

NROTC  
ROCHESTER



IRONCLAD 2025

Rachel Yorke

Peter Higgins

# **BNCO Reflection**

Getting the opportunity to work with the active duty staff has been quite a beneficial experience. It has been very rewarding being able to work behind the scenes of upcoming Battalion events, scheduling activities and bringing our ideas to life. Of course being the connection between active duty staff and midshipman has been exciting as well. Being Battalion Commander (BNCO) has challenged me in many ways: as an individual through peer leadership, to manage new kinds of stress, and in being an advocate for the battalion. It has also reminded me of the overall mission of NROTC which is to develop well rounded officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. This mission of NROTC quickly became my mission for my peers and the underclassmen in my last semester enrolled in the program.



To the next Top 3, this will be your mission. You will be the face and the voice of the Battalion. You will make decisions on behalf of the Midshipmen that will challenge them in order to help mold them into future leaders of the Navy and Marine Corps. My advice to the next Top 3 is to never lose sight of the mission. There will certainly be days and weeks when you will feel like you are failing. Step into your position with a readiness to learn and further develop yourself, in order to further develop and teach others. Always remember your “why” – your reason for being here and entering the service. Your “why” is what is going to get you through the difficult times. Remembering why you’re here is extremely important in influencing your character and your leadership style.

MIDN Niezabytowski

# First Class



MIDN Ellrich  
Tallahassee, FL  
The Basic School



MIDN Kang  
Sherborn, MA  
Naval Flight School



MIDN Perry  
Rexford, NY  
The Basic School



MIDN Hendricks  
Albany, NY  
Naval Flight School



MIDN  
Niezabytowski  
Syracuse, NY  
The Basic School



MIDN Smith  
Manchester, NH  
Nuclear Power School



MIDN Hickey  
San Diego, CA  
Naval Flight School



MIDN  
O'Shaughnessy  
Peekskill, NY  
DDG Chung Hoon



MIDN Wagner  
Ashburn, VA  
The Basic School



MIDN White  
Albuquerque, NM  
USS Sterett



MIDN Yorke  
Summit, NY  
The Basic School



MIDN Wingood  
Chicago, IL  
Nuclear Power School



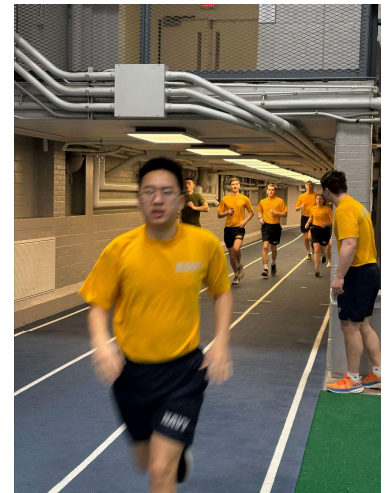
MIDN Zheng  
New Canaan, CT  
USS San Diego

# Physical Training



This year in PT, our training plan focused on threshold and pace work to improve both aerobic efficiency and speed endurance. Threshold training involved running at or near one's lactate threshold—the point where lactic acid begins to accumulate in the blood. This type of training helps the body become more efficient at clearing lactic acid, allowing one to sustain faster paces for longer periods without fatigue. Pace work focused on maintaining specific target speeds over set distances, improving running economy and mental pacing strategy. These workouts trained our bodies to become more efficient at utilizing oxygen.

Combined with regular warm-ups and cool-downs, the plan supported overall physical conditioning while minimizing injury risk. By sticking to this scientifically based approach, we were able to see improvements in endurance, speed, and consistency throughout the year.



MIDN 2/C  
VanAuken

# Marine Platoon

NROTC Rochester's Marine platoon consists of 13 Midshipman, each planning on joining a wide array of career fields upon commissioning. Our Marine-specific training aims to prepare Marine Options for their future careers and beyond. This semester we started off with a Small Unit Leadership Exercises (SULEs) which grant the opportunity to practice combat missions for OCS and TBS. Marine Platoon also participated in a Spring Field Exercise at Mendon Ponds that included a combat lifesaving class, day and night land navigation, 5 SULEs, a 5K hike, and MCMAP lessons. Physical fitness was a key focus this semester with the remainder of MOPT sessions being physical events like 10k hikes, calisthenic workouts, and MCMAP. Marine Option Midshipmen also sharpened their minds with refresher courses on the Operations Order with a highlight on effectively structuring them. Marine Platoon has excelled overall and will be commissioning several new second lieutenants this Spring.



MIDN 4/C Viator and MIDN 4/C Libert

# Battalion Lab

Top three started this semester by setting the intention



that Battalion Labs that were more interactive and less powerpoint focused. Some of the activities we did during Lab were Tactical Decision Games, breakout rooms based on the communities we intend to commission into, and Leadership Reaction Courses. We also had many presentations this semester on a variety of topics including financial responsibility, how to improve physical fitness, and public safety. These presentations were not only informative but interesting. The shift we made to more interactive labs gave us more hands-on opportunities to grow in our leadership and be better prepared for officerhood upon commissioning. MIDN 3/C Kwak



# MEC

This spring, the Rochester NROTC Unit attended the Rensselaer Rumble in Troy, New York. The Rumble is a Military Excellence Competition (MEC) where ROTC units from across the Northeast compete in close-order drill, physical fitness challenges, and academic knowledge competitions. This MEC represented the culmination of our midshipmen's hard work in improving their drill performance and showcasing their academic and athletic talents. The event offered a great opportunity to demonstrate our skills and connect with fellow ROTC units from nearby universities. As is tradition, the Unit performed exceptionally well—earning 1st place overall in the competition. More specifically, the Unit took 1st place in both platoon and squad drill, and 2nd place in color guard. Our Midshipmen also reached the podium in both the academic and athletic competitions, continuing our strong legacy of success at MECs.



MIDN 3/C Barber



# Navy Ball

The 2025 University of Rochester NROTC Navy Ball was held on April 19th at Ridgmont Country Club, providing an elegant setting to honor Naval traditions and the Class of 2025. Guests gathered for a cocktail hour before being formally seated for the ceremony. The evening commenced with the presentation of colors, national anthem, and invocation. A highlight of the program was the introduction of the First Class Midshipmen as they entered through a ceremonial sword arch, symbolizing their transition to commissioned service. The POW/MIA table ceremony paid tribute to those who remain missing. Dinner was served, followed by speeches from the Commanding Officer, Captain Russel Sanchez, and Guest of Honor, Captain John White Jr., USMC (Retired), a decorated Vietnam veteran. The event concluded with the presentation of the NROTC Rochester Challenge Coin and an evening of music and dancing. The Navy Ball fostered camaraderie, pride, and reflection, marking a memorable milestone for the battalion.

MIDN 3/C Kelsch



# Awards Ceremony

We ended this semester with an award ceremony to celebrate Midshipmen's achievements throughout the year and their entire time in the Battalion. These awards ranged from physical fitness and academic achievements to awards given by outside organizations in recognition of their capacity to serve. The highlight of the event was the presentation of the Mamaluke sword to MIDN 1/C Yorke. This event was our last lab and Battalion event of the semester and served as a reward for all the hard work we put in throughout the year.



MIDN 2/C Higgins



# First Class Superlatives

*Most likely to...*

Miss ship movements:



Wingood

Write a book:



Yorke

Win a MOH:



Hickey

Become CNO:



Zheng

Be in Top Gun remake:



Hendricks

Run aground:



Smith

Become a military influencer:



O'Shaughnessy

Become commandant:



Niezabytowski

Get married first:



Ellrich

Salute enlisted personnel:

Lose a rifle:

Give a powerpoint presentation:



Wagner



Perry



White

Eject from aircraft:



Kang

## First Class Words of Advice

- Reach out for help early and always ask questions. There is so much you can learn from the officers, your peers, upperclassmen, and underclassmen. Figure out your priorities and organize your calendar accordingly so. Balancing school, work, NROTC, and your personal life can be hard but if you know your priorities it makes everything so much easier. **MIDN O'Shaughnessy**
- My biggest lesson learned whilst being a part of the NROTCU Rochester unit has been how to take care of my academic performance. As a biomedical engineering major a fair bit of time/effort is asked from us every semester and finding a balance with the time required by NROTC was tough, especially when my classes really challenged me. I overcame this difficulty by dedicating more time to my classes and striving to do well whenever an assignment with my name on it came around. Some advice I've got for the underclassman is to stay on top of your studies but also enjoy college: find a good group

of friends outside of NROTC, find a club you enjoy, get involved in the university's sports teams, and don't take yourself too seriously. **MIDN Smith**

- I learned that the most important thing you can do in life is continue to look for ways to grow and challenge yourself. For advice - look out for your people, lean on your peers, and always keep an open mindset to learn from those around you. **MIDN Wagner**
- Peer mentorship is something that begins in the early stages of your NROTC career. Develop strong relationships with your fellow midshipmen and ensure that you, and your peers, never lose sight of the mission of NROTC. **MIDN Niezabytowski**
- As I have gone through the 4 years in this battalion, an important lesson that I have learned is to advocate for yourself. No one else will fight for you unless you are motivated yourself. Put yourself out there and grab every opportunity you can to succeed. A piece of advice I have is to enjoy your time at NROTC and college. Sometimes days are hard and weeks are long, but focus on something positive and remind yourself that you want to be here. **MIDN Kang**
- Never give up on yourself and keep pushing forward. You can do anything regardless of what your mind is telling you. There are no shortcuts, the only path to success is through hard work and discipline. Through this you can achieve any goal you set. **MIDN Perry**
- The main lesson I learned might seem fairly basic. But It is all about the main goal. The best way to motivate yourself to get the hard stuff done is to remind yourself what the end goal of your hard work. You want to be able to look back on the effort you have put in and recognize that you did all you could do to give yourself the best opportunity to succeed. My advice follows the same logic. Anytime you are struggling to get work done, or motivate yourself to stay focused, remember that goal you are working towards and recognize that the work you are doing now is a step towards that goal. **MIDN Hickey**
- The main lesson I have learned here at NROTCU Rochester is that perspective is everything. Everything you do is judged by others and making sure your actions are perceived properly is a large part of being a good leader. Another lesson is that you don't violate someone's trust by double checking their work. When everything needs to be done right the first time it is important to remember that we function as a team. **MIDN White**
- A piece of advice I can give to those in ROTC is to get more sleep than you think you need. Plan ahead and ensure good sleep. Worst case, it is usually the case that paperwork or homework can wait until the morning when you are rested and ready to tackle it.
- Through ROTC, I learned to improve my problem-solving under pressure and became more open to feedback, which helped me grow. My biggest advice: if you truly want something— a specific service selection, better grades, or a higher PFT—you have to

fight for it. When things seem impossible, determination and persistence will carry you through. You don't have to do it alone—lean on others who share similar goals and support each other. **MIDN Wingood**

- I've learned that time management, professionalism, and good communication really make the difference when it comes to balancing everything ROTC demands. Learning how to stay on top of things while staying true to your beliefs, your integrity, and staying connected with others is key. My advice is to get into a routine that makes space for your own growth while still showing up for your team. When you focus on improving yourself, you're better for everyone around you too. **MIDN Yorke**
- Always be humble, there's way more to learn... **MIDN Zheng**
- Most of the lessons I learned took place while I was trying to be the absolute best I could at something. You can learn a lot about yourself by pouring your heart into a pursuit, whatever that pursuit may be. Make family out of your friendships, seek to understand your peers, and treat the people you come across with intention. **MIDN Hendricks**
- I learned that this process is not about me. Everything we do here, all of our training, time, and effort is not about us. This program is and should be about better outcomes for our enlisted out in the fleet. My advice is this: Evaluate yourself every day, and never stop trying to measure up to the person you think your future platoon deserves. **MIDN Ellrich**

Fair Winds and Following Seas  
To Our Graduating First Class

