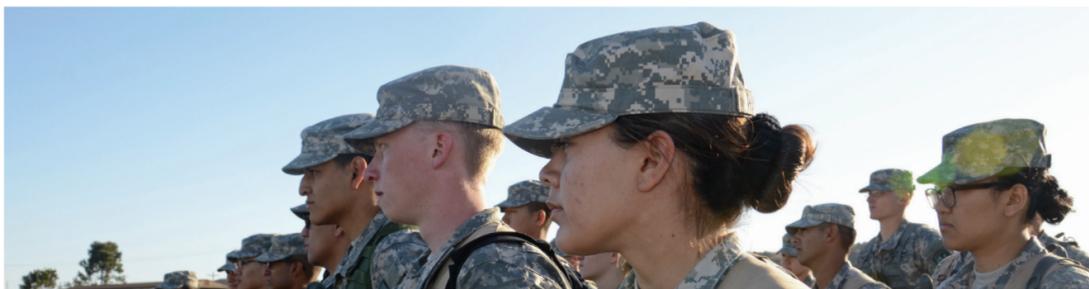


TRAINING GROUND



TAKING CHARGE

Although they are outnumbered, more women are assuming leadership roles in UCLA's ROTC program

BY NAHEED RAJWANI
Bruin senior staff
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The enemy was attacking oil fields, hiding in the brush and strapping on improvised explosive devices.

About 175 cadets in camouflage U.S. Army Combat Uniforms were responsible for stopping the enemy in its tracks, through drills like ambushes and reconnaissance operations.

Amid the action was third-year nursing student Kali Whitehurst, a lieutenant in this simulated battlefield.

She was running on little sleep. But somehow the adrenaline rush she got from her mission – to ensure the cadets were accounted for throughout the training – kept her going, she said.

She had spent the last few weeks helping to organize the training, and was now responsible for keeping track of the number of men and women in the battlefield, including any injuries that occurred on site.

The Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program hosts several training exercises throughout the year, with two main trainings in the fall and spring.

Students from across Southern California – including UCLA, the University of Southern California and California State University, Northridge – attended the spring training at Camp Pendleton earlier this month.

The training was designed to test the students' leadership skills and challenge them to think on their feet. The Daily Bruin sent four journalists to



About 175 Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets from across Southern California, including UCLA and the University of Southern California, travelled to Camp Pendleton near San Diego, Calif. earlier this month to participate in a four-day field exercise training; (Above) Third-year nursing student Kali Whitehurst stands with her battalion on the last day of training, which she helped organize.

NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF

embed themselves into the training session with the cadets.

Whitehurst is one of the top-performing cadets in the Army ROTC program at UCLA, which means she has consistently scored higher at training exercises and has a higher physical training score than most of her peers, both male and female.

She is one of many women

trying to find their way in a predominantly male field.

Opening up the ranks

The U.S. Armed Forces is currently re-evaluating its standards for combat positions, after the Department of Defense announced earlier this year that

ARMY ROTC | Page 7

EDITOR'S NOTE

Earlier this month, four Daily Bruin staff members travelled to the U.S. Marine Corps base at Camp Pendleton to report on the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps' annual spring field training exercise. The journalists lived with the cadets – who came from schools across Southern California – and observed their training over the course of four days. The reporting in this package is the result of this experience and of an effort to better understand the experience of participating in the Army ROTC program at UCLA.

Table of Contents

Behind the Badge

People involved in the Army ROTC program at UCLA come from different backgrounds and have different reasons for joining the army. [p.4-5]

Braving the Battleground

Assistant photo editor Sidhaant Shah visually documents cadet training. [p.6]

Cadets' commitment to one another inspires admiration

Shah reflects on his experience with the Army ROTC cadets during training. [p.7]

ONLINE

Check out the Daily Bruin's coverage of the Army ROTC at graphics.dailybruin.com/training-ground.



Professor ordered to stand trial

A judge has ordered UCLA chemistry professor Patrick Harran to stand trial for felony charges regarding the death of a staff research assistant in a laboratory fire more than four years ago.

In court Friday, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Lisa Lench denied the defense's motion to dismiss the case, said Thomas O'Brien, Harran's lawyer.

"We fully expect that the jury will find that this was nothing more than a tragic accident," O'Brien said.

Last year, Harran was charged with willfully violating

state occupational health and safety codes, after a chemical ignited the sweater of research assistant Sheharbano "Sheri" Sangji in 2008. Sangji was reportedly not wearing a lab coat at the time.

The Los Angeles district attorney dropped the charges against the regents in July as part of a plea deal, in which the regents accepted responsibility for the conditions under which the laboratory was operated. As part of the deal, the regents also said they would improve their safety regulations and

HARRAN | Page 2

GSA ELECTIONS

Graduate election polls reopen

BY AMANDA SCHALLERT
Bruin contributor
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Graduate student government elections will reopen for 10 hours on Wednesday to remedy technical problems that barred graduate students from voting during this month's elections.

Graduate students who have not already done so will be able to vote on MyUCLA from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday. The votes cast will be added to the current count, said Daniel Goodman, Gradu-

ate Student Association commissioner of elections.
At the GSA meeting last week, representatives voted to appeal the results to the GSA Elections Board because outages on MyUCLA's server prevented students from voting online at intermittent times on April 11 of elections week, which ran from April 9-15.

The Election Board is composed of members from the 13 graduate student government

academic councils and Goodman. Seven of eight members of the Election Board present at the meeting voted to reopen the elections.

While determining if they should reopen the elections, members of the Election Board voiced particular concern that the outages occurred during Grad Bar, an event held by the elections' organizers to increase voter turnout. The smallest number of graduate students voted on April 11, relative to the other days of the elections.

GSA | Page 2

LONG STORY SHORT

Today, 6 p.m.

UCLARadio.com

- Did you know that a meteorite museum is being built on campus? We talk to a professor about the particulars and why there has been an increase in meteor showers recently.
- Contrary to popular belief, Cinco de Mayo does NOT celebrate Mexican Independence Day. We explain what it actually represents and discuss its significance.
- For National Dance Week, we'll also speak to a dance and movement therapist about the use of dance to improve emotional health.

All this and more on Long Story Short!





\$150 cash back

Refinance your current auto loan to UCU and you could get:

- Affordable monthly payments
- Low rate
- \$150 cash



UNIVERSITY CREDIT UNION
Where Bruins Bank

Loans subject to credit approval. Call for eligibility and details.
 *\$150 Cash Back offer applies to vehicle loans of at least \$7,500 refinanced from another lender to UCU. Offer expires 5/31/13; loans must be funded by 6/30/13. Existing UCU loans not eligible for refinance. \$150 will be deposited into member's Regular Share Savings Account upon funding.

TRAINING GROUND



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COURTESY OF OLIVER KAY



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF

BEHIND the BADGE

Members of Army ROTC come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of motivations



COURTESY OF CAPTAIN ERIN FRITZLER



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF



COURTESY OF OLIVER KAY



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF



COURTESY OF LT. COL. SHAWN PHELPS

PATH TO COMMISSION

Here are the steps of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program at UCLA:

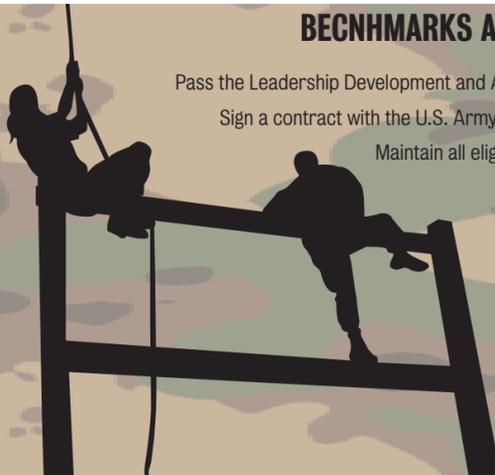
Eligibility Requirements

- United States citizenship
- At most 31 years old at the time of commission
- High school diploma, or equivalent
- Cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher
- At least a 920 SAT or 19 ACT score (reading/math)
- Medically qualified
- Pass Army Physical Fitness Test



BECNHMARKS ALONG THE WAY

- Pass the Leadership Development and Assessment Course
- Sign a contract with the U.S. Army to receive benefits
- Maintain all eligibility requirements



Lt. Col. Shawn Phelps
Position: Professor of military science
Age: 46



COURTESY OF LT. COL. SHAWN PHELPS

Lt. Col. Shawn Phelps has spent the last few years guiding cadets in the UCLA Reserve Officers' Training Corps through the ropes of the military, drawing from his 26-year experience in the U.S. Army.

In a couple of months, Phelps will pack up the objects that furnish his office – about 90 military coins, dozens of plaques he has earned over the years and his coveted baseball mementos.

He will start a new chapter of his life as a retired army officer, instructing Junior ROTC students at a high school located near Orlando, Fla.

"I wake up before my alarm every day and I'm excited to do what I do," he said to a group of ROTC cadets during his last field training exercise as an active duty officer earlier this month. "(Teaching people) is something I will continue to do at JROTC – it's something I love."

Phelps grew up in a small farming community in central Washington. He was an avid athlete, playing basketball, football and baseball for his high school.

"The most difficult thing for me when I first joined (the military) was that I had never been anywhere before," he said. "I'd never been outside of my hometown other than to visit my grandparents nearly a hundred miles away."

Phelps has travelled to more countries than states within the U.S. in the past two decades. He was deployed to Iraq in 2003 and lived on a military base in Germany with his wife and two children for several years.

Phelps joined the army on a whim in 1987, after driving his college roommate to an office to enlist in the army and deciding to enlist as well.

He has continued to apply his love for athletics, drawing

inspiration from Coach John Wooden's leadership style, to the art of war.

"We don't get trophies in the army, but we want to be high-performing teams," he said, "We want to be standing in the end – that's our trophy."

Victoria Sanelli, the military science department's manager, has watched Phelps grow into his role as a military science instructor since the day he first stepped onto the UCLA campus in 2010.

She said she remembers Phelps sometimes doing sit-ups on a table in the cadets' lounge and walking around the ROTC hallway in his shorts and sweaty T-shirts.

"Not every (professor of military science) comes in and does that," she said.

Phelps' students have also taken notice of his love for teaching and his efforts to foster a community within the ROTC program.

"He is the embodiment of a scholar, an athlete and a gentleman ... that's something I admire and something I want to aspire towards," said Michael Brinkley, a fourth-year history student.

And while Phelps is moving more than 2,000 miles away in June, UCLA will continue to hold a special place in his heart, he said.

"Even though I've got a Washington State flag hanging on the door, this is my school now," he said. "I'm absolutely going to miss it. It's like I'm graduating from here now."

But, he's also ready to start over.

"These guys down the hallway that I work with obviously mean a great deal to me," he said. "But that's kind of common in the army – we build our relationships and then we move on to our next assignment."

Capt. David Chichetti
Position: Assistant professor of military science, UCLA
Army ROTC training officer
Age: 30



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF

One of Capt. Erin Fritzier's favorite parts about being an officer is the opportunity to help people both on and off the battlefield.

Between 2007 and 2008, she was deployed in Telafer in Northern Iraq and was responsible for managing police stations in the region – with tasks ranging from training police officers, to ensuring they had the supplies they needed to do their job well.

"The most memorable stories I have ever had was when I took care of a soldier," she said. "That's the whole point of being an officer in the army, I think, because you're taking care of soldiers and you're making sure they're trained."

Fritzier graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 2006 and trained in the police corps, a law enforcement branch within the U.S. Army.

She currently works as an assistant military science professor and ROTC recruiter at UCLA.

Beyond her military responsibilities, however, Fritzier has managed to pursue other passions as well.

Every week, she and her husband go to local dance studios to swing dance.

Dance is also the secret behind their marriage – they first met during a dance workshop in Kansas City in 2009.

While swing dancing and her work at UCLA are very different, Fritzier said it isn't too hard balancing her personal and professional life.

"I don't really act differently when I'm off duty than when I'm on duty," she said. "I've always tried to maintain some transparency (about my interests)."

March 25, 2008. Sadr City, Iraq.

Bullet casings. Mortars. Improvised explosive devices. A 12-hour gunfight and multiple casualties.

Capt. David Chichetti lost three of his fellow soldiers in battle over the next two months – a loss that is etched into the black bracelet he now wears on his right arm.

"This (bracelet) reminds me every day why I'm here," he said, while looking down at the bracelet with the soldiers' names inscribed on it. "I'm here to lead soldiers and I'm here to make sure they're safe."

Chichetti grew up in Tallahassee, Fla. and does not come from a military family.

But after becoming interested in the history of American wars and researching careers in the armed forces, Chichetti decid-

ed to go straight into military school after graduating from high school.

He enrolled at the Citadel, a military college in South Carolina, in 2001 and later trained to become an infantry officer. He was deployed to Iraq twice, between 2007 and 2008 and later between 2010 and 2011.

He said he feels it is important to pass down the lessons he has learned over the years to the next generation – one of the reasons he enjoys his work as an assistant professor of military science and Army ROTC training officer at UCLA.

"The American people trust me to take their sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives – you name it – into combat," he said. "I'm supposed to get the mission done with the least amount of harm as I can – that is a lot of responsibility."

Capt. Erin Fritzier
Position: Assistant professor of military science
Age: 29



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN

Oliver Kay
Position: UCLA Army ROTC cadet
Age: 32



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF

Four years ago, Oliver Kay was a lieutenant in the British Army. He trained alongside Prince Harry for a year, toured different countries around the world and led a group of about 30 British soldiers in the Iraq War.

Now, he teaches cadets in the UCLA Army ROTC's Bruin Battalion how to be soldiers.

Though he serves as the battalion's sergeant major, Kay is not technically ranked any higher than the cadets. He is one of them.

"I just love the challenge and the excitement the army has," he said. "For me, this isn't a job – this is an adventure."

Kay moved to the U.S. after returning from Iraq in 2009 because he felt it offered more educational and career opportunities.

But the adjustment has not been easy.

"(After moving to L.A.), I thought to myself, 'This is nuts – one day, six months ago I was

in Iraq as a platoon commander, leading troops,'" said Kay, currently a fourth-year Middle Eastern and North African Studies student. "And now I am a cadet, with guys in their fourth year, with no military experience, trying to tell me what to do."

Beyond ROTC, Kay is passionate about learning Arabic and learning about different cultures. He hopes to work for the U.S. government in the Middle East after graduating from UCLA.

And every now and then, he tries to take a break from his busy schedule to go running – a passion he has developed over the years. He also runs in the L.A. Marathon to raise money to support veterans.

While he misses England a lot, he said he is not planning on moving back anytime soon.

"The States have been good to me," he said. "(The U.S. is) definitely something fresh to me because I have lived out of a rucksack all of my life."



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN STAFF

Kirsty Cordes
Position: UCLA Army ROTC cadet
Age: 20

Kirsty Cordes' day often starts just as her residents' night is about to end.

The third-year political science student is a resident assistant in Rieber Vista and as an Army ROTC cadet.

"It can be tough ... with the RA job; it's a lot of late nights," she said. "And then I have to still wake up early

Monday through Thursday."

At the start of the Army-ROTC's field training earlier this month, Cordes was running on little sleep. She had gone through an entire day plowing through the thick brush and mountainous terrain at Camp Pendleton in pursuit of pretend enemies. She was hot. She was

sweaty. And she was exhausted.

"But it's OK," said Cordes, whose face was covered in green camouflage paint. "I know I only have two days of real work. ... I'll be ready for tomorrow."

Cordes comes from a military family, which she said inspired her to join ROTC. Her grandfather was a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, her uncle is a colonel in the Air Force, and her mother went through

the ROTC program at UCLA when she was in college.

Cordes said the relationships she has formed as a resident assistant and as a cadet have made her college experience worthwhile.

"The people I'm closest to are the people who are also my year (in ROTC)," she said. "You can really utilize them as a support system because you are all doing the same thing and you all want each other to do well."

OBLIGATIONS

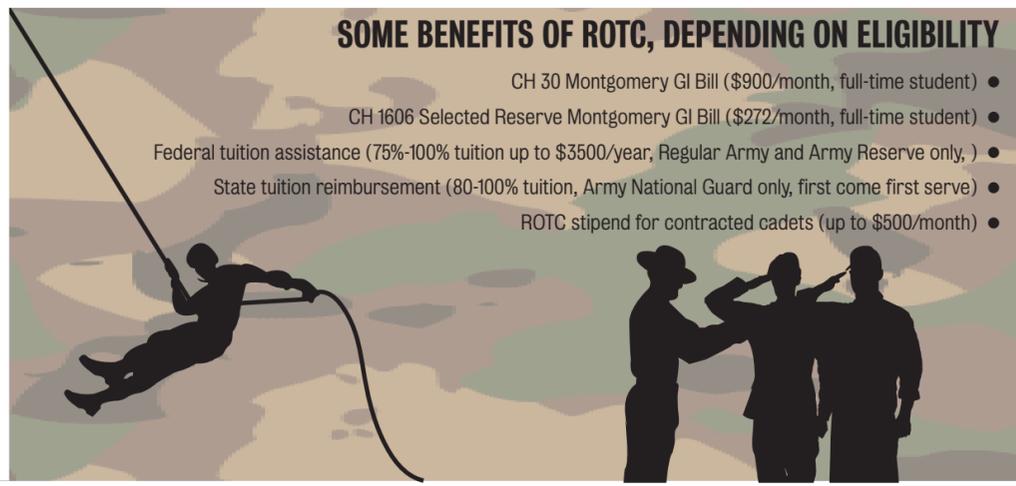
Each cadet must complete eight years of military service, which can be satisfied in any of the following ways:

- Serve 3 years on active duty, plus 5 years on Individual Ready Reserve
- Serve all 8 years on active duty
- Serve all 8 years on reserve forces duty



SOME BENEFITS OF ROTC, DEPENDING ON ELIGIBILITY

- CH 30 Montgomery GI Bill (\$900/month, full-time student)
- CH 1606 Selected Reserve Montgomery GI Bill (\$272/month, full-time student)
- Federal tuition assistance (75%-100% tuition up to \$3500/year, Regular Army and Army Reserve only,)
- State tuition reimbursement (80-100% tuition, Army National Guard only, first come first serve)
- ROTC stipend for contracted cadets (up to \$500/month)



TRAINING GROUND

BRAVING the BATTLEFIELD

Daily Bruin assistant photo editor Sidhaant Shah followed the cadets over the course of the weekend, documenting what their training looks like. Here is a glimpse:



Day 0: The day before training, students have Pre-Combat Inspection of all items and goods they will be carrying with them.



Day 0: The Bruin Battalion, comprised of ROTC cadets from both UCLA and CSUN, en route to Pendleton for camp.



Day 1: First Lane. The squad leader, upon getting the necessary mission objectives, gives mission intelligence to his teammates.



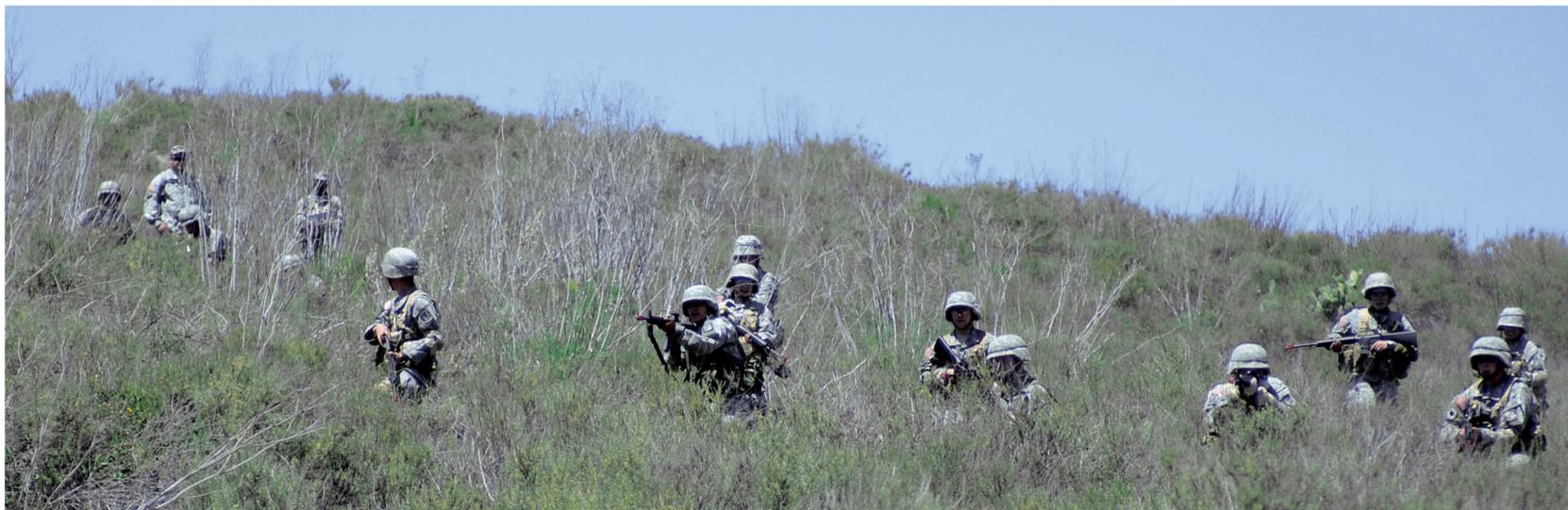
Day 0: The Bruin Battalion stands in formation while receiving orders and instructions about the upcoming field training exercises from the cadre officers right after they set foot at United States Marine Corps base at Camp Pendleton, Calif.



Day 1: Lane 1. While receiving mission intelligence from the lane officer, the cadets form a security parameter around their base of operations. During this time, the squad or platoon leader tries to formulate a path for mission execution, which has to be completed within 90 minutes.



Day 2: Lane 2. At about 6 a.m., before his platoon executes its mission, a cadet feasts on his Meal Ready to Eat.



Day 2: Lane 4. The attack. Cadets descend down a hill while "shooting" at the opposition forces at the base of the hill. The execution of the mission in its entirety took them approximately three hours.



Day 3. The cadets have completed training but there was still a lot of work left to be done. The female cadets clean out their rifles, which is a three- to four-hour process.



Day 3: At the end of every successful training period the commanding officer of the battalion gives out coins of recognition. Cadet Kirkwood of UCLA was recognized as the best Military Science I cadet.

ARMY ROTC | Cadets reflect on training experiences, the military's changing composition

from page 1

the positions are now open to women. For the changes to be in effect, however, branches within the armed forces will need to put in place gender-neutral standards by 2016.

If branches in the military choose to make adjustments in their standards for people serving on the front lines, the changes would trickle down to ROTC programs across the country, said Mike Johnson, a U.S. Army spokesman.

However, women have long served in combat-related roles – particularly those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Women have really been on the front lines. ... The way the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq is being fought, the battlefield is all around us,” said Lee Reynolds, an assistant military science professor at the University of Southern California.

Lt. Col. Shawn Phelps said that in terms of the structure of the military, a majority of high ranking officers come from the combat arms, which are currently comprised of males only.

“Our leadership does not represent

our society,” said Phelps, a professor of military science at UCLA.

He said the formal expansion of women's roles in the armed forces is symbolic of the changes of gender roles from generation to generation.

“We've got the people in the pipeline now,” he said. “We've just got to give them the opportunity now to serve in the same jobs so that they can get promoted. ... Who knows, it could be somebody sitting in these desks here (at UCLA).”

Navigating a male-dominated military

College ROTC programs are a stepping stone for men and women who hope to get their foot in the door because they help them develop a basic set of skills that can be applied to various fields in the army, Phelps said.

While many women stated similar motivations for joining the army as men at the field exercise training in Camp Pendleton, they continue to constitute a minority in the Bruin Battalion and in the army as a whole.

There is roughly a two-to-five ratio

of females to males within the Bruin Battalion, the official name of the UCLA ROTC program's Army division.

Whitehurst was one of three women on the eight-person staff that led the spring field exercise training.

Myan Pham, a fourth-year history student who serves as an executive officer in the Bruin Battalion, was one of the other women who helped lead the training.

She said her male counterparts are often surprised if she performs well in training exercises – a sign of the difference in expectations for the two genders.

“Being a woman changes everything,” said Pham, who wants to be a doctor for the army.

Once, a team captain wrote on her evaluation card that he had initially thought she would be shy because she was “small.” This, she said, was an indication of the added hurdles women have to surpass in the military.

“He'd already formed an impression of me before I even performed,” Pham said.

When Capt. Erin Fritzler was going through military training nearly a decade ago, she disliked it when people tried to teach her how to “take care” of herself out in the field – something she tries to shy away from when she is teaching her students at UCLA.

“Honestly, I don't look at (the female cadets) as women – I look at them as cadets,” said Fritzler, as assistant military science professor at UCLA.

Sometimes though, Fritzler does try to encourage her cadets to improve their physical training score to help them maintain their competitiveness.

“You need to have a lot of credibility with your male counterparts,” she said. “They don't want to help you if you don't want to help yourself.”

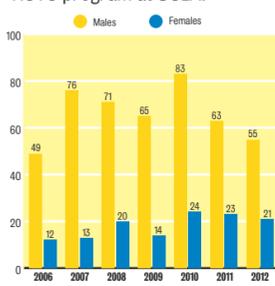
Edward Trinidad, a fourth-year English student who was a Battalion commander this past year, said he has noticed that males at UCLA are fairly respectful of their female counterparts, which might be because they are familiar with their leadership styles and capabilities.

However, this is not the case during trainings where cadets from other schools are present, he added.

Cadets from across the country attend the Leadership Development and Assessment Course in Ft. Lewis, Wash.

WOMEN IN UCLA ROTC

There are significantly fewer women than men in the Army ROTC program at UCLA.



SOURCE: Victoria Sanelli, UCLA Department of Military Science. Graphic by Jennifer Mallipudi, Bruin contributor.

The course assesses trainees' leadership skills and potential as future officers in the army, in areas such as first aid, weapons familiarization and teamwork.

When he attended the program last year, Trinidad was leading a reconnaissance mission and chose a female cadet to help with the exercise because he felt she was the top cadet in the group, he said.

The evaluator gave Trinidad extra points for creating a positive environment and for not being gender-selective because males tend to pick males in those types of exercises, Trinidad said. “I found that (evaluation) really strange,” he said. “I don't base anything off gender – just on the quality of the cadet.”

Men and women inherently have different body compositions, which means there are different standards for the two genders in the military, Phelps said.

Whitehurst said she sometimes feels like she is at a disadvantage because she is smaller in physique than many of her male counterparts.

Last summer, Whitehurst attended the Leadership Development and Assessment Course.

“The bigger guys and the guys with the deeper voices who could shout louder than me definitely had it over me,” Whitehurst said. “As a female, your voice only goes but so deep and as a five-foot-nothing tall girl, I can only get but so tall.”

Still, Whitehurst and Pham have found ways to command respect from some of their male peers who might not

take them seriously at first.

They prepared contingency plans in case something went wrong.

Pham, Whitehurst and the other cadets on the leadership team ran the Tactical Operations Center – another word for the simulated battlefield's headquarters – like a well-oiled machine.

They debriefed with their team every night – keeping tabs on injuries, supply levels and even the weather.

At the beginning of the training, a cadre member had warned the cadet leaders that no matter how closely they planned out the weekend, they would be dealing with curveballs.

And they were.

A cadet ended up in the wrong squad. Cadets who were assigned a leadership role in their squad got injured – a gap the team had to scramble to fill.

But even when she was stressed, Whitehurst tried her best to stay calm throughout the weekend. That is a skill she has learned in the last three years, while navigating through the Army ROTC program.

“I've found that if you talk to (cadets) as a person, then they are more likely to do what you need them to do than talking down to them,” Whitehurst said.

Fritzler said that while she is happy the Department of Defense is taking steps to open up ground combat positions to women, she would like the re-evaluation to happen at a quicker pace.

“Policy is only as good as when it's being implemented,” she said. “So if it's a good policy and they aren't really enacting it until who knows when, it's like they aren't enacting it at all.”

Whitehurst said that after going through the ROTC program and having the success she has had in it, she would not be opposed to a position in combat in the event nursing does not work out for her.

“It would definitely be something I would consider,” she said. “I wouldn't shut it out entirely, which is a surprise to me.”

And when it was time to head back to UCLA Sunday afternoon, Whitehurst was already thinking about the week that awaited her – the homework she had to catch up on, the 12-hour nursing rotations, and more early morning ROTC training exercises.

“I'm not going to say it's easy – it's hard,” she said, smiling. “But you make it work for the things you love.”



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN

(Left to right) UCLA student Kait Whitehurst and California State University, Northridge student Natasha Ikejiri's break ends prematurely with a call about an emergency.



NEIL BEDI/DAILY BRUIN

(Left to right) Natasha Ikejiri, a fourth-year kinesiology student at California State University, Northridge, Matt Lanter, a fourth-year sociology student at UCLA and Myan Pham, a fourth-year history student at UCLA, plan for the weekend at the base's headquarters.

VIDEO: A Tactful Test



ENID ZHOU/DAILY BRUIN SENIOR STAFF

From 0600 to 1920, cadets of Bruin Battalion march up and down hilly terrain in Camp Pendleton for their spring field training exercise. Third-year Military Science III cadets are placed and evaluated in leadership positions before they head off to a monthlong Leader Development and Assessment Course that will determine their placement in the military. With rifles in their hands and rucksacks on their backs, cadets practice patience under stress at dailybruin.com/video.

Cadets' commitment to one another inspires admiration

BY SIDHAANT SHAH



I grew up in India learning about the four wars we fought with Pakistan, which was divided from us by a man-made border upon our independence from the British.

I grew up in a country where ushers check for explosives underneath seats in movie theaters between shows, and every major shopping mall or public space has metal detectors and security checkpoints.

I grew up hating war, the idea of fighting, bloodshed, pain. But I never faltered in my immense respect for those men and women in uniform who defend democracy. While it's easy to hate war and the suffering it brings, it's sometimes less instinctive to remember the evident strife and sacrifice experienced by those who fight it.

These thoughts were running through my head before I boarded the bus that took me to Camp Pendleton for a weekend of ROTC field training exercises – and were only reinforced by the time the trip came to an end.

The bus ride there was like the calm before a storm – the cadets, students from UCLA and California State University, Northridge, sat in stoic silence, perhaps contemplating the

weekend ahead. Before a few cadets boarded the bus, they jokingly asked me why I was willing to subject myself to what they were about to go through. As a photographer on assignment to shoot their exercises, I was thinking about camp, but with excitement rather than dread.

As a media embed, I followed the cadets for the entirety of their training. Eating Meals Ready to Eat, sleeping out in 40-degree weather, waking up to frost on their faces, carrying heavy loads of about 30 pounds on their backs while performing physically arduous tasks, was an average day for the cadets.

I tried to put on a brave face and hide my exhaustion because I never once saw these cadets flinch or disobey a direct order. They slugged through those extremely hot days on rugged hills spotted with thorny cacti and bushes in all their military regalia without ever uttering a sigh of defeat.

In spite of the strain the cadets were going through, they had a few moments of repose between each training lane, a lane being a specific course or mission that the cadets had to complete. During these moments I was able to glimpse at some intimate moments. I remember a cadet yelling to the rest of his squad before drinking his own water, “Hey, whoever is

out, please have mine.”

During an early morning lane, a cadet looked at me during her break. I was shivering, and she walked up to me. Without a moment's hesitation or a chance for me to deny her offer, she handed me her gloves and scarf.

On another occasion, a cadet fell to the ground bearing the heavy weight off his rucksack, and immediately, two of his compatriots helped him up, dusted him off and gave him a drink of water. These were the moments that stuck out to me the most. Moments of camaraderie, unspoken understanding that they were all in this together. It didn't matter what school they were from or even what name or rank they held. All that mattered was that they were fighting together, side by side.

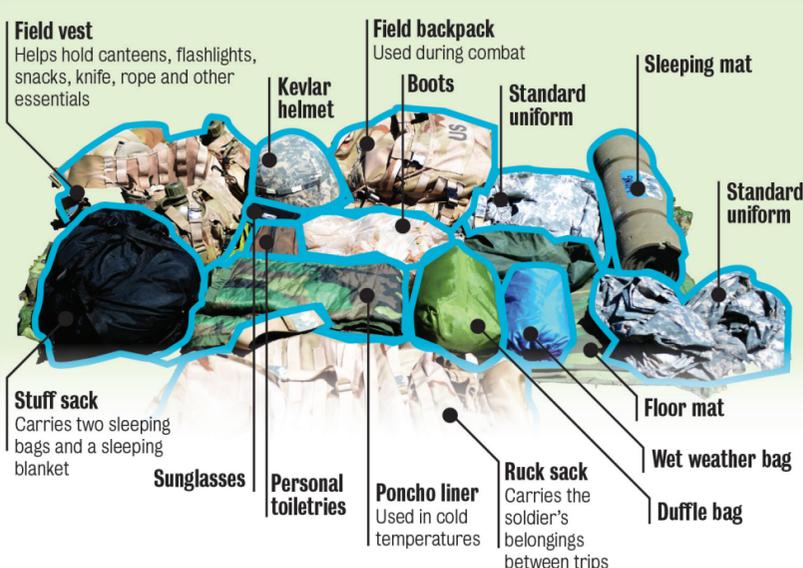
I remember talking to one of the cadre, befuddled by the passion and selfless nature of the cadets, and asked him one simple question: “Why?” The answer he gave me was by far my most profound experience at Camp Pendleton.

He said that most soldiers who go into combat are not fond of war. Some don't fully understand the policies coming out of Washington.

They fight in part because they love their country, but there is a greater factor behind

ROTC INSPECTION

These were the items carried by every cadet during the field training exercise at Camp Pendleton.



SOURCE: Gary Cope, armories master at UCLA. Graphic reporting by Sidhaant Shah, Bruin senior staff. Graphic by Jonathan Solichin, Bruin senior staff.

their willingness to make sacrifices.

They have a friend fighting right beside them, and they would do anything and everything possible to protect him or her. “That's why we do what we do,” he said. “For the guy standing next to us, that's why we fight.”

I've covered a lot of stories for the Daily Bruin, but never have I been so full of emotion as I was at Camp Pendleton.

Throughout the weekend, I took photo after photo, trying to find the one that perfectly summed up the intensity of the training, their willingness to keep going.

Though I consider myself to be a good photographer and a decent storyteller, the feelings of respect and honor that were invoked in me by these young men and women can never be captured by a camera lens. Maybe this photo essay can shed some light on the endurance of these brave cadets.