

Military Education Council Meeting
April 16, 2020 2:00 p.m.
Online conference call via zoom

Present: Tom Teper, Jennifer Bateman, Joe Brown, Anthony Corapi, Jonathan Ebel, Jeffrey Eric Jenkins, Daniel Johnson, Athol Kemball, Joseph Timberlake, Cadet William Smith
Absent: Angela Lyons, Candace Martinez, Tom Costello, Mark Olguin, John Marshall

Prof. Teper started the meeting at 2:00 p.m. He explained that typically at the last meeting of the school year, the MEC will recognize any outgoing Commanding Officers. He directed CAPT Corapi to look in his bag, where he found an engraved plaque from the MEC thanking him for his service to the ROTC programs. A surprised CAPT Corapi thanked the group and stated that he had plans to stay in the area after his retirement.

Prof. Teper explained that in lieu of usual meeting topics and reports, the Commanding Officers would provide an update to the group on how ROTC has been affected by the COVID-19 situation and allow time for questions and discussion.

MAJ Johnson reported that Army ROTC has been appropriately following social distancing with faculty and staff working from home, occasionally coming into the office for equipment or materials needs. There have been no COVID-19 cases among the cadre or students. The unit has continued to stay engaged with students with regular contact. Remote classes have provided an opportunity for guest lecturers, which have been a good addition to the course and promoted engagement with students. For some students who are local, the unit has issued out fitness equipment so they can continue to work out from home.

In usual circumstances, Army ROTC holds some "Day in the Life" events on campus where prospective students can spend time with ROTC cadets and learn about the Army ROTC program. This event has been moved to a zoom session with a panel of current cadets. They invited ROTC scholarship recipients and students who had indicated interest through their High School Counselors. The response to the zoom sessions have been great, and they have expanded to three sessions. Prospective students who may not have ordinarily been able to visit campus have shown interest and they seem very comfortable asking questions to current cadets. The online panel sessions will likely be something they continue once things return to normal operations.

For graduating seniors, Army ROTC is planning a virtual commissioning ceremony. Army is also discussing a national virtual ceremony that would be in addition to whatever the unit does locally. Active duty start dates for newly commissioned officers are being pushed back approximately 45 days.

For Naval ROTC, CAPT Corapi reported that commissioning ceremonies will take place virtually via zoom or something similar. There are fifteen students set to commission and all are on track to graduate. As far as reporting for duty after commission, some, Marines for example, will report as scheduled and then quarantine there before training begins. Many of the summer training opportunities for underclassmen are being cancelled, they will either be made up or waived.

Advisors are maintaining regular communication with students and the students are adapting well. He was impressed with how his class has rose to the challenge of working remotely and gave an example of group presentations. There have been no COVID-19 cases in their unit.

For Air Force ROTC, Lt. Col. Timberlake reported that the online classes are being offered via zoom or a recorded power point. He and the faculty have requested and been receiving feedback from students regarding instruction and have made changes to improve. For Air Force, summer training between Sophomore and Junior years is the only summer training that happens in the program and is an integral part of the ROTC program progression. Summer training will still take place for Air Force ROTC. It is a two week training that takes place in Alabama, with several sessions throughout the summer. Cadets will receive notice well in advance of their scheduled training and will be required to self-quarantine two weeks prior to camp. Upon arrival, and daily throughout the two week training, cadets will have temperature checks and health monitoring.

Regarding staffing, Air Force ROTC has two officers scheduled to rotate out. Lt. Col. Heidbreder, a reservist, is set to rotate out in May, but is hopeful to receive an extension. Capt. Cencer is to leave in September. This will leave Air Force ROTC with one officer in addition to Lt. Col. Timberlake. Air Force is investigating options of hiring contractors to fill understaffed ROTC units, and Lt. Col Timberlake has reminded them that all faculty must receive University approval.

They have been authorized to conduct virtual commissioning ceremonies, but may still do them in person if State and University regulations allow for it. Graduates will report to their new bases when needed, and may have quarantining requirements upon their arrival.

Question and Answer

Prof. Teper asked how the **credit/no credit option** for University courses would impact ROTC students:

Air Force: Official guidance is that it is allowable for students to select this option, though Lt. Col. Timberlake strongly discouraged his students from selecting credit/no credit for courses as impacts to GPA and competitiveness among peers down the road could be unconsidered consequences.

Naval: For courses required by the NROTC program (Naval Science, Calculus, Physics), students cannot *choose* credit/no credit, if the course grading was changed by the instructor, they use C/NC..

Army: Army considers "credit" on a transcript as a 2.0. Scholarship students must maintain a 2.5 GPA to remain in the program. Like, Air Force, they have discouraged their students from selecting this as an option. Also, Army may re-evaluate the credit policy as this has been an issue throughout the country.

Prof. Teper also asked about the **loss of training opportunities cause by loss of contact?** Future repercussions?

CAPT Corapi: It is hard to quantify the loss opportunities, though there certainly has been. However, the situation has provided new opportunities in adaptation to change.

MAJ Johnson: Army plans to add additional training, likely two field training exercises in the Fall.

Prof. Ebel mentioned possibility of utilizing the time in early January between semesters for training opportunities. All said that that was a good possibility. CAPT Corapi mentioned that fleet capacity would be an obstacle for sending all their students on a winter cruise, but there would be some.

Prof. Ebel also mentioned the loss of the team atmosphere that many ROTC students rely on, especially as they come to the end of the program. How are the mindsets/mental health of students? All services

reported working to keep in regular and personal contact to stay engaged with students. Graduating Naval students already know where they are going, so there is less uncertainty for them. MAJ Johnson said they in Army ROTC are immediately calling students on the phone when orders come in.

CAPT Corapi reported that his replacement has been identified as well as the replacement for the XO vacancy. Those nominations will be forwarded to the committee when he receives them.

MAJ Johnson brought up an issue of credit acceptance for "Green to Gold" students. The University's restrictive policy on credit acceptance has deterred students from coming to U of I. CAPT Corapi mentioned that he is on a committee that was addressing this issue and would share where the University is on it. Prof. Kemball also mentioned that in some cases, contacting the department directly with information about a course may be a route to get a course accepted.

Lt. Col. Timberlake brought up the requirement that students inform the Air Force if they are subject to disciplinary action. He wanted to make sure that University personnel knew that they could report to ROTC when there is a disciplinary problem or concern about a student. A meeting has been set up with Justin Brown from Student Conflict for Prof. Teper and the CO's to discuss this issue in May.

At the end of the meeting, CAPT Corapi notified the group that he had just received notification that Tom Costello, one of the committee members, had passed away.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.