

trained in LEADERSHIP

Whether they pursue a career in military or civilian life, cadets in the college's ROTC program are commissioned as leaders.



Almost immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania, a new sense of patriotism swept through the country. City and suburban streets were lined with homes proudly flying the American flag. Radio stations were inundated with requests to hear “God Bless America” and “The Star Spangled Banner.” And firefighters and policemen were rightfully referred to as the new American heroes.

Acts of patriotism also overwhelmed United States military offices. Enlistments increased and Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) programs experienced a surge in enrollment on college campuses. The Canisius College Golden Griffin Battalion was no exception. According to Lieutenant Colonel James Bagwell, chair of military science and commander of the Golden Griffin Battalion, ROTC enrollment at Canisius is currently at 125, up 25 percent from September 2001. The same number of recruits is expected for fall 2003, making it one of the busiest times in the ROTC office, since its inception on campus in 1951.

At that time, the Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps had already been in existence for nearly 35 years. Established with the signing of the National Defense Act in 1916, ROTC was initiated as a national program of instruction and authorized the appointments of cadets as second lieutenants.

It wasn’t until 1951 when the Department of the Army instituted an Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps at Canisius. Initially, the program operated as a chemical unit but by 1953, there arose a need for officers of all branches in the Army and the military science curriculum at Canisius was converted from chemical to general military science.

To date, more than 1,000 lieutenants have received their commissions through the Army ROTC program at Canisius. And much like the recruits of years past, today’s are equally as eager to take advantage of the benefits available by combining a college education with a military career.



Cadet AMELIA CASEY '06

For Cadet **Amelia Casey '06**, an ROTC scholarship at Canisius enabled her to fulfill two dreams: serving in the military and studying to become an athletic trainer. A native of Maryland, Casey is the only child in her family to attend college. “I was lucky enough to get a four-year scholarship to Canisius. If I didn’t attend college, I would have probably enlisted,” says Casey.

Cadet **Matthew Fernandez '04** shares a similar dream. He wants to become a teacher but says he is equally committed to serving his country. “That’s why we join the military, to protect our country,” he says.

Despite the eagerness of ROTC recruits to serve, the cadets at Canisius are not currently deployable. “It is imperative that cadets complete their college education before beginning military service,” says Bagwell. “The Army considers the education of its future leadership to be a priority.” To ensure these future leaders are the right caliber for the job, ROTC seeks cadets who are up to the challenge of balancing academics with military training. “We are looking for a well-rounded person; a scholar, an athlete and a leader,” adds Bagwell.

He explains that interested cadets have up to two years to explore the ROTC program and decide if the Army is right for them. In their junior year, if cadets wish to continue, they contract with the Army and complete the program. Those who

receive four-year scholarships are contracted as freshmen. The scholarship money is awarded on the condition that cadets maintain a 2.5 GPA throughout college and commit to four years of military service following graduation.

Upon graduation, cadets are commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army. It is a leadership position they are trained and educated for at Canisius through a combination of academic studies, and a series of electives in military science, physical training and field training exercises.

“The focus of our military science classes, particularly at the lower levels is confidence building and developing them as leaders,” explains Bagwell. “We hope they will gain something from that whether or not they are going to be in the Army.”

While freshmen and sophomores learn about basic military structure, map reading and chain of command, upperclassmen focus on more specific topics. They study and analyze past wars and learn about the Geneva Convention considerations — something the general public learned a little bit about just prior to the Iraq conflict. Seniors (ranked as M4s in the battalion) also spend a good deal of time instructing and evaluating younger cadets.

Most cadets also participate in leadership labs, which include everything from road marches and rifle marksmanship training to survival swimming. According to



Cadet MATTHEW FERNANDEZ '04



Cadet ROBERT GUAGLIARDI '03

Bagwell, these labs are designed to teach cadets military skills and build their confidence. For instance, the survival swimming lab requires cadets to jump off a 20-foot platform into a pool. The exercise aims to help cadets face their fear of heights and is one that Fernandez remembers well.

"I got up there and said 'wow.' I knew I couldn't back out so I just jumped off into the pool," recalls Fernandez, who adds that the ROTC instructors encourage cadets to face their fears in a constructive way. "It's not like they push us to do it. You can work in stages, starting with the smaller platform. If you can do that one, they encourage you to move to a higher platform and on from there."

Casey recalls a similar leadership lab, in which cadets were required to rappel off a 65-foot tower. "There was a person at the bottom, holding the rope," explains Casey. "It was a big trust issue – whether you trust that person and whether you trust yourself."

Lessons in trust and teamwork are incorporated into virtually all ROTC leadership training and cadets are encouraged by their cadre (military instructors) to help foster the ideals of teamwork, through involvement in Canisius clubs and organizations. Cadet **Robert Guagliardi '03**, a history major, finds time in his busy schedule to sing in the Canisius College Chorale. He is also a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon,

a volunteer with the Boy Scouts and Habitat for Humanity, and a member of the college's lacrosse team. Similarly, Fernandez, a physical education major, has participated in baseball, soccer, cross-country and track at Canisius. His campus involvement has taught him how to balance his academics and social activities and ultimately enhanced his physical activity, another 'top priority' in the military.

Cadets are mandated to participate in physical fitness training (PT) three mornings a week, from "zero-630" to "zero-730." For Casey, who is among the 20 to 25 percent of female ROTC cadets at Canisius, the PT requirement pushes her to work even harder.

"I try to meet the physical fitness standards of the male cadets, which tend to be higher." But Casey says her greatest challenge is not keeping up with her male counterparts. Instead, it's being prepared for anything and everything. "At any time the instructor can put you in charge of the squad," says Casey. "You have to make sure everyone knows the assignment, when and where to show up for lab and what uniform to wear."

It is no coincidence that cadets are given frequent, impromptu leadership assignments, says Bagwell. "We teach them the fundamentals of group dynamics and how to lead a group of about 10 people, which is how many they will normally be charged with in the Army."

When Guagliardi is commissioned as an ordnance officer this spring, his ROTC training will be put to the test. But Guagliardi says he is confident in his ability.

"I think the program has honed my leadership skills so well that I am ready to lead a platoon right now," says Guagliardi, who adds the turning point in his ROTC career came when he attended the National Advanced Leadership Camp (NALC) in Fort Lewis, Washington. ROTC cadets from all over the country attend this demanding, 35-day program the summer following their junior year. They train in such areas as land navigation, ammunition, chemical instruction and leadership.

"The third day of camp I became the executive officer for a company. I was in charge of 100, maybe 200 cadets," he explains. "Everything we did at camp was graded and grades influence placement in the Army after graduation. So it was very important to do well." Bagwell adds, "After cadets return from camp, there is a real, noticeable change. They immediately become the leaders of the battalion."

And while the ROTC program prepares cadets for military leadership positions that include field artillery, finance and military intelligence; it also provides students with the skills, confidence, teamwork and sense of service needed to succeed in all aspects of life.

"You learn all the dimensions of being a leader," says Fernandez, who will be commissioned as a lieutenant in charge of 30 enlisted soldiers next spring. His fellow cadet, Casey, concurs. "I am learning valuable life skills that will impact everything I do."

Whether it is military or civilian work these ROTC cadets ultimately pursue, they are all trained with the leadership skills that exemplify the Jesuit philosophy of academic excellence and service to humanity.

"The ROTC program goes hand in hand with the mission of Canisius," says Bagwell. "Our whole purpose is to prepare and send effective leaders to the Army to serve their country and fellow citizens." ★

**GOLDEN GRIFFIN BATTALION
MARKS 50 YEARS**

The Golden Griffin Battalion at Canisius plans to celebrate 50 years of the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Tony Smaczniak '55 is heading up a committee for the anniversary celebration. By now, all ROTC alumni should have received a survey from the Office of Alumni Relations requesting input for the planning of this event. If you were commissioned through the ROTC program at Canisius and did not receive the survey, or if you are interested in serving on the committee, please contact the Alumni Relations Office at 1- 800-201-4952, or by E-mail at alumni@canisius.edu.