

# Leah Reynolds

Minnesota State University-Mankato . Class of 2024  
Honors Program Portfolio



Hello! I am Leah Reynolds and I am a fourth year Honors Program student at Minnesota State University-Mankato. I am majoring in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services-Therapeutic Recreation emphasis with a minor in Military Science and Leadership and part of the Maverick Battalion Army ROTC. My expected graduation and Commissioning date is Spring 2024.

**Mission Statement:**

Being outdoors is something everyone should enjoy. Within my Army and Civilian careers, I want to share my passion of the outdoors and help people discover something new.

# Honors Program



## MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

### HONORS

#### About the Honors Program


In the Honors Program, each student works to develop three competencies; Research, Leadership, and Intercultural Engagement. The Honors Program strives to encourage students to get out of their comfort zones and make successful contributions to society and in their field of study. Many people involved in the Honors Program are already involved with many things on campus. Students also get many benefits and access to facilities that a regular student would not normally get. Through additional and Honors-level classes, the Honors Program allows students to reflect on their education and be prepared for the future. The Honors Program offers a small community on a large campus setting.

#### Mission Statement of the Honors Program

"To create future leaders, researchers and global citizens by providing high ability and motivated students with exceptional learning opportunities, mentoring relationships, and a community of scholars that foster their development as future leaders in a global society."

[HONORS PROGRAM WEBSITE](#)

#### Synthesis Essay

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#### Competency Portfolio

[INTERCULTURAL ENGAGEMENT](#)[RESEARCH](#)[LEADERSHIP](#)



#### Learning Plans

Learning Plans are completed at the beginning of each academic year and reflect how each student is going to grow each competency area. Every student lists goals or experiences on how they will complete each competency that year.


*Learning Plan for 2020-2021*

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*Learning Plan for 2021-2022*

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*Learning Plan for 2022-2023*

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*Learning Plan for 2023-2024*

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#### "Why Honors" Essay

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#### Resume

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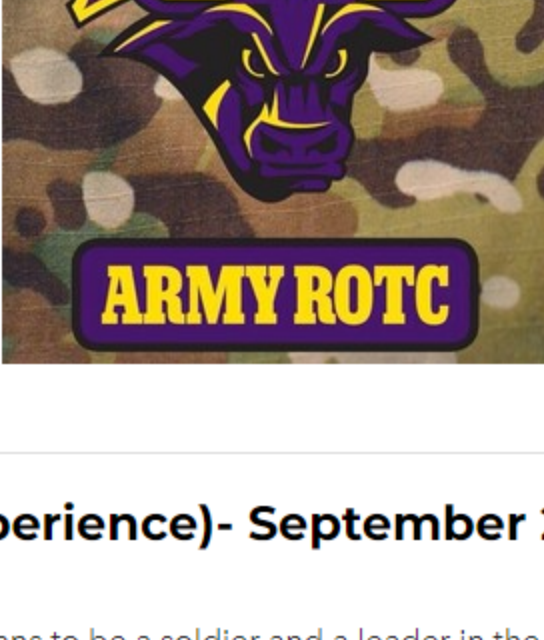
#### Volunteer Hours

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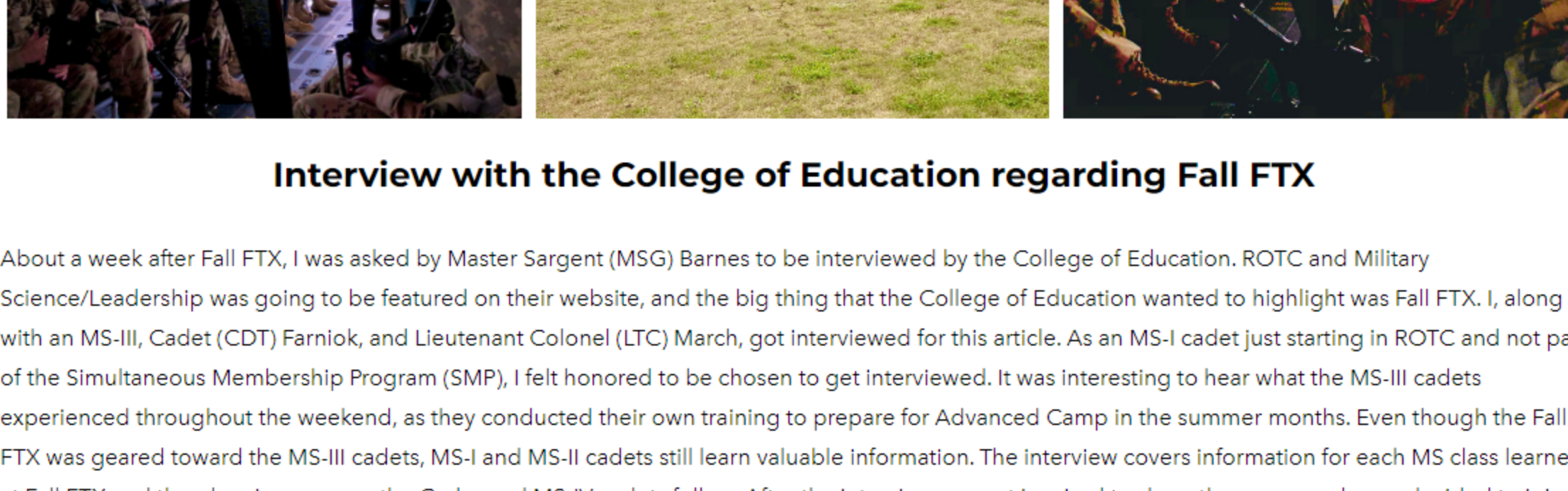


# Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)



## Fall FTX (Field Training Experience)- September 24-27, 2020 at Camp Ripley

As an MS-I, we learned a lot of the basic skill of what it means to be a soldier and a leader in the Army. ROTC is all about leadership and preparing us to be future officers in the Army. At the Fall FTX, we learned everything from Squad Tactics to riding in a Chinook (pictured below) and eating an MRE (Meal Ready to Eat) for the first time. We also participated in an EST (Engagement Skills Trainer), Obstacle Course, Night and Day Land Navigation, and a 6-Mile Ruck March. My MS-I class worked together throughout the weekend and learned from Master Sergeant (MSG) Barnes and the MS-II class, as well as some of the MS-IV cadets. All of the things we learned over the weekend and in early classroom experience paved the way for the rest of our learning throughout the semester. For some of the MS cadets, like myself, this was the first experience we had with the Maverick Battalion and the Army. This was also my first time seeing and staying at a military base. We stayed in the tin huts and marched to all of our training exercises. The weekend was mentally and physically challenging at first but the rest of the cadets were there to help support and cheer you on as you learned. As the weekend came to a close, the bus ride home provided the perfect time to catch up on sleep. I was drained, but I knew ROTC was something I wanted to continue with.



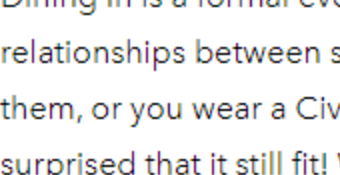
### Interview with the College of Education regarding Fall FTX

About a week after Fall FTX, I was asked by Master Sergeant (MSG) Barnes to be interviewed by the College of Education. ROTC and Military Science Leadership was going to be featured on their website, and the big thing that the College of Education wanted to highlight was Fall FTX. I, along with an MS-III Cadet (CDT) Farnick, and Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) March, got interviewed for this article. As an MS-I cadet just starting in ROTC and not part of the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP), I felt honored to be chosen to get interviewed. It was interesting to hear what the MS-III cadets experienced throughout the weekend as they conducted their own training to prepare for Advanced Camp in the summer months. Even though the Fall FTX was geared toward the MS-III cadets, MS-I and MS-II cadets still learn valuable information. The interview covers information for each MS class learned at Fall FTX and the planning process the Cadre and MS-IV cadets follow. After the interview, we got inspired to share the reasons why we decided to join ROTC and become future officers in the Army. Overall, the interview was a time that I could genuinely reflect on the Fall FTX, the ROTC program, and learn new things from another cadet.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE THE ARTICLE ON THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION WEBSITE!](#)

## Midterm Essay for MSL 101: Introduction to the Army and Critical Thinking

For our midterm essay, we had to write about leadership in the Army and what it means to be an officer in the military. We also had to highlight two important leaders in history and why their leadership styles were effective. Another aspect of our paper was to reflect on three of the ten leadership styles, why they are effective, and how to use them as we become officers. We also reflected on our own leadership styles and three leadership theories and how we will be leading throughout our time in ROTC and as we commission as officers in the US Army. At the mid-semester point, we learned a lot about Army leadership and introductory level tactics. The midterm essay was our time to reflect what we learned and pave the way for future leadership experiences in the Maverick Battalion. MSG Barnes encouraged us to reflect on the type of leader we would like to be as a Commissioned Officer (CO) in the Army in our essay. It is important to know what type of leader we would like to be because we could be leading many soldiers at one time. As cadets, we already are held to a higher standard because of our training experiences.



## Dining In- February 26th, 2021

Dining In is a formal event in the Army. These kinds of events build relationships between soldiers. As you can see, those who have ASUs wear them, or you wear a Civilian dress attire. I wore my Junior Prom Dress. I was surprised that it still fit! We had a formal dinner, made kits above the class above us, and participated in a Grog Bowl Ceremony. A Grog Bowl Ceremony consists of a punch of sorts that has many interesting ingredients. It is chaotic! There were seating arrangements at the Dining In. My table was very lively! We started the night with some pictures and a ceremony. The ceremony had a color guard, prayer, and some cadets recited creeds. Having an event like this helped me learn Drill and Ceremony within the Army. Even during a formal event, the Army is a very structured environment. However, this event was structured but we still had a lot of fun! It was a fun event that allowed us to get together in a COVID environment. This event usually takes place during the Fall Semester, however we had a COVID outbreak during the original date. This event took place at the Kato Ballroom in Mankato, MN. Leaving the event was interesting. I was walking around in 3-inch heels in slushy snow!



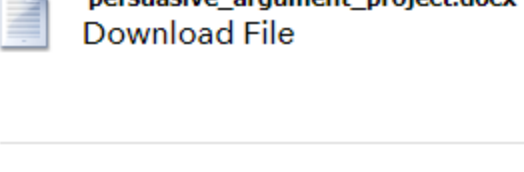
## Cadet of the Month- March 29th, 2021

For Cadet of the Month, one cadet from each class competes for the title. The one who completes the best, gets the title and advances on to Cadet of the Semester. I did not receive the title this time, but it was a great experience as a first-year cadet who has little military experience outside of ROTC. For the competition, we needed to memorize the Army Soldier's Creed, turn in a personal narrative (attached below) and a picture in our OCPs, and participate in a situational interview on the day of the event. Two MS-4 cadets, MSG Mason, and MSG Barnes were the ones who asked us the questions. All four had different topics they asked us about. We were asked about Land Navigation, Current Events, Leadership, and many other topics. At the end of the interview, we were given feedback on how to improve for our next board we will be competing for. This event involved a lot of studying and utilizing outside resources, such as the Ranger Handbook and getting help from other cadets. I learned many things and it was a great review from what I learned in the past year, especially because both of my instructors were interviewing me! It was helpful to receive feedback from older cadets, those I was competing against and those interviewing me! It was also great to hear I may be nominated for more boards in the future!



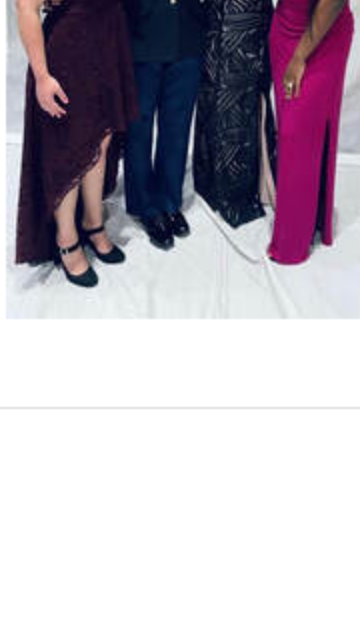
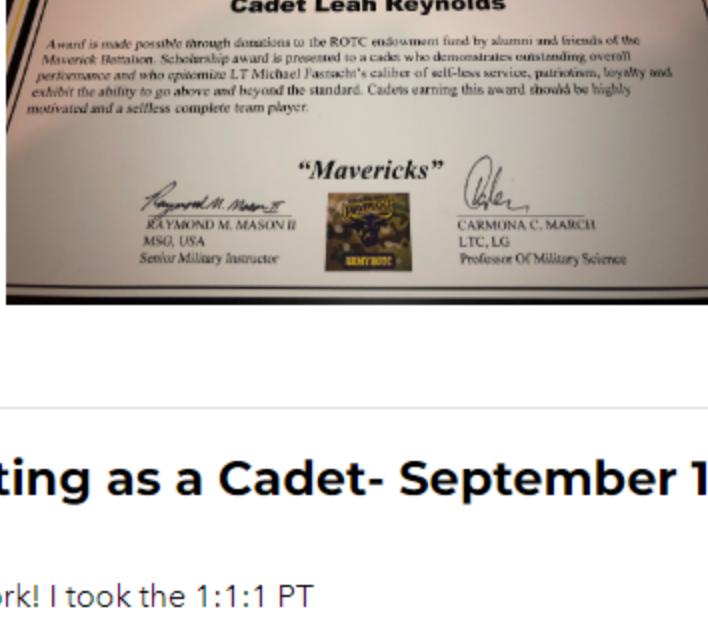
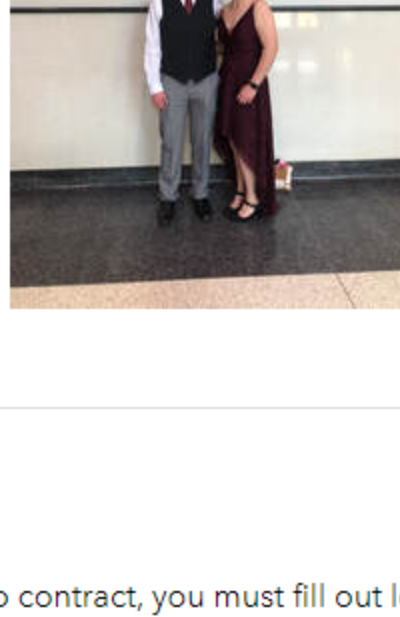
## Final Essay- Persuasive Argument Project

This project was part of our final and overall grade. We researched and persuaded the reader why we should Commission in a certain branch upon graduation. I researched the Signal Corps and Airborne. I go into detail how the Signal Corps and Airborne correlate, as well as give reasons why they would be a good fit for me. Going Active Duty has many opportunities for advancement and allows soldiers to better themselves with many training events! Being able to research the Signal Corps and Airborne was very interesting! I learned about the history of both branches and where they could be stationed. After much contemplation, I hope to join the 82nd Airborne Infantry Unit (like most soldiers...) with the attachment of Signal Officer. The 82nd Airborne is stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. North Carolina is a place I love and my parents want to retire in Tennessee (somewhere in the mountains), so I think being stationed here would keep me close to my family! Having the opportunity to research more branches in the Army allowed me to learn more about myself, and other cadets when I asked what branches they researched!



## Military Ball- May 6th, 2021

Every year, the Maverick Battalion holds a Military Ball at the end of the year before Commissioning of the MS-IV cadets. This is an event to dress nicely, or in ASUs. We have a dinner, guest speaker, and awards ceremony. Awards are given to the top cadets in each class and cadets who demonstrate great leadership within the classroom and battalion. Each cadet is also allowed to bring one guest to this event. I decided to bring a friend that I met at home, who happens to go to the same college as me! During the awards ceremony, I was awarded the Michael Fasnacht Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to a cadet who has "outstanding performance, optimized LT Michael Fasnacht's caliber of self-service, patriotism, loyalty, and exhibit the ability to go above and beyond the standard. Cadets who earn this award are highly motivated and a selfless complete team player." Before the event, MSG Mason mentioned that a few people in the MS-I class would be getting awards, even though there are not many available for our class. I was very happy to receive this scholarship, as I didn't know I would be getting it! This amazing scholarship helps me and my education in many ways! Below are pictures of me and some friends and my guest at the event!



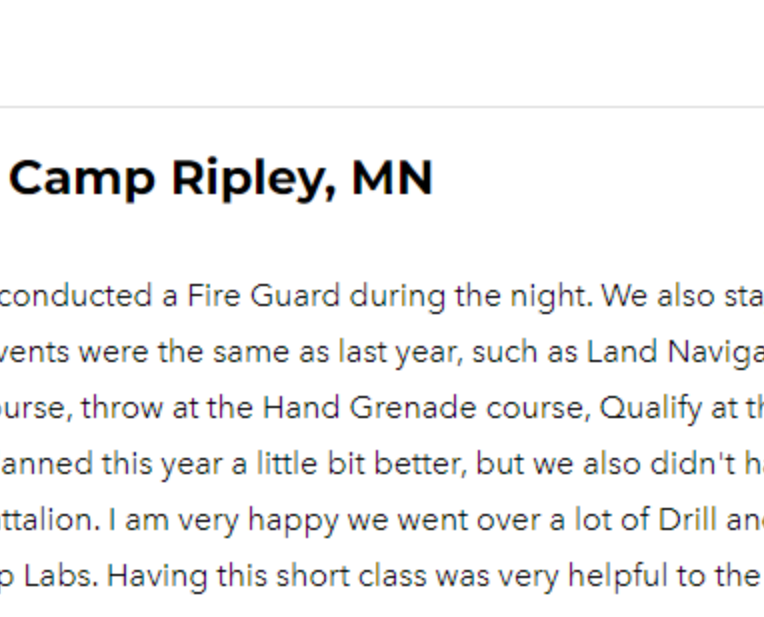
## Contracting as a Cadet- September 17th, 2021

In order to contract, you must fill out lots of paperwork! I took the 1:1:1 PT Test (1 minute Sit-Ups, 1 minute Push-Ups, 1 mile run) on Wednesday. By Friday, I was the first cadet of the semester to contract and I was LTC's first person to contract since I was a place I love and my parents want to retire in Tennessee (somewhere in the mountains), so I think being stationed here would keep me close to my family! Having the opportunity to research more branches in the Army allowed me to learn more about myself, and other cadets when I asked what branches they researched!



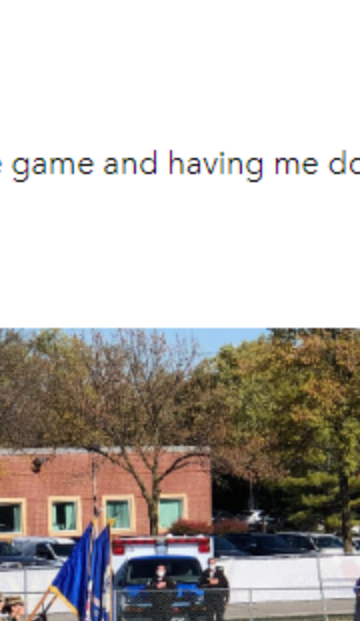
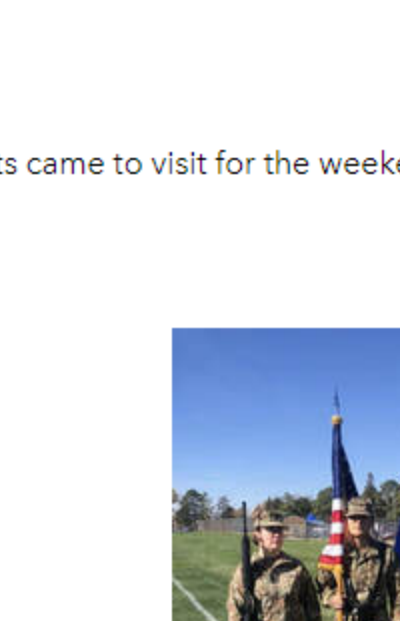
## Fun Fact: I have done Color Guard at a home Football Game!

Saturday, September 18th, 2021 -- MNSU vs. Bemidji State



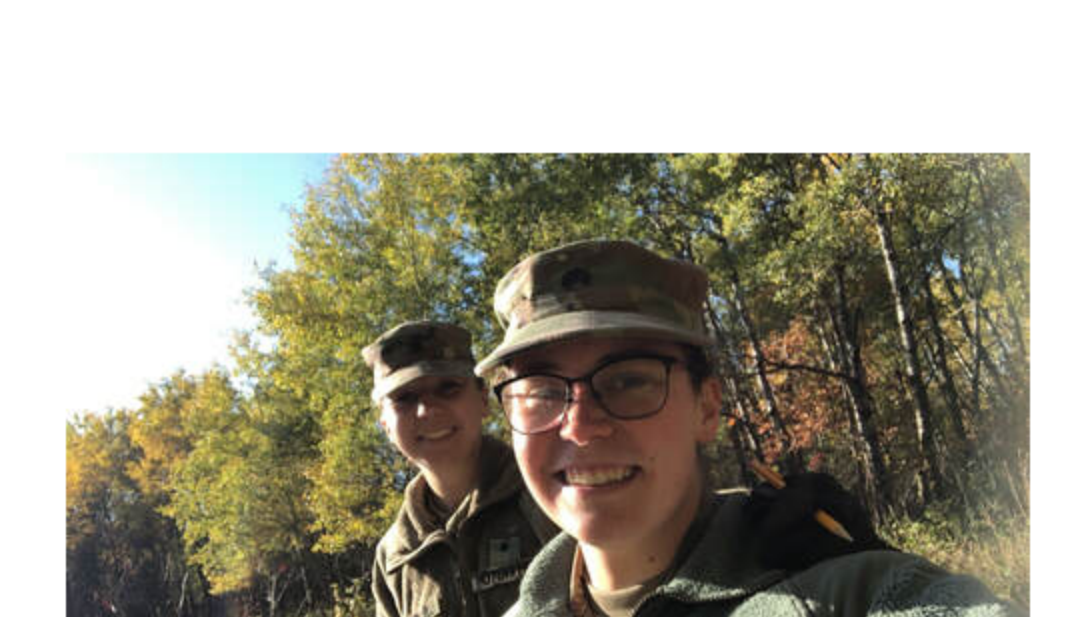
## Fall FTX- September 23-26, 2021- Camp Ripley, MN

This is my second Fall FTX with the Battalion! It was a very exciting weekend. This year, we conducted a Fire Guard during the night. We also stayed in the Barracks and conducted this Fall FTX with St. John's University and their Battalion. Some events were the same as last year, such as Land Navigation, the Obstacle Course, and learning new things. We also got to participate in the Leadership Course, throw at the Hand Grenade course, Qualify at the Range on M-4, and go on the Repel Tower. This Fall FTX had a lot of down time. We could have planned this year a little bit better, but we also didn't have enough Cadre to conduct our own Fall FTX this year which is why we went with another Battalion. I am very happy we were over a lot of Drill and Ceremony skills. This is something that isn't covered a lot during class or during Leadership Labs. Having this short class was very helpful to the entire Battalion. It was also very fun to learn from the new MS-I cadets and see how much the classes above me have grown in their leadership skills. I wish we would have conducted a Ruck March at some point during the weekend, as I feel it is necessary to conduct an event like this at an FTX. There were also many things that could have been planned to help the weekend go smoother.



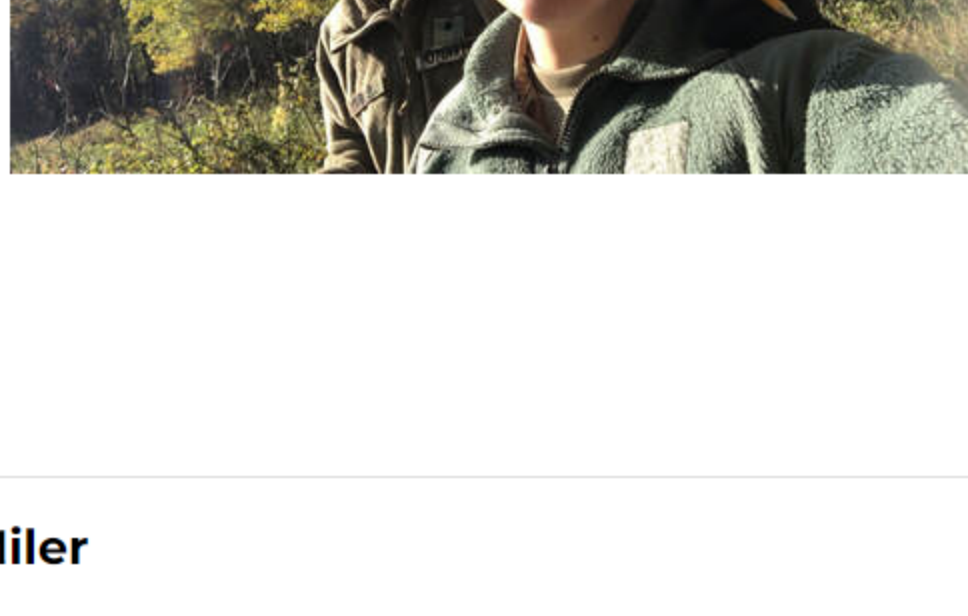
## Family Weekend 2021 Color Guard

My parents came to visit for the weekend and they watched the football game live! They had a lot of fun watching the game and having me do Color Guard!



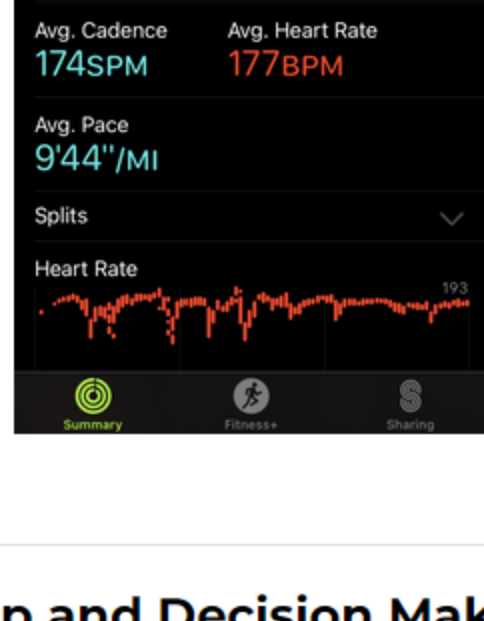
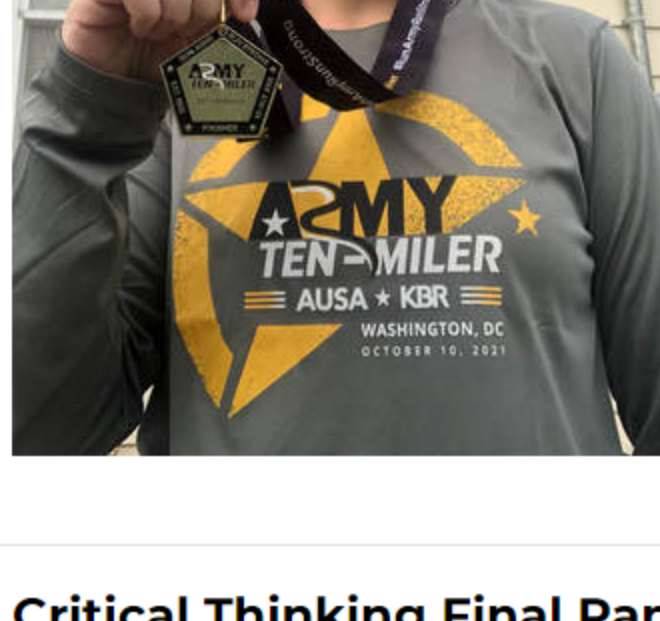
## Ranger Challenge Logistics Detail/ October 15-16th, 2021/ Camp Ripley, MN

This year, I decided to participate in the Army 10-Miler, so competing with the Ranger Challenge was something I will be doing next school year. However, the Army 10-Miler was moved to a virtual event. As Physical Training one morning, the team captain of the Ranger Challenge 9-Man team was looking for volunteers to help with a detail for the weekend. Without knowing what the detail consisted of or having a packing list, I decided to take off work and volunteer. My roommate and I were the two cadets who volunteered. We assisted the Cadre with anything they needed on Friday night. On Saturday, the competition started. Our battalion's Cadre (and the Cadets who volunteered for the detail) was in charge of grading the One-Rope Bridge lane. It was very cool to see every team complete the task at hand, especially our team. The fastest time to complete this task was 8 minutes and 1 second and it was done by University of North Dakota. It was very cold throughout the day, so it made it not exciting. However, it was very valuable to spend the day with the Cadre and gain insight of what the Ranger Challenge is about. I was even convinced by Captain Fuller to participate in the Ranger Challenge next year! I earned OML (Order of Merit List) points and gained confidence by doing this event.



## Army 10-Miler

The Army ROTC/Maverick Battalion sent an 8-person team to Washington D.C. to run 10 miles each at the Pentagon's Well, that was the original plan. Barely a week and a half before, the Army 10-miler was switched to a virtual event. No plane tickets were purchased, so we were forced to run 10 miles at home. We were going to plan a day for all of us to run the 10 miles in Mankato, but that did not happen either. So, each of us individually had to run the 10 miles on our own during Thanksgiving break.



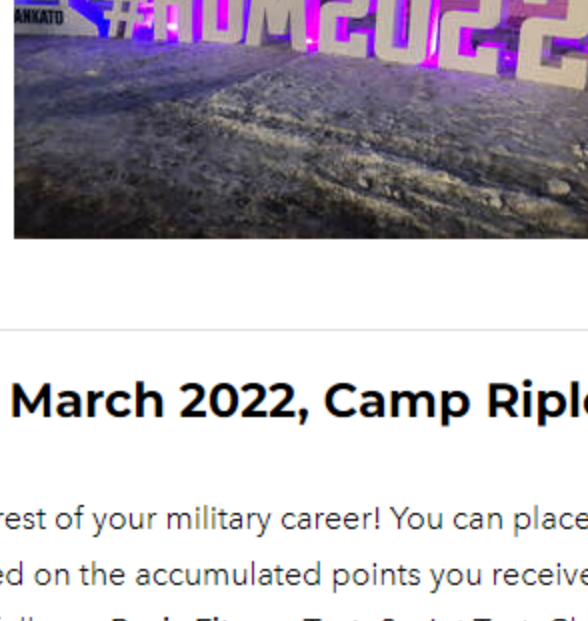
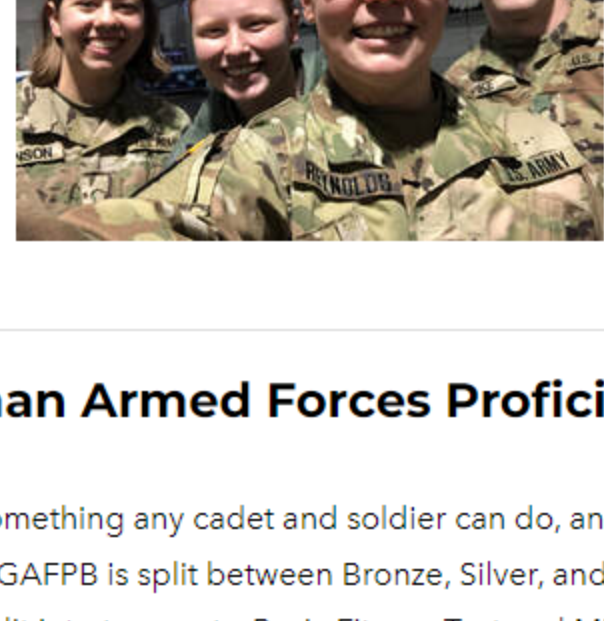
## Critical Thinking Final Paper- MSL 202: Leadership and Decision Making

For our first MSL final of the year, we had to write a 3-5 page paper on Critical Thinking and reflect on how ROTC has been conducted over the course of the semester. For the paper, I reflected on my time volunteering for the Ranger Challenge at Camp Ripley back in October. I watched multiple teams try and complete the one-rope bridge. Few teams successfully completed the task in the time limit provided, our own Maverick Battalion was not one of those teams. I reflected how our team could have done better, but this was only one task for them throughout the day. I also talked about Critical Thinking and how that helps leaders, not just those in the Army. This reflection included a short personal definition and how a leader can effectively critical think in a risky situation. In my MSL classes, we always touch base on our basic Army tactics, but each semester there seems to be an underlying theme for the class to help build our leadership as future officers. Like most college students, I did complete this paper in one day a week before the deadline so I didn't have homework over a holiday break. During the semester, we also had a group project for an Army Briefing, CDT Sward and I briefed an MSU football game vs. Winona State. I have attached the powerpoint below.



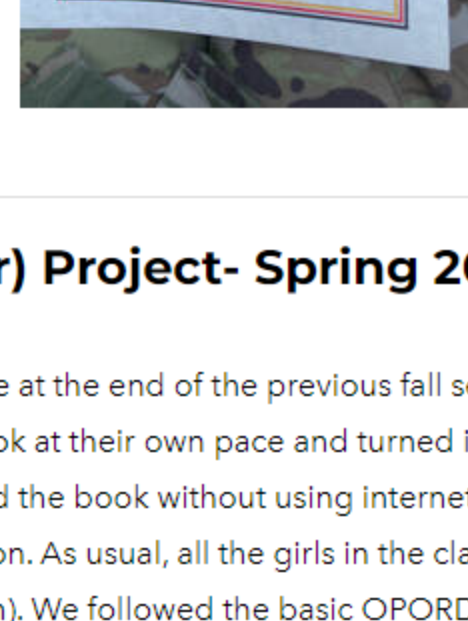
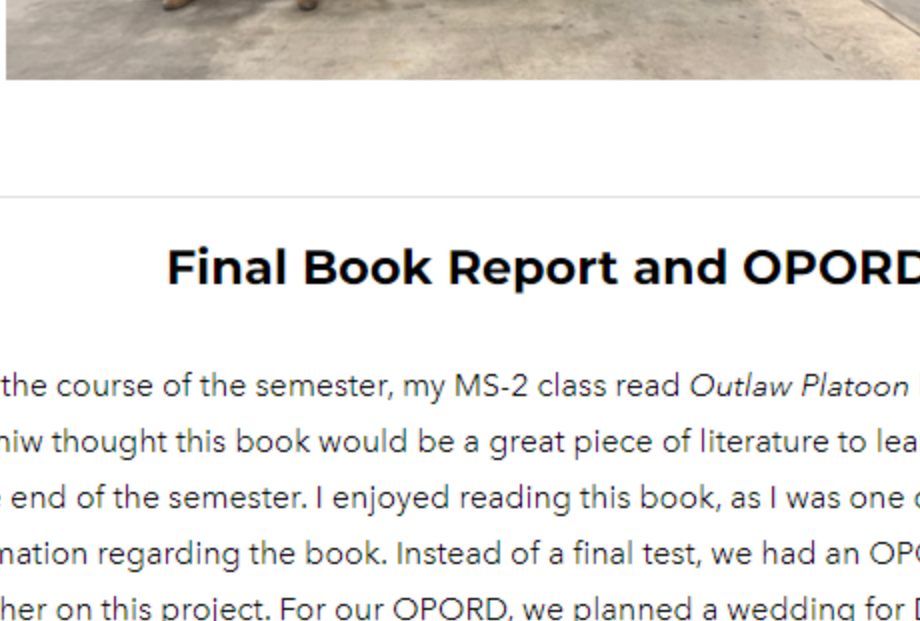
## Hockey Day Minnesota- Color Guard Pictures!

I received extra credit for Program Planning (RPLS 376) for volunteering for Hockey Day Minnesota! Color Guard is a way to volunteer within Army ROTC.



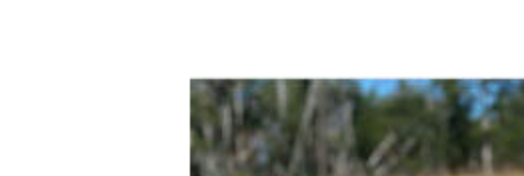
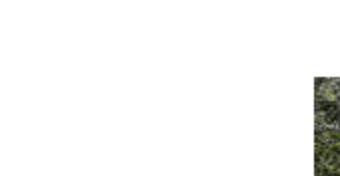
## German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge (GAFPB)- March 2022, Camp Ripley, MN

The GAFPB is something any cadet and soldier can do, and this award will stay with you for the rest of your military career! You can place the badge on your ASUs! The GAFPB is split between Bronze, Silver, and Gold. You will get a specific one based on the accumulated points you receive for each event. The GAFPB is split into two parts, Basic Fitness Test and Military Training Part. The events are as follows: Basic Fitness Test: Sprint Test, Chin-Up Test, 1,000-Meter Run; Military Training Part: 100-Meter swim in uniform (then undress in water), First Aid Test, NBC/MOPP Test, Pistol Qualification, and Road March. I was the only female in the battalion to compete for the GAFPB this year and I received Bronze!



## Final Book Report and OPORD (Operation Order) Project- Spring 2022

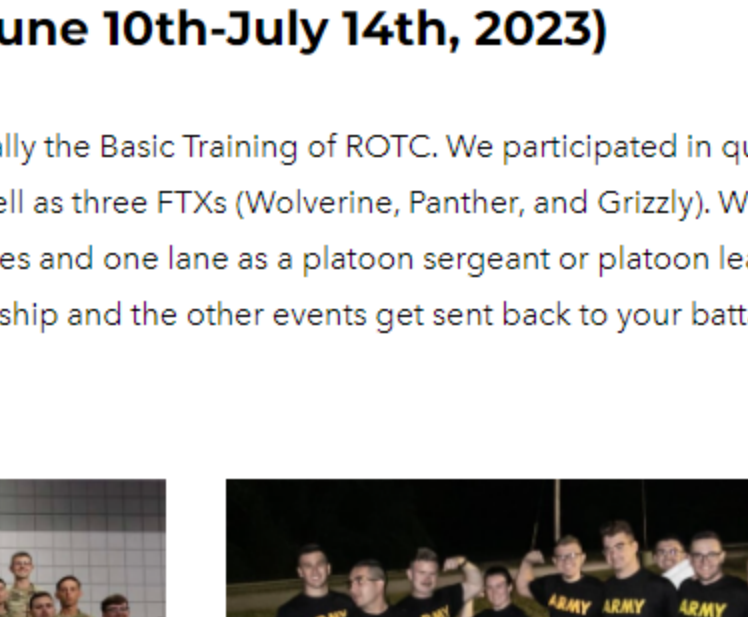
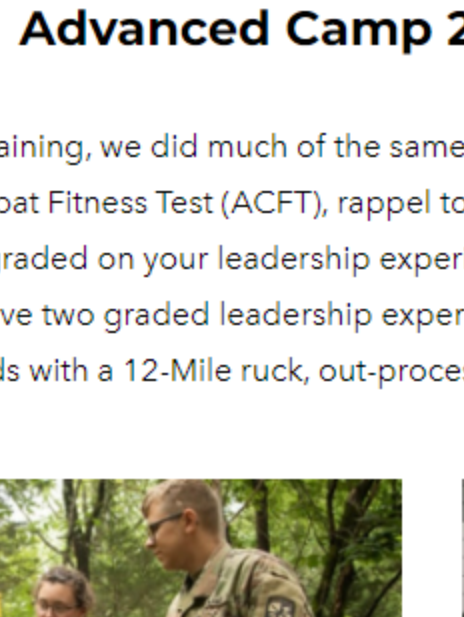
Over the course of the semester, my MS-2 class read Outlaw Platoon by Sean Pennell. We took a vote at the end of the previous final semester, however CPT Steiner thought this book would be a great piece of literature to learn from. Everyone read the book at their own pace and turned in a final book report at the end of the semester. I enjoyed reading this book, as I was one of the few cadets who fully read the book without using internet sources to receive information regarding the book. Instead of a final test, we had an OPORD group project/presentation. As usual, all the girls in the class decided to work together on this project. For our OPORD, we planned a wedding for Daphne and Simon (Bridgerton). We followed the basic OPORD template to complete our presentation as well as complete a sand table and plan basic aspects of the wedding. I enjoyed this project as I also took a Program Planning class this semester as part of my major curriculum. It was interesting to see how aspects of my major can fit into certain parts of the Army. Both final projects are provided below.



## Fall FTX (September 9-12th, 2022)- Camp Ripley, MN

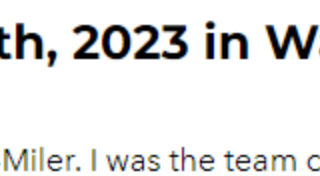
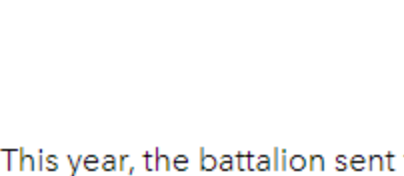
This Fall FTX was a whirlwind of events! This was the first big event for MS-3 cadets in the program. During this FTX and until the midpoint of the semester, I was serving as Company Commander. I was in charge of ensuring everyone was where they needed to be. Some things we participated in were qualifying an M-4, day and night Land Navigation, b/wacings, and paint ball.

Outside of FTX, my role of Company Commander had lots of duties. I attended Cadet CUB (Commander Update Briefings), found volunteers for events, pushed out important information, and maintained accountability. This was my first position in our quarterly leadership rotations throughout the academic year.



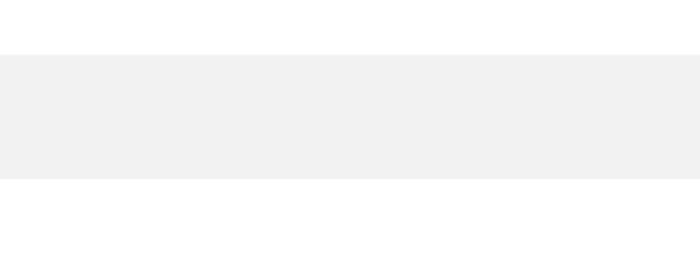
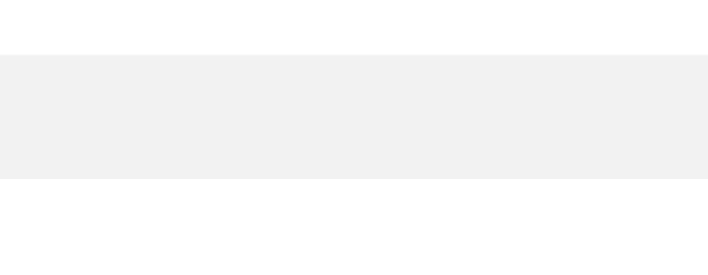
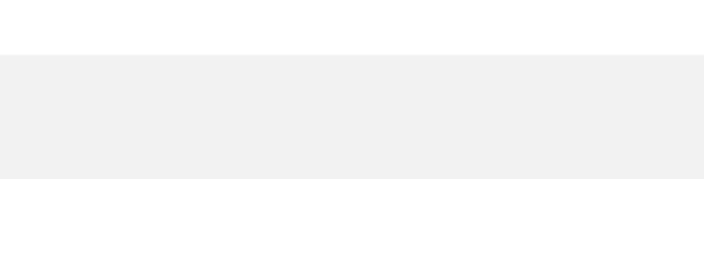
## Spring 2023 Semester

During the semester, I helped lead PT sessions. I have attached those documents below. I also briefed a book report about Once an Eagle.



## Advanced Camp 2023- 3rd Regiment (June 10th-July 14th, 2023)

During this 35-day training, we did much of the same events as Basic Training. It is essentially the Basic Training of ROTC. We participated in qualifying our rifles, the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), rappel tower, obstacle course and FLRC, as well as three FTXs (Wolverine, Panther, and Grizzly). While you are in the field, you are graded on your leadership experiences. You have two squad leader lanes and one lane as a platoon sergeant or platoon leader. In garrison, you only have two graded leadership experiences. All of your scores from leadership and the other events get sent back to your battalion. Advanced Camp ends with a 12-Mile ruck, out-processing, Family Day, and graduation.



## Army 10-Miler- October 6-9th, 2023 in Washington DC

This year, the battalion sent five people to the Washington DC to run the Army 10-Miler. I was the team captain! As captain, I made a training plan, lead practices, and ensured the team finished the race. I added my training plan and pictures below. We had about half a day to explore Washington DC!





# About Me

After graduating high school in Osseo, WI, I knew I wanted to go back to my home state (a.k.a Minnesota) to continue my education. After a lot of research on colleges, MSU-Mankato was the right fit for me, as they are the only college in Minnesota accredited in my major. Starting college in a pandemic and be a first-generation student has not been easy. As a Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services-Therapeutic Recreation Emphasis, I am very interested in the outdoors and the medical field. After college, I will be commissioning as an officer in the US Army Reserves, and I hope to branch Engineers then transfer into Civil Affairs. I will also be continuing to get my master's degree while I am in the Army. Outside of the Army, my dream job is to work at a VA Hospital and live in Pensacola, FL or somewhere I can have a palm tree in my yard. I am involved with many things on-campus and off-campus. I am part of TRIO Student Support Services, Honors Program, and Maverick Battalion ROTC. I also serve on the RPLS Advisory Board. I have served on this board for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. I also work at the Highland Pool on campus as well as at Laurels Edge/Peak as a Therapeutic Recreation Assistant. I am also a mentor with the Brother/Sister Program at the Mankato Family YMCA. Being in the Honors Program has allowed me to reflect on past experiences and become a well-rounded student as I continue through college. When I have the time, I love to explore the outdoors, play acoustic/electric guitar and ukulele, read new books, try new coffee shops, run, rock climb, play games, and go camping with my family.

