

BEARKAT BATTALION

NEWSLETTER



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2024 Fall Commissioning Ceremony Highlights
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MS4s had the opportunity to meet MG Anthony McQueen!
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WELCOME BACK, BEARKAT BATTALION!

As we step into the Spring 2025 semester, we are excited to bring you updates and highlights from the Bearkat Battalion. Over the winter break and in December and January, our program celebrated significant milestones, including the Fall 2024 Awards and Branching Ceremonies, and the commissioning of five Cadets as Second Lieutenants. These moments marked the culmination of months of dedication and hard work by our Cadets and the incredible support of our community.

Now, as the semester begins, our MSIV Cadets are stepping into their leadership roles with focus and determination, while MSIII Cadets intensify their training in preparation for Advanced Camp this summer. Across the board, our Cadets are gearing up for a semester filled with opportunities to grow and lead.

We look forward to showcasing their achievements and the teamwork, resilience, and leadership that define the Bearkat Battalion. Thank you for your continued support as we strive to make this semester one for the books.

Eat 'Em Up Kats!

PMS Insights and Initiatives

SHSU Faculty, ROTC Alumni, Local Community Supporters, and Families,

As we begin the Spring 2025 semester, I am thrilled to reflect on the incredible milestones and achievements of the Bearkat Battalion. From celebrating our Cadets at the Fall 2024 Awards Ceremony to honoring their commitment during the Branching Ceremony, our program continues to embody excellence, leadership, and service.

In December, we proudly commissioned five Cadets as Second Lieutenants, while 53 Cadets earned 130 individual awards, with 37 receiving scholarships totaling \$14,000. These accomplishments reflect the dedication and perseverance of our Cadets, alongside the unwavering support of their families, friends, and community.

This semester, our MSIV Cadets are preparing for commissioning, our MSIII Cadets are intensifying their training for Advanced Camp, and our new Cadets are embracing their journey. These efforts set the stage for an inspiring semester of growth and success.

As we move forward, I offer advice to guide our Cadets:

- **Embrace the Grind:** Hard work and discipline lay the foundation for success. Attack each day with purpose.
- **Lead by Example:** Leadership is about setting the standard in all you do, inspiring others through your actions.
- **Stay Adaptable:** Challenges will come—resilience and flexibility are key to overcoming them.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Balance ROTC, academics, and personal wellness to perform at your best.
- **Foster Teamwork:** Success is never achieved alone. Build strong relationships and recognize the value of your team.
- **Plan with the Future in Mind:** Whether you're preparing for Advanced Camp, commissioning, or new responsibilities, set clear goals for yourself and work toward them with focus and determination.
- **Cherish the Journey:** Every training session, challenge, and accomplishment is a step in your journey to becoming a leader. Take pride in your progress and remain motivated by the opportunities ahead.

To our Cadets and supporters: I could not be more excited to begin this semester with such a talented and motivated group. Your hard work and dedication inspire us all, and I am confident we will achieve great things together. Thank you for your support, which is vital to our program's success and the development of future leaders. Let's make this semester one to remember!

Discipline Starts Here,
LTC Roger Hafford, Professor of Military Science

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

New Graduates and Second Lieutenants



On Saturday, 14 December 2025, five Cadets graduated and commissioned as second lieutenants. These brave men and women dedicated their time to ROTC for over four years and will now serve this country with honor. The following page is dedicated to honoring the achievements of these Cadets.



COMMISSIONED OFFICERS



2LT Joseph Bozic
Branch - Chemical Corps
Degree - Criminal Justice



2LT Haley Davee
Branch - Medical Services Corps
Degree - Psychology



2LT Blaine Nowak
Branch - Chemical Corps
Degree - Psychology

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS



2LT Hunter Mills
Branch - Field Artillery
Degree - Criminal Justice



2LT Rashaad Hammond
Branch - Chemical Corps
Degree - Philosophy



Congratulations

WINTER PT CHALLENGE

Bearkat Battalion's Winter Break Workout Challenge: Keeping Cadets Strong and Motivated



The Bearkat Battalion's Cadets took no breaks during winter break as they pushed through an intense workout challenge spanning 35 days between the fall and spring semesters. Designed to motivate and inspire physical readiness, the challenge encouraged Cadets to log as many miles or hours at the gym as possible, with tiered goals to recognize outstanding performance.

Cadets competed in two categories: Running and Strength Training, with tiers of achievement established to push them toward higher performance.

Despite unpredictable Texas winter weather, the results were nothing short of impressive.

The challenge demonstrated the Bearkat Battalion's commitment to physical fitness and discipline. Whether braving the cold for a run or putting in the hours at the gym, these Cadets proved their dedication to maintaining high standards. Their efforts serve as a reminder that success stems from consistency and determination, even when others might take a break.

Congratulations to all the Cadets who participated and pushed themselves during the break. Your hard work is recognized, appreciated, and will set the tone for success in the spring semester!

Running Tiers

- Gold: 70 miles
- Silver: 60 miles
- Bronze: 50 miles

Strength Tiers

- Gold: 45 hours
- Silver: 40 hours
- Bronze: 35 hours

Running Tier Achievements

Gold (70+ miles)

- Hagui Cardona
- Isaac Siekas
- Tanner Stone
- James Cooke
- Alex Cannon

Silver (60-69 miles)

- Diego Paez
- Kaleb Brown
- Lauren Silva
- Karli McMillin

Bronze (50-59 miles)

- Thelma Gurrola
- Michael Huff
- Jacob Clement
- Samantha Gaus-Schmidt

Most Miles Ran: Alex Cannon (101.85 miles)

Strength Tier Achievements

Gold (45+ hours)

- Michael Kilgore
- Tanner Stone

Silver (40-44 hours)

- Alex Cannon

Bronze (35-39 hours)

- Kaleb Brown

Most Hours in the Gym: Michael Kilgore (45 hours, 35 mins)

Discipline Starts Here!

CADET SPOTLIGHT

The Importance of Rest and Recharging: Cadet Winter Break Highlights

As we begin a new semester, it's important to reflect on the value of rest and how it plays a critical role in the success of our Cadets. Over the winter break, not only did our Cadets work hard to stay on top of their training goals, but they also took well-deserved time off to recharge, bond with their loved ones, and experience new adventures. This balance of discipline and downtime is vital for maintaining morale, well-being, and motivation as they take on the challenges of the semester ahead.

For CDT Kilgore and CDT Siekas, the break offered a chance to strengthen their bond through a thrilling first-time experience: skydiving in Houston, TX! The adventure was an unforgettable way for these peers to push their limits and create lasting memories together.

CDT Clement also made the most of his break, traveling with his wife and her family to Colorado Springs. During the trip, he connected with 1LT Nathan Frye, a proud Bearkat Battalion alumnus. 1LT Frye, currently serving in the EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) career field, gave CDT Clement an up-close look at the profession by introducing him to EOD gear and ordnance. To make the visit even more impactful, the EOD team challenged CDT Clement with a bomb suit assessment—a hands-on task that provided him with a glimpse into the unique demands of the field. The experience was not only educational but also a testament to the camaraderie shared within the Bearkat Battalion family.

CDT Ortega took advantage of his winter break to travel to Jalisco, Mexico, where he reconnected with family and revisited the place where he grew up. He spent quality time with loved ones, participated in local traditions, and created cherished memories. Some of the highlights of his trip included attending the local fair, visiting his hometown church, and celebrating Christmas with his family. This time spent embracing his roots and reconnecting with his heritage was invaluable for his personal growth and well-being.

These moments of relaxation, adventure, and connection remind us that quality time away from rigorous training is essential for the holistic development of our Cadets. As they return from break recharged and ready to tackle the semester, the lessons learned and memories made during their time off will serve as motivation to push their limits even further.



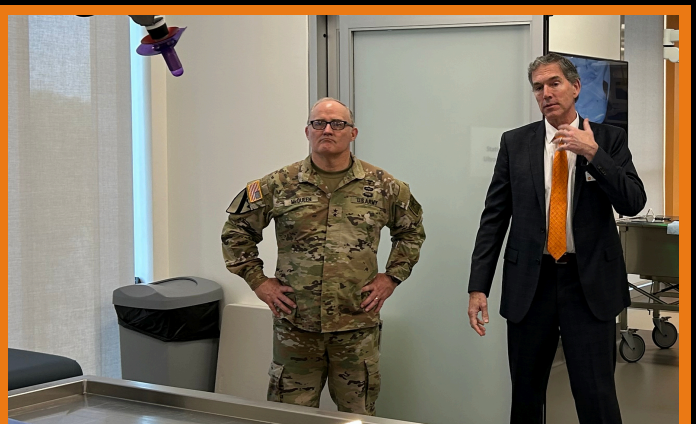
MAJOR GENERAL MCQUEEN

Visiting the MS4s



Major General McQueen visited Sam Houston State University to reconnect with the campus where he began his journey. During his visit, he toured the anatomy facility and clinical operating room, led by Dr. Mario Loomis, M.D., Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Course Director for Surgery. He also gained insights into the capabilities of SHSU College of Osteopathic Medicine (SHSU-COM) and participated in a Q&A session.

The day concluded with a seminar for the MS4 class, where Major General McQueen provided invaluable guidance to prepare them for their upcoming military officer careers. The seminar focused on leadership values and life after graduation, offering a meaningful opportunity for our senior Cadets as they prepare to take the next step in their journey.



MAJOR GENERAL MCQUEEN

Biography



Major General McQueen, a native Texan, graduated from Sam Houston State University as an ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate in 1991.

He most recently served as the Commanding General of the Medical Research & Development Command and Fort Detrick, Maryland. Throughout his distinguished career, he has commanded at every level, from company to brigade. Major General McQueen has served as the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, for the United States Army Medical Command and was detailed to Operation Warp Speed from May 2020 to May 2021. His previous commands include Blanchfield Army Community Hospital and United States Army Medical Activity at Fort Campbell, Kentucky (June 2017 to June 2019), as well as the 402nd Army Field Support Brigade at Fort Shafter, Hawaii (August 2015 to June 2017).

He has also completed two Operation Iraqi Freedom combat tours and two tours in the Republic of Korea. His assignments include serving with the 2nd Infantry Division, the 25th Infantry Division, the 4th Infantry Division, and the 1st Cavalry Division. Major General McQueen has held key leadership roles within the Medical Brigade, Brigade Combat Team levels, Division Staff, U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence, and the Office of the Surgeon General.

Major General McQueen is a graduate of the Army Medical Department Officer Basic Course, the Combined Logistics Officer Advanced Course, the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the National War College. He holds a Master of Science in National Security Strategy and a Master of Arts in Health Services Management.

"Thank you, Major General McQueen, for visiting and sharing your insights with the MS4 class as they prepare for their careers as Army officers. Your guidance and leadership are invaluable to the next generation of military leaders."

Fall 2024 Awards Ceremony



CDT CALHOUN ♦ CDT DAVIS
CDT PROWN
TOP CADET AWARDS



CADET WALKER CALHOUN
BATTALION CSM EXCELLENCE AWARD



CADET CALEB RODAS
BATTALION COMMANDER EXCELLENCE AWARD



CDT SIEKAS ♦ CDT EVANS
CDT MCGINLEY ♦ CDT WERTS
SMSI LEADERSHIP AWARDS



CDT GAUS-SCHMIDT ♦ CDT PIRO
CDT PENTON
TOP VOLUNTEER AWARDS

On December 5, 2024, the Bearkat Battalion gathered to celebrate the Fall 2024 Awards Ceremony, marking the culmination of a successful semester. This event served as a meaningful opportunity to honor the hard work, dedication, and achievements of our Cadets as we transitioned into the holiday season and prepared for the upcoming spring semester.



CADET TANNER STONE
TOP MENTORSHIP AWARD



CDT SAMANTHA GAUS-SCHMIDT &
CDT ELIZABETH WERTS
PROGRAM DEDICATION AWARDS

This year, 53 Cadets were recognized with a total of 130 individual awards, including scholarships awarded to 37 Cadets, totaling \$14,000. These honors reflect the remarkable talent, leadership, and commitment demonstrated by our Cadets throughout the semester.



CDT ELIZABETH WERTS
CPT ROWDY INMAN SCHOLARSHIP
Winner



CDT MCMILLIN & CDT WHITNER
TACTICAL PROFICIENCY AWARDS

The ceremony was a fitting tribute to the accomplishments of the semester and an inspiring way to set the stage for even greater success in the spring. Congratulations to all our Cadets for their outstanding efforts and dedication!



CDT SAMANTHA GAUS-SCHMIDT
CPT ROWDY INMAN SCHOLARSHIP
Runner-Up

Excellence is not a destination—it's a journey fueled by hard work, dedication, and the drive to lead. Keep pushing for excellence each day, Cadets—the best is yet to come!

Branching Ceremony Highlights

On December 6, 2025, the Bearkat Battalion celebrated an exciting milestone as our Cadets received their branches—a defining moment in their journey to becoming Army Officers. The results were truly remarkable and reflect the dedication and hard work of our Cadets.

An impressive 50% of Active Duty Cadets received their first branch choice, and an outstanding 90% were assigned a branch within their top four preferences. Additionally, 83.3% of Cadets pursuing Active Duty secured their component of choice, a testament to their commitment and performance.

We also proudly recognized Cadets branching into the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, as well as Cadet Haley Davee, who was awarded an Education Delay to continue her academic pursuits. These accomplishments highlight the diversity of opportunities our Cadets are embracing as they step into their roles as leaders.

To the families and friends who have supported our Cadets every step of the way—your encouragement and sacrifices have been vital to their success, and we are grateful for all you’ve done to help them reach this milestone.

To our Cadets: your dedication, perseverance, and teamwork continue to inspire us all. As you embark on this next chapter of service and leadership, know that your future is bright, and the U.S. Army is gaining exceptional leaders. You carry with you the strength and pride of the Bearkat Battalion, and we eagerly anticipate the incredible achievements that lie ahead.

Congratulations to all our newly branched Cadets—we are so proud of you! Eat ‘Em Up Kats!



Branching Ceremony Highlights



HAGUI F. CARDONASANCHEZ
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: QUARTERMASTER CORPS



JACOB C. CLEMENT
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: EXPLOSIVE ORDINANCE DISPOSAL



JAMES B. COOKE
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: ENGINEER CORPS



THELMA L. GURROLA
COMPO: ARMY RESERVES
BRANCH: MILITARY INTELLIGENCE



MICHAEL J. HUFF
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: TRANSPORTATION CORPS



MICHAEL T. KILGORE
COMPO: NATIONAL GUARD
BRANCH: SIGNAL CORPS

KATELYN A. NITSCHKE
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: SIGNAL CORPS



WILLIAM D. RATLIFF
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: EXPLOSIVE ORDINANCE DISPOSAL



OLIVIA J. SANCHEZ
COMPO: ARMY RESERVES
BRANCH: MILITARY INTELLIGENCE



ISAAC J. SIEKAS
COMPO: NATIONAL GUARD
BRANCH: FINANCE CORPS



TANNER J. STONE
COMPO: NATIONAL GUARD
BRANCH: FIELD ARTILLERY



JOHN W. WISNEWSKI
COMPO: ACTIVE DUTY
BRANCH: INFANTRY



SPRING 2025 - CADET CHAIN OF COMMAND

THE 'BIG' THREE



CADET JACOB CLEMENT
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



CADET WILLIAM RATLIFF
BATTALION COMMANDER - RANGER CHALLENGE OIC



CADET KATELYN NITSCHÉ
COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR - COLOR GUARD OIC

SUPPORT STAFF



CADET MICHAEL KILGORE
S1 OIC - MENTORSHIP OIC



CADET JOSHUA VOGT
S2 OIC



CADET HAGUI CARDONASANCHEZ
S4 OIC



CADET ERIN JUAREZ
S6 OIC



CADET ISAAC SIEKAS
S8 OIC - AS4 - RING CEREMONY OIC

TRAINING STAFF



CADET TANNER STONE
S3 OIC - MPFTX OIC



CADET MICHAEL HUFF
AS3 - BRM - LAND NAV



CADET KARLI MCMILLIN
AS3 - SCHUDER'S CHALLENGE OIC



CADET MADISON EVANS
AS3 - COMMENCEMENTS OIC



CADET KALEB BROWN
RANGER COMPANY OIC - BATAAN DEATH MARCH OIC

COMPANY COMMANDERS



CADET JOHN WISNEWSKI
A CO. COMMANDER



CADET OLIVIA SANCHEZ
B CO. COMMANDER

SPECIALTY PROGRAMS



CADET CATHERINE BENTON
ACE OIC



CADET THELMA GUROLLA
PAO OIC - NEWSLETTER OIC



CADET JAMES COOKE
HISTORIAN - RUNNING CLUB OIC



CADET ALEX CANNON
PT OIC



CADET DIEGO PAEZ
SCABBARD AND BLADE OIC



CADET MIA CHAPA
COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OIC



CADET SAMANTH GAUS-SCHMIDT
RECRUITING OIC



CADET STEVEN KELLENBERGER
BARBELL CLUB OIC

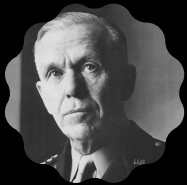
UPCOMING EVENTS!



06 FEB: BRANCH / AGSU FITTING DAY @ TEXAS A&M



07-08FEB: APACHE BDE RANGER CHALLENGE AT CAMP SWIFT, AUSTIN, TX



19-21FEB: GEORGE C. MARSHALL SEMINAR



01MAR: 3RD ANNUAL SCHUDER'S JROTC RANGER CHALLENGE INVITATIONAL



01MAR: JROTC OUTREACH EVENT AND MILITARY APPRECIATION BASKETBALL GAME