UC SANTA BARBARA

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The Next Wave

When Brig. Gen. R. Mark Toy learned cadets from UC Santa Barbara's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) would be commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army at Goleta Beach, he almost didn't believe it. A beach? Really?

As Toy would soon learn as the guest speaker at last week's 10 commissioning ceremony, there's no more appropriate setting for the Surfrider Battalion to send 12 of its finest off to the Army. The oldest organization at UCSB, dating to 1947, the Surfriders are intimately familiar with the beach next to the campus.

Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield, professor and chair of UCSB's Department of Military Science, said the new officers represent the cream of the crop at the campus. Four were named Distinguished Military Graduates, an honor limited to the top 20 percent nationally.

"We're a small ROTC program — we're one of the smallest on the West Coast —but we deliver a lot of quality," Rayfield noted. "And the neat thing is, UCSB gives us degrees that we augment with the military science curriculum to really give leaders back to the Army and, really, the nation."

Surfrider Battalion is sending 10 officers to active duty and two to the reserves, Rayfield noted. At some schools, depending on the Army's needs, freshly minted second lieutenants have little or no say in whether they're put on active duty or assigned to the reserves or National Guard. "But UCSB kids perform well enough that they get to pick where they're going," he said. "That's the fun thing for me. I

get to be at a program where I have the luxury of getting the quality of UCSB students to come in the door."

2nd Lt. Nicholas Brischler exemplifies the Surfriders' top-end talent. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science with a 3.8 grade-point average and received the George C. Marshall Award as one of the elite cadets in the nation. As he prepares for active duty as a future aviation officer, he said he cherished his time as a cadet.

"You know, it's funny, because I'm so excited to finally achieve this. It's four years of hard work, and I couldn't be more proud," Brischler said. "At the same time, these are all my best friends. And look around, it's beautiful. It's the best four years of my life thus far, so it's a bittersweet moment. I'm extremely happy, I'm extremely honored to finally have made it, but I'm going to miss this place a lot."

Few students at UCSB were as busy as 2nd Lt. Sarah Schreck. While earning a bachelor's degree in ecology and evolution with a minor in professional writing, she competed on the school's Division 1 track and field team. In 2014 she placed second in the 10,000 meters of the Big West Conference championship. How did she find the time for it all? "I had a lot of support, obviously, throughout whole time," she explained. "All the cadre has been amazing working with me. And my team, too, working with me through my ROTC commitment. Besides that, not a lot of sleep and a lot of efficient studying. That's pretty much it. I'm excited for the next part."

In the commissioning ceremony, each cadet took the oath of office, after which friends and family then pinned officers' bars on the new second lieutenants. As officers, they received their first salute from an enlisted person. By tradition, the new officers then gave the enlisted person a silver dollar.

Commissioned as second lieutenants were: Brischler, Schreck, Miguel Delgado, Dan Garcia, Declan Harris, Nicolas Hernandez Harnish, Joshua Joseph, Kerry Kang, Kevin Lewis, Joseph Macdonald, Vincent Monreal and Nadia West.

The Surfrider Battalion has been a staple on campus since before there *was* a campus. It was established in 1947 at the Santa Barbara College of the University of California at Santa Barbara, preceding the official founding of the university's current campus and making it the oldest organization at UCSB.

The training corps, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, was part of the National Defense Act of 1916 signed by President Woodrow Wilson. The act formally

established the ROTC to train and prepare high school and college students for military service. The program has changed a lot since then, going from mandatory to voluntary, opening to women and becoming a pathway for dedicated students to explore the options offered by the military.

The modern ROTC focuses on training a diverse group of undergraduates to become leaders, whether they choose to serve in the military or not. Students complete military-specific training while they work toward their undergraduate degrees, with scholarships available to those who choose to pursue a career with the armed forces.

The department’s lower-division curriculum imparts valuable military knowledge, while upper-division courses give students both theoretical and practical leadership and management skills. The department offers no majors or minors, instead augmenting what is already offered by the university to prepare its cadets for service.

“My mission is to find people who want the opportunity to serve, give them that opportunity, and then give them a job in the Army reserves, National Guard or active duty as a second lieutenant commissioned officer leading America’s fine young men and women,” explained Rayfield.

According to Rayfield, the ROTC is looking for “scholar-athlete-leaders,” and UCSB is fertile ground because of its academically competitive environment and health-conscious student body. The program takes dedication and discipline, Rayfield said, and ultimately teaches students critical skills while preparing them to lead a team within a large organization.

Rayfield said he strives to translate the strengths and diversity of campus into the next generation of military leaders, offering a curriculum that also provides general career preparation. “We would love to have the future leaders of those who choose to serve be represented by this campus,” he commented.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary

collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.