UC SANTA BARBARA

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Mission-Critical Teamwork

A little blood, a lot of sweat, and even a few tears of exhausted joy marked a historic victory for UC Santa Barbara's Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) team at this year's annual Ranger Challenge.

Held Nov. 4–5 at Fort Hunter Liggett military base in Monterey County, the Task Force South regional event pitted a dozen teams across a range of competition, from an obstacle course and 16-mile ruck march to firearm marksmanship and battlefield first aid and casualty transport.

This year marked the first time UCSB's Army ROTC team took home the regional championship, beating teams from top schools, including UCLA, UC Berkeley, University of Southern California, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, University of Nevada Las Vegas, and San Diego State, among others.

"I was so overjoyed!" said Karsen Flom, a junior Middle East studies major. Flom co-captained the team with Lauren Little, a senior linguistics major.

"I will admit," Flom said, "I secretly cried when we returned to campus and saw the gift from my team and other cadets — a framed photo of the entire team with a letter from each of them, cookies and flowers. The support was overwhelming."

"I really believe our success came from the team camaraderie and family environment we have," she said. "Many Ranger Challenge teams consist of all seniors, males and a lot of physical strength. What I love about our team is we have several people from each class and a mix of skill sets and personalities. We work

well as a team because what one person may struggle in, the next person is quick to assist.”

“As a female captain, I came to realize that leadership doesn’t always come in the form of being the strongest physically," she added. "I can lead by example through my work ethic, intelligence and critical thinking."

In late January, the team will travel to the Joint Base Lewis-McChord military installation near Tacoma, Washington, to compete for a spot at the Sandhurst Military Skills Competition national championships, held in March at West Point.

UCSB’s ROTC program includes students from Santa Barbara City College, Westmont College and CSU Channel Islands.

In addition to Flom and Little, the Ranger Challenge team includes UCSB students: Jack Rollinson, computer engineering senior; Amgad Hawari, computer science junior; Vincent Agrella, biology sophomore; Alec Garcia, economics sophomore; Nicolas Gandolfo, biology freshman; Jenny Pham, economics and accounting sophomore; Lauren Graves, biology freshman; and Francisco Romero, psychology and brain sciences sophomore; as well as Jacob Bailey, Westmont University mechanical engineering junior; and Jeremiah Canada, CSU Channel Islands business administration graduate student.

“We are so proud of our cadets,” said Patricia Dent, digital media coordinator and business manager at UCSB’s Department of Military Science. “For many of the members, this was their first year on the team. They trained very hard preparing for this very difficult competition — and it paid off! I am constantly in awe of their hard work and dedication.”

UCSB’s ROTC program provides leadership training for students and prospective officers for the U.S. Army, U.S. Army Reserve and U.S. Army National Guard.

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.