First Female Infantry Officer

Christina Vogel will be the first ever female Infantry Officer commissioned from the University of South Dakota Army ROTC program. 2LT Vogel was a 4-year National Scholarship recipient and joined ROTC as a freshman in 2017. She is from Colton, SD and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.

She served in a variety of leadership positions within ROTC, to include the Battalion S3 (Operations Officer) and most recently was the Cadet Command Sergeant Major, in charge of ensuring that training, personal conduct, appearance and accountability of the cadet battalion is always to standard.

When asked about what she enjoyed most about ROTC, 2LT Vogel said “I liked the labs and FTXs. I enjoyed actively learning about the various movements and maneuvers from military science class in an applied setting.” 2LT Vogel also participated in numerous events during her time with the Prairie Fire Battalion, from Ranger Challenge, Color Guard and recruiting events. Vogel Said “My favorite college memory was attending the Student Conference on US Affairs (SCUSA) conference at United States Military Academy (USMA). Every year students from across the US are selected for a conference to discuss US Affairs at USMA. I attended in fall of 2019 representing USD.”

2LT Vogel Branch Detailed into the Infantry Corps. Her basic branch is Military Intelligence, but she will start her first 4 years as a commissioned officer serving in the Infantry, then will transition to Military Intelligence once she is promoted to the rank of Captain.

It wasn’t until recently that women could serve in the Infantry Branch, or combat arms branches in general. In 2015 that the Department of Defense opened all military jobs to every Soldier, opening the door for women to serve in combat arms. There are currently less than 600 female Soldiers serving in the Infantry branch.

2LT Vogel will attend Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC) at Ft. Benning, Georgia before she will be stationed at an active duty post to serve as an Infantry Platoon Leader.

Christina Vogel as an MSIII cadet during a leadership lab.

2LT Vogel having her rank pinned on by her sister at the commissioning ceremony on 7 May 2021.
SMSI Corner

Hello everybody!

I would first like to congratulate all of our Cadets that completed Advance Camp, Cadet Troop Leadership Training, Air Assault School and those that participated in Internships over the summer. Thank you for your hard work and the excellent job you did representing the “Prairie Fire” Battalion and the University of South Dakota. This 2021 school year we are going to continue to build on the foundation that has been established over the last couple years as we continue to move up in national rankings, compete in competitions such as Ranger Challenge and Arlo Olson Award. We are going to hit the ground running right away this fall with completing our Fall Field Training Exercise and Basic Rifle Marksmanship at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

This September we will conduct our fall Field Training Exercise where we will knock some of the rust off our Squad and Platoon level tactics. This exercise will be important because it will be the first time that our new MS4s will be in battalion leadership roles and serving as mentors to the rest of the Cadets and I have no doubts they will be successful. This exercise will also lay the foundation for our new MS3s as they begin their journey to Advance Camp over the summer of 2022 and last but not least this will be a great time to integrate our MS1s and MS2s.

This fall we look forward to building on the momentum that was established during a very challenging and difficult 2020 – 2021 school year. The last school year displayed that we are resilient and we are determined to get better no matter the circumstance and I am excited to see where this school year brings us! That is all, carry on!

Sincerely,

MSG Nicholas M. Rivera

Senior Military Science Instructor

Professor of Military Science Corner

Welcome back from summer break – but really, welcome back to some semblance of normalcy prior to COVID. In mid-May ‘21, the University of South Dakota lifted all COVID restrictions, paving the way back to a learning environment the upperclassmen remember, and in the case of freshmen/MSIs from last year, an experience they have yet to undergo. The Cadre team, along with myself, look forward to welcoming the returning and incoming new Cadets in August.

Cadet Summer Training (CST) was conducted in its entirety at Fort Knox, KY, with select USD MSIII Cadets participating in Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT), Air Assault training, and internships across the world – an indicator that their hard work and effort has been noticed and acknowledged. I am highly encouraged after their last three years in Military Science, coupled with MS3 week in mid-May, that all our CST attendees excelled. We look forward to their results and the exciting times ahead as they discover their branches and extent of service in either the Guard, Reserves, or Active Duty assignments upon graduation next year.

LTC Daniel Sundberg conducted a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) in May to Fort Drum, where he assumed command of a Field Artillery Battalion which was well deserved, especially after his three years contributing to the recent successes of the ROTC Department at USD. We wish him and his family the best on their next chapter!

For those looking to visit the ROTC Department starting this fall, you will be pleasantly surprised that we are no longer working out of the Burr House. In agreement with USD, we have completed our move to the DakotaDome! We look forward to the opportunities presented in this move which gains convenient access to the facilities while increasing our presence in high traffic areas. We could not think of a better location to continue to advertise and educate students and families on what ROTC can do for them.

Lastly, I arrived at the USD ROTC Department at the end of April, assuming the duties of the Professor of Military Science. My wife, Laurie, and I PCS’d from Alaska and look forward to our time here in the Prairie Fire Battalion. We are originally from Minnesota and Wisconsin respectively, and appreciate being back in the Midwest. I consider myself lucky and privileged to have this unique opportunity to train and mentor the next leaders in the United States Army.

Go Yotes!

MAJ Adam J. Kirschling

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I would first like to congratulate all of our Cadets that completed Advance Camp, Cadet Troop Leadership Training, Air Assault School and those that participated in Internships over the summer. Thank you for your hard work and the excellent job you did representing the “Prairie Fire” Battalion and the University of South Dakota. This 2021 school year we are going to continue to build on the foundation that has been established over the last couple years as we continue to move up in national rankings, compete in competitions such as Ranger Challenge and Arlo Olson Award. We are going to hit the ground running right away this fall with completing our Fall Field Training Exercise and Basic Rifle Marksmanship at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

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USD Athletics to Recognize First Responders and Military

The Coyote football team is excited to recognize first responders and military members at two games inside the renovated DakotaDome this season.

The Yotes open their home schedule on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and will honor first responders throughout the game, including prerecorded promotions and a bag pipe performance. The annual Military Appreciation Day game will take place on Saturday, October 23rd against Illinois State. The team will wear special United States helmet decals, veteran Jimmy Weber will perform patriotic songs live from the field and military vehicles will be on display outside of the DakotaDome. Free tickets are available for first responders, active military members and veterans to both of these games. Deeply discounted tickets are also available for their family members.

To redeem the offer to the Saturday, September 11 home opener (1 p.m. kick-off), visit GoYotes.com/Promo and enter the key word HERO. To redeem the offer to the Saturday, October 23rd Military Appreciation Day game (1 p.m. kick-off), visit GoYotes.com/Promo and enter the key word FLAG.

The Coyote ticket office can also be contacted at 605-677-5959 or tickets@usd.edu to redeem these offers.
In combination with ROTC programs within the Task Force, the Prairie Fire Battalion participated in a trying Field Training Exercise. The intent of the training was to prepare Junior cadets for summer training as well as further younger cadets in leadership, personal, and professional growth. Twenty-Seven total cadets from the Prairie Fire Battalion made the trip to Camp Rapid, SD starting on the 25th of March and ending on the 28th. Upon arrival the cadets were separated into platoons combined with programs from South Dakota State University and South Dakota School of Mines as well as their satellite schools. Once in their respective platoons, cadets finished day one by working tirelessly into the late hours to prepare themselves and the rest of the platoon for success.

The four-day training exercise started day two with a series of training stations. In the early morning, cadets sharpened their land navigation skills. While the Junior cadets found their points by themselves, Freshmen and Sophomore cadets worked in teams of two. After land navigation, cadets worked in teams to bypass challenging situations in the Field Leaders Reaction Course (FLRC). The FLRC is based on challenging circumstances and limited resources which force cadets to
think critically as a team to successfully complete. As the day progressed, the future officers made their way through the obstacle course located on Camp Rapid. The Obstacle Course forced cadets into uncomfortable situations such as climbing towering barriers and crawling under barbed wire. Freshmen Maggie Barnett explained, “the obstacle course and FLRC were challenging but also fun.” In addition, Barnett mentioned how those events grew the platoon of cadets together and made the next day easier. To end the second day of training, cadets took to the land navigation course once more, but this time in the dark. Night land navigation tested the proficiency and skills to get from one point to the other. Cadet Nathan Mantei, who finished with a top time of thirty-three minutes during the night land navigation mentioned, “it was a really good night for land nav. My prior experience and the great training from my ROTC instructors helped me succeed.”

Saturday marked some of the most challenging training for the junior cadets. These cadets led as either a Platoon Leader, Platoon Sergeant, or Squad Leader to accomplish a mission. While the missions required a decent understanding of tactics, the training was more focused on testing their leadership abilities such as how they lead under pressure and with a short amount of time. Junior cadet Asia Whitead said that, “it was great to get to experience what it’s like to lead different personalities in a dynamic and evolving environment.” The missions started in the early morning and went throughout the whole day. And although the morning was chilly, by midafternoon the Cadets were finishing up their missions sweaty and tired.

On Sunday, the 28th, the cadets traveled back to Vermillion to conclude their training. As they were relieved to be in the comforts of their beds, the Cadets rested well knowing both their minds and bodies had been tested over the weekend.
The EST lab is one of the more anticipated labs of the semester. Cadets travel down to the national guard base in Sioux City, IA to hone their skills in EST and learn the basics of marksmanship, weapons and how to climb a rope for Air Assault. On February 25, 2021 Cadets of the USD ROTC, Prairie Fire Battalion completed the lab with exceptional results.

EST was performed in a round robin style to allow each cadet an allotted time to focus on the different stations available. The first being familiarization with weapon systems which include the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon and an M4 rifle. MS3’s and MS4’s teach the MS1’s and 2’s how to dismantle and reassemble the weapons for cleaning. Then they are taught how to perform functions check to be sure the weapon is in proper condition.

The next station is more familiarization with the M4, as well as proper shooting positions. Cadets get another breakdown of how to disassemble and reassemble the M4, as well as another course on functions check. The cadets are then taught about different shooting positions to prepare for qualifying in EST. Cadets learn how to shoot in the prone position, the kneeling position, as well as the standing position. Each cadet performed extremely well and the cadets that taught the course were very knowledgeable about the weapons and positions.
Cadets then move onto the station where they learn to climb a rope. This is a very important course for cadets who will be going onto air assault school this summer. The course was taught by our Battalion Commander, Dalton Sobotka. Cadets are shown two ways to climb the rope, the s-method and the wrap around method. Once climbing is mastered, cadets practice dismounting from the rope in a safe and stable fashion. Every cadet is given the opportunity to participate and many exceeded expectations by reaching the top of the rope and touching the ceiling.

Overall, it is safe to assume every cadet enjoyed and learned a lot of useful information at the 2021 Spring EST Lab. The MS3’s and MS4’s all performed exceptionally well teaching the younger cadets and showing strong leadership skills. Every cadet benefitted from the lab and will be able to utilize all the skills learned when qualifying in the future.

By: Cadet William Reardon
On March 25th, 2021, the Prairie Fire Battalion hosted its 100th annual military ball. The annual ball was held on campus, in the Muenster University Center ball room. The ball allows cadets, cadre, friends, and family to get together for a night of dining and recognition.

CDT Hannah Koupal did an outstanding job planning, preparing and setting up rehearsals for the ball while serving as the Officer in Charge (OIC) for planning. CDT Connor Glasford served as the narrator for ceremony. CDT Molly McMahon coordinated for our guest speaker, Adam Gough, who served in the Marine Corps as a Corporal.

During the ball, we presented numerous awards. The Top Cadet of the year based on the Order of Merit list was CDT Gregg Taylor. The Order of Merit list is based on Cumulative GPA, Fitness Scores, leadership roles within ROTC and participation in ROTC activities and University/Community events.

Each Military Science class also had a top cadet on the Order of Merit list. The top MSI cadet was CDT Maggie Barnett; top MSII was CDT Cade Rickford; top MSIII was CDT Carter Yungwirth; and the top MSIV was CDT Dalton Sobotka.

CDT Andrea Torres earned the Military Officers Association of America Award. This award is presented annually to an outstanding MSIII cadet that displays high moral character and exceptional potential for military leadership. CDT Asia Whitead was awarded a $500 Military Officers Association of America scholarship.

We also gave four coveted “CPT Arlo Olson Coins” to CDTs Andrea Torres, Connor Glasford, Benjamin Rohlfs, and...
The CPT Arlo Olson award is our campus based RECONDO award based on the Medal of Honor recipient and former USD ROTC graduate, Arlo Olson. To be eligible for the award, cadets had to score in the top 25% of the physical fitness test, pass Land Navigation written test and practical exercise, qualify on the M16 carbine, pass First Aid and Tactical Casualty Combat Care test and complete the 6 mile ruck march in under 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Overall, the 100th annual Military Ball was an outstanding success! Thanks to all the cadets and cadre that helped plan and coordinate the event.
The Prairie Fire Battalion commissioned five Second Lieutenants on at Knutson Theater on the University of South Dakota campus on 7 May 2021. The commissioning ceremony was overseen by LTC Daniel Sundberg, Professor of Military Science, with guest speaker COL (retired) John Holter.

The Five newest 2LTs in the US Army are 2LT Trevor Archer, 2LT Bailey DeJong, 2LT Raeann Patrick, 2LT Gregg Taylor and 2LT Christina Vogel.

2LT Archer will serve as an Ordnance Officer in the South Dakota National Guard after graduating from USD Knudson School of Law with Juris Doctor (Law). He plans to become a Judge Advocate General (JAG) officer in the future. He is originally from Sisseton, SD.

2LT Bailey DeJong will serve as a Medical Services Officer in the South Dakota National Guard after graduating as a Distinguished Military Graduate (DMG) from USD with a Bachelor of Science in Med Microbiology. She is originally from Kennebec, SD.

2LT Patrick will serve as a Nurse in the Active Duty Army. She will attend BOLC at Ft. Sam Houston, TX. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She is originally from Vivian, SD.

2LT Taylor will serve as an Ordnance Officer in the Active Duty Army after attending BOLC at Ft. Lee, Virginia. After BOLC, 2LT Taylor will proceed to Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) training. He is a Distinguished Military Graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He is originally from Westfield, IA.

2LT Vogel will serve as an Infantry Officer in the Active Duty Army after attending BOLC at Ft. Benning, Georgia. She is a Distinguished Military Graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She is originally from Colton, SD.
Cadets use these funds in order to help offset the cost of training and traveling during the school year to various functions like Ranger Challenge, Ranger Buddy Competition and the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge Competition.

To order, contact 605-677-6059 or email ROTC@usd.edu.
Leave a Lasting Impact

By donating to the Prairie Fire Cadet Battalion, YOU are allowing us to fund many of the day-to-day functions of our great program! The Prairie Fire Cadet Battalion relies on your generous donations to help offset many of the costs associated with Cadet events, such as the travel to competitions (Ranger Challenge, and German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge), commissioning and award ceremonies, military ball, open house, guest speakers, event receptions, as well as training equipment and events that would otherwise not be possible. Please direct donations to the USD Foundation, P.O. Box 5555 Vermillion, SD 57069 or you may make a gift online at onwardsd.org/donate/rotc, or www.usd.edu/arts-and-sciences/military-science/.

For specific information, please contact the USD Foundation at 1-800-521-3575 or 1-605-677-6703 or email usdfound@usdfoundation.org.

Fall Events and Activities ’21

Welcome Back Picnic...............Aug. 22
Lab 1 In brief .........................Sept. 2
USD Football Color guard ........Sept. 4
Fall FTX..............................Sept. 16-19
Ranger Challenge ...............Oct. 15-17
Super Lab ............................Oct. 30
Patriots Week ....................Nov. 8-12

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