



## FALL 2019 University of Minnesota Army ROTC "Dig Deep"



The Golden Gopher Battalion at Arden Hills Army Training Center during Mega Lead Lab I on 21 September 2019.

### Golden Gopher Named Country's Top Army ROTC Cadet



St. Thomas University, MN - Senior mechanical engineering major and St. Thomas swim and dive team member got out of the pool on November 22nd to a phone call. Many of his peers and family knew what he didn't: Cadet Lucas Manke had just been

selected the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) top Cadet in the nation. "I was in shock," Cadet Manke said of all the text messages confirming the news. "It still feels surreal to me when I think about it." Cadet Manke has excelled as a full-time student-athlete at St. Thomas University and is a member of the University of Minnesota's Gopher Battalion. "Cadet Manke is a highly motivated and inspiring leader. He is extremely humble, and a true team player," said Maj. Melissa Hoaglin, Professor of Military Science of the Gopher Battalion. "Cadet Manke is constantly working to build unit morale and strives to set the example." Along with a 4.0 GPA, Cadet Manke has put together an exhaustive list of accomplishments in and out of the classroom, including being one of four St. Thomas students named last year

a *University Innovation Fellow*. Cadet Manke received word earlier in November that his superb resume had also earned him his first choice for his branch placement upon graduation. He will commission as a second lieutenant in the Aviation branch "When I found out I was branching into aviation, a longtime dream of mine, I was so happy and relieved. It definitely made all my hard work worthwhile," Cadet Manke said. "I think that both St. Thomas and the Gopher Battalion ROTC program prepared me to excel at this level because of the positive environment that surrounds each of them. The lasting relationships created among the Gopher Battalion along with the family atmosphere we create foster a super strong support system."

~ Excerpt in part from St. Thomas Academic News Plus ~

### Cadet Battalion Commander

By Cadet Madeline Pantalione



Minneapolis, MN - University of Minnesota Gopher Battalion Army ROTC had an amazing semester. We pushed ourselves with an intense training schedule to prepare ourselves in many aspects: infantry tactics, rifle marksmanship, physical fitness, and mental agility. We also performed excellently at Army Ten-Miler, Norwegian Ruck March and Ranger Challenge. The Battalion is busy training for more specialty teams including Northern Warfare Challenge, Buddy Ranger Challenge, and Bataan Memorial Death March. During a series of Mega Lead Labs and Field Training Exercises our Cadets trained safely and efficiently and are able to prove that they will outdo their peers at Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox, KY. In the midst of a very busy semester, Gopher Battalion hosted an extremely successful event, Norwegian Foot March. Hundreds of civilian and military participants traveled to ruck 18.6 miles with the University of Minnesota Army ROTC. Throughout all of our training, we had a focus on the Cadet commanders command philosophy of Making a

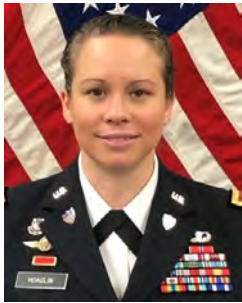
Difference. This is evident in the hundreds of hours our Cadets volunteered in and around the community. We are so proud of the effort our Cadets poured into this semester, some volunteering over one hundred hours in three months. This semester we proved ourselves at a new level by having the highest ranked Cadet nationally, Cadet Lucas Manke and the highest ranked Cadet in the Minnesota Army National Guard, Cadet Gabriela Marick. To end the semester our Cadets were able to celebrate all of these accomplishments at our first Dine Out in many years, which was made possible by hardworking Cadets, families, and sponsors. The combination of difficult training, effort poured into volunteering and specialty teams as well as high success rate academically prove that we really are the best in the Big Ten. Our Battalion is able to achieve this level of excellency through Cadets who work above and beyond to accomplish the mission, families who support them, and dedicated Cadre staff. I am proud to say that our Battalion has had a very successful semester and want to thank everyone who helped make it that way. We accomplished our intent of training future army officers this semester, and we are excitedly planning a busy spring semester to continue training tactics, rifle marksmanship, physical fitness, and many other soldiering skills. GOPHER STRONG!

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## From the Professor of Military Science

By MAJ Melissa Hoaglin



To all our Gopher Battalion Cadets, Families, friends, and colleagues, I wish to congratulate you on a tremendous Fall 2019 semester and thank you for welcoming our new cadre and

families to the Team. I look forward to seeing what awesome things you will accomplish and to working together on future endeavors. It has been an absolute pleasure watching our Cadets grow from our initial Welcome Week in August to our Dining-out and final exams this December. It does not matter what year, our Cadets at all levels are exhibiting exemplary leadership and teambuilding skills resulting in our strengthened and en-

hanced overall organizational performance and cohesion. We have volunteered over 1,500 hours, had two Cadets listed as #1s (Nation-wide and Minnesota National Guard (MN NG), we ranked in the top 15% of ROTC Teams at the Army Ten-Miler, took first place in 2 events at the Task Force Ripley Ranger Challenge competition, were recognized at the National conference for the Association of the United States Army for having the largest participating ROTC program, had a 97% weapons qualification rate for our Juniors preparing for Cadet Summer Training, were able to take a ride in some chinooks (thanks to the MN NG), got lost in the woods, were found in the woods, and have been able to make some great friends and teammates along the way. When I arrived at the University, I was not sure exactly what our motto “Gopher Strong” meant,

but after surviving multiple 0630 physical training smoke sessions, breaking some brush at Arden Hills and Camp Ripley-up hills both ways (no kidding, it was up hills both ways, not sure who chose the route but they apparently really liked hills), and witnessing some extremely intellectual and engaging conversations within the classroom, I now am happy to let you know that there are no other words to describe our Corps of Cadets except “GOPHER STRONG”! We hope you enjoy this newsletter, it is only a glimpse of the magnificent things our Cadets are accomplishing. We look forward to sending you another update in the spring and welcome you to participate and help us continue to grow and make an impact within our community. From the entire Gopher Family, we hope you all have a wonderful holiday season and wish you all a Happy New Year!

## From the Commandant of Cadets

By MSG Troy Hill



As my first semester as the Senior Enlisted Military Science Instructor (SMSI) here at the University of Minnesota comes to a close, I can unequivocally say that this has

already been one of the highlights of my 20 plus year career. The Cadets have outperformed anyone’s expectations thus far and are continuing to raise the bar daily! The new Professor of Military Science (PMS), plan to restructure the program to enhance and foster the leadership ability of the already tactically sound Cadets has been a success. I truly believe the Seniors will be better trained to assume their leadership roles within the Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve battalions immediately and the Juniors will be extremely ready for the challenge and rigors of Advanced Camp this summer. The Mega Leadership Labs and Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX) combined all the doctrinal knowledge of the requisite squad tasks

that was learned and rehearsed in the classroom into continuous field training exercises to evaluate the depth of knowledge the Cadets had. They were extremely beneficial and fun! The Freshman and Sophomores were able to immerse themselves in the “Cadet life” from day one as well. Our specialty teams have done some amazing work this semester as well. The Army Ten-Miler and Ranger Challenge teams went and competed at a very high level and set a foundation for future success. Our Color Guard Team has continued to showcase their talents by supporting over 15 events to include all the U of M football events, the Bethel vs Hamline football game and even the veteran’s ceremony at General Mills. The Volunteer team provided personnel to any and all events they were requested to support to include the University of Minnesota Veterans Appreciation Event, Gopher Basketball games, Junior ROTC events and the setup at the Minneapolis Terrain Race. 19 Cadets and 2 Cadre also participated in the annual Norwegian Foot March that was hosted by the Cadets for over 200 participants. We also enjoyed the inaugural, to be annual,

Dining-out where we came together to celebrate the partnership and relationship of the Gopher Battalion, Alumni, family and local supporters. If you didn’t make it this year, we hope you will join us next December. Along with the addition of the PMS and myself this summer we also added an invaluable member to our team, MSG (R) Alberto DeJesus as our Recruiting Operations Officer. As a previous SMSI and previous work with the St. Johns Army ROTC and most recently University of Minnesota Air Force ROTC he brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the team. He also led our Army Ten-Miler team and will take our Bataan Death March team to compete this spring. As much as we love welcoming new team members it is unfortunate that we will be losing SFC Jason Benjamin this spring as he is set to retire after 20 years of faithful service. We wish him the best and hope to see much of him as he settles in Jackson, MN with his wife and 5 daughters. I look forward to the future of this program and see only continued success because of the quality of the Cadets and Cadre who are a part of the Gopher Battalion. Gopher Strong!

# 2019 Fall Commissioning

## The U.S. Army's Newest Lieutenant



Newly commissioned 2LT Ka Hang Ng

Minneapolis, MN - December 2019 was a pivotal month for one Cadet of the Golden Gopher Battalion. It marked the end of his college education, his pursuit of a Bachelor's Degree, and the beginning of an Army career for Ka Hang Ng. 2LT Ng was born in Hong Kong, China. He moved to the United States with his parents in the summer of 2010. 2LT Ng began his military career in 2014, enlisting into the Minnesota Army National Guard and served with the 347th Regional Support Group, he was then re-assigned to the 247th Finance Management Support Detachment. This was an important period for 2LT Ng in his military career as he transitions from Cadet to Lieutenant, by commissioning into the Active Army. This moment pointed him in a new direction as an Army officer. He successfully completed

all necessary training in an excellent manner. 2LT Ng will serve as the Golden Gopher Battalion Goldbar Recruiter before attending the Military Police Officer Basic Course at Fort Leonard Wood. This special commissioning ceremony was attended by family, friends, fellow Cadets, and Cadre. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics from University of Minnesota-Twin Cities; and an Associate Degree in Business from Inver Hills Community College. Awards and decorations received by 2LT Ng include the Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and Army Service Ribbon. We wish this newly commissioned Lieutenant the best of luck in his career as an Army officer. On behalf of the Golden Gopher Battalion, we congratulate 2LT Ka Hang Ng on a job well done!

## 2019 Dining-out

By Cadet Alec Farrell & Grace Nielson

McNamara Alumni Center, UMN - On the evening of December 6th, 2019 the Golden Gopher Battalion held their Annual Dining-out at the McNamara Alumni Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The evening was filled with fun, friends, and celebration for the year's numerous activities and events. The evening began with a social hour where Cadets, Cadre, Alumni and guests were entertained by TSgt Johnny Holliday, an excel-

lent Jazz musician and performer who serenaded our event with his unique renditions of popular songs and original music providing an amazing performance. The evening also presented the opportunity to socialize and introduce their dates, go through the receiving line, and have their photos taken by a professional photographer. The social hour was followed by the presentation of the colors and a formal sit-down dinner. This

year's guest speaker, Brigadier General (R) Christie Nixon, who was Military Intelligence Readiness Command commander. After BG (R) Nixon' speech, the formal Gopher Battalion award ceremony took place honoring the Cadets, Staff and Center of Influencers all of their accomplishments for this academic year. For many Cadets this was the most fun event of the year, and it is looked forward to by all.



Mrs. Verbeten receives an appreciation certificate from BG (R) Nixon for her continuing support.



Our Color Guard was recognized for excellence receiving their very own Wheaties Box from General Mills.



Cadets, Family, Friends & Alumni enjoying the Gopher Battalion Annual Dining-out.



Gopher Battalion Freshmen class looking sharp during the 2019 Annual Dining-out..

## The Order of Saint Maurice

By MSG Troy Hill



**Minneapolis, MN** – It is not every day that a ROTC program gets the opportunity to witness extraordinary ceremonies for U.S. Service Members with occupational specialties within the Infantry community. The Golden Gopher Battalion leadership team recently helped honor U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Jason Benjamin, an Infantryman assigned to the program as the Military Science Instructor, as he was inducted into the National Infantry Association's Order of Saint Maurice on December 6th. The Order of Saint Maurice recognizes individuals who have significantly contributed to the Infantry in ways that stand out in the eyes of the recipient's senior leaders, subordinates and peers. The award is categorized into five different levels – SFC Benjamin received the Legionnaire medal, the highest level of the order he can obtain at his current duty position. With 20 years of active duty service, SFC Benjamin, a Jackson, Minnesota native, has seen his fair share of combat and trauma, having deployed twice to Afghanistan and twice to Iraq. With over 400 combat patrols and 70 direct fire attacks, SFC Benjamin's experience on the battlefield shaped him to fit perfectly within the mission of

Cadet Command and the Gopher Battalion. MSG (R) DeJesus, a former Infantryman and recipient of the same award, nominated SFC Benjamin for induction into the Order of Saint Maurice. During his four-year assignment to our program SFC Benjamin served as a sterling example of what a Noncommissioned Officer should be for future Army officers and provides crucial developmental guidance for Cadets who are branching into the Army profession at all times, ensuring to portray the Infantry and the Army in a positive light. SFC Benjamin strictly adheres to the Army Values and Warrior Ethos at all times. He impresses his strong sense of values and ethical decision making upon all personnel he interacts with, whether on campus or within Cadet Command, setting the example for others to follow. SFC Benjamin continues to champion for the Infantry by leading the Best Ranger Competition team and the Buddy Ranger teams. He also has time and again been by name requested to support the tactics lanes at the Cadet Summer Training in Fort Knox, KY. These accomplishments coupled with his success-oriented devotion to duty, has been in keeping with the highest traditions of the Infantry and the United States Army.



DJ & SFC Benjamin during the OSM award presentation.



SFC Benjamin proudly holds the coveted Infantryman award.

## MN Army National Guard Top Cadet

By Cadet Lucas Manke



CDT Pantalion congratulates CDT Marick during an award ceremony.

**Minneapolis, MN** - Cadet Marick has excelled so much throughout her military career because she is an embodiment of the Army Values. From the time she began ROTC in the fall of her freshmen year, Cadet Marick has continued to push herself to become the best she can be. By participating in specialty teams like Army Ten-Miler, Ranger Challenge, and Buddy Ranger, Cadet Marick was able to improve her physical fitness and soldiering skills. Her hard work and determination to not only succeed, but excel, in everything she does allows her to lead from the front and inspires those around her to better themselves.

Aside from her strong work ethic, Cadet Marick never complains. Through countless early mornings, summers dedicated to basic training and Cadet summer training, 12-mile ruck marches, back-to-back drill and FTX weekends, Cadet Marick shows up with a smile on her face ready to work hard. She cares immensely about her peers and her subordinates, always willing to help out in whatever way possible. Many of the younger Cadets speak about how great of a mentor she is to them. She is a vital member of the Gopher Battalion and will be an excellent Adjutant General Officer upon her commissioning in May.

## 35th Annual Army Ten-Miler

By Cadet Gabriela Marick

**Washington D.C.** – The Golden Gopher Battalion sent 15 Cadets to compete in the 35th Annual Army Ten-Miler race in Washington D.C. on October 13th, 2019. Our first team placed 15th overall which was comprised of Cadets Brooks, Brown, Olson, Pease & Morrow and our second team consisted of Cadets Scufsa, Christensen, Manke, Tomczyk & Birkholz who placed 25th out of 103 teams in the Military Academy & ROTC Division. Cadets Marick, Lyons, Bulver, Kruta & Pantalion made up the female team who placed 6th out of 13 teams in the Open Women Division. The Army Ten-Miler race is one of the largest races in the United States, with other 35,000 runners in attendance. Runners and service members from all over the country meet annually in Washington D.C.. The race started at 8:00AM with a cannon fire. Runners were cheered on by family and friends as they ran around

Washington D.C. and its monuments. Cadet Morrow was the top male finisher for the Gopher Battalion with a time of 1:05:51. The elite UMN team finished with a total time of 4:29:34 and took 15th place. After the race, UMN Cadets had the opportunity to meet Cadets from other ROTC programs across the country and they also took a picture with the Cadet Commanding General, Major General Evans. The rest of the weekend was filled with sight-seeing around Washington



2019 Gopher Battalion Army Ten-Miler Team.

D.C. The Army Ten-Miler team did an excellent job representing the University of Minnesota and the Golden Gopher Battalion Army ROTC.



Cadet Tomczyk at the 2019 Army Ten-Miler finish line.

## 3rd Brigade Ranger Challenge

By Cadet Conner Gross

**West Camp Rapid, SD** – Gopher Battalion sent one 9-Man team to the Black Hills of South Dakota this year for the annual Ranger Challenge Competition. Usually ran at Minnesota’s Camp Ripley, this course brought on some new challenges for the Golden Gophers. The team consisted of Cadets Vandenberg, Crary, Rathke, Hockert, Shreve, Lyons, Schmidt, Bertke, Bornstein, Karrick, Soderlund and Flores. After training hard for nearly two months, the team made the 10-hour trip to Camp Rapid, South Dakota in hopes of moving on to the Brigade competition in early November. There were 8 teams competing against each other with 11 grueling events. The competition started Friday night with an extensive tactics knowledge exam and a weapons maintenance exercise. The following morning the gophers awoke at 0500 and prepped for their one rope bridge challenge high in the wooded hills of SD. From there, the team had to ruck to their next challenge utilizing speed and land navigation. They completed the call for fire test, a tire flipping mystery event, the strenuous obstacle course, another mystery event which tested the memory of each Cadet, a sprinting grenade

course, and a medical evaluation lane where only two of the eight teams qualified. (Yes we were one of them!) To finish it off, the Gophers ended their long day with a very tough 10k ruck up and down the surrounding hills. Once the Cadets completed their foot march, they conducted an inspection of their gear to ensure no one was missing any equipment and the 2019 competition was over. The Gophers placed 4th overall, but put up very commendable performances in their events, including taking the best time for the memorization challenge. After the completion, Cadets were able to take in some culture of the Black Hills, visiting both Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse monument. They also were able to stop by the largest corn palace in the states as well as the infamous Wall Drug on their trips down and back.



Gopher Team negotiates one of the many grueling events.



2019 Gopher Battalion Ranger Challenge Team.

“Ranger challenge helped broaden my horizons for the future of my Army career and spend time personally and physically developing myself” - Cadet Lucas Vandenberg

## Norwegian Foot March

By Cadet ShuYang Dong

**Arden Hills, MN** - On November 23rd, 2019, the University of Minnesota hosted its second annual Norwegian Foot March at the Arden Hills Army Training Center. The Norwegian Foot March is a 30km (roughly 18.6 miles) ruck march with a 25 pound pack. Participants that complete the event within the 4.5 hours are awarded the coveted Marsjmerket badge, that is authorized to wear on their dress uniforms. This year, the University of Minnesota sent a team of 19 Cadets to participate in the ruck march, led by the assistant team leader of the Norwegian Team Cadet Paul Kim. The Norwegian Team trained with ruck marches of various lengths, ability group runs, and weight training. Besides the Norwegian Team, the majority of the Golden Gopher Battalion volunteered to run and support the event at Arden Hills: manning checkpoints and water stations, working charge of quarters (CQ) shift for participants lodging overnight along with helping with the check-in and registration of participants. The University of Minnesota Norwegian Team was proud to represent our Army ROTC program at this joint-component event, and a huge congratulations is in order for all the hard work and dedication the Norwegian Team put in for running this event!



19 Cadets from the Gopher Battalion participated in the 2019 Annual Norwegian Foot March.

## Volunteer Team

By Cadet Kayla Bulver

**Minneapolis, MN** - Volunteer Team has had a very busy semester! We kicked off the semester by doing a flag detail at the Minnesota Vikings Game. These Cadets had a great time cheering on the Vikings while representing UMN Army ROTC. The next event we participated was the Terrain Race/1Wish at Buck Hill. At this event, the Cadets got to pass out t-shirts and medals to the finishers and supporting the 1Wish Foundation who coordinates wishes for children with cancer and terminal illness. Our biggest event this semester was the UMN Dome Set-up, this was a very daunting task, but we had for-

ty Cadets from Volunteer Team who came out to assist and raise funds for the Gophers Campus Life Program (CLP). Recently, six Cadets went to Fort Leonard Wood, MO to support the regional Ranger Challenge competition, this fun event allowed them to run the Call for Fire and SALUTE Report stations. Additional events we have completed were a flag detail at the Gopher's Basketball Game for Military Appreciation Night and hosting events with surrounding JROTC programs. Thank you to the Cadet and students who came out to these events and helped support the Gopher Battalion!



Army ROTC Cadets supporting the Terrain Race event.



Cadets from the Gopher Battalion participated in a Flag detail during a Vikings game.



Cadets from the Gopher Battalion during the UMN Dome Set-up detail.

## AUSA Best ROTC Program Award

By Cadet Gabriela Marick

**Washington, D.C.** - The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Largest ROTC Company Award was presented to the Golden Gopher Battalion on October 14th, 2019. The award was presented at the ROTC Cadet Luncheon during the Annual AUSA Conference held in Washington D.C every October. The Largest ROTC Company Award recognizes the ROTC program with the most AUSA members across the country. The Golden Gopher Battalion had the most participation and active membership in AUSA for the operational year. Cadet Marick and the PMS accepted the award and had the opportunity to meet Cadets from other ROTC programs across the country as well as the Cadet Commanding General, Major General Evans. The Golden Gopher Battalion was awarded the Largest ROTC Company Award for their excellent performance and partnership with AUSA and the Gen. Vessey Chapter of Minnesota.



DJ, CDT Marick & MAJ Hoaglin at the AUSA ROTC Luncheon.



CDT Marick meets w/ Cadet Command Commander MG Evans.

## Toys For Military Kids Program

By Cadet Dakota Birkholz



Cadet Birkholz during a toy inventory as part of the Toys for Military Kids Program.



### Minneapolis, MN -

This year the Golden Gopher Battalion and the Flying Gopher Detachment supported the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) General Vessey Chapter by helping to organize and distribute presents for the Toys for Military Kids Program. Toys for Military Kids strives to provide gifts to military members and their families during the holidays in recognition of the sacrifices they have made on our behalf.

Our Cadets aimed to assist the families and provided presents for children of deployed Soldiers who might not be able to afford toys or clothing on their own. This year was once again, a successful year for Toys for Military Kids, giving gifts to thousands of children and providing toys to many military units throughout the state of Minnesota. If you would like more information about the Toys for Military Kids Program, or would like to donate to the cause, please contact Mr. Alberto DeJesus at 612-625-3062.

## Veterans Appreciation Day

By 2LT Andrew Gladitsch

**Coffman Memorial Union, UMN** - UMN Army ROTC attended a Veterans Day event where both the University of Minnesota and our program thanked and honored our veterans both past and present. As is tradition the Cadets of our program served pizza and other refreshments to the Veterans, who are students, faculty and

staff and in every college of the University of Minnesota. Veterans from wars spanning Korea, through the present-day, inquired about our program, the training we do and our goals for the future. We were truly honored to spend time with our comrades in arms, as we remembered those who have served. **GOPHER STRONG!**



Cadets Dong, Thomas, Bulver, Scufsa, Shobert, Tomczyk and 2LT Gladitsch supporting the University of Minnesota Veterans' Day event.

## Sights from Fall 2019



Cadets conducting field training during Mega Leadership Lab I.



Cadets Pantalion & Weddle add the Ten-Miler streamer to the Battalion Colors.



Cadets negotiate an obstacle during the 2019 Ranger Challenge competition.



Cadet Brooks conducting a Pre-Training Inspection layout during a Lead Lab.



CDT Bornstein conducting the high dive during the Combat Water Survival Training.



Gopher Battalion Volunteer Team setting up the UMN Sports Field Dome.



## Sights from Fall 2019



CSM Clary, Cadets Rathke, Scufsa, Buehler, and COL Phillips at UMN Armory



Gopher Ranger Challenge Team during one of the many competitive events.



MSIIs Cadets training conducting Map Reading & Land Navigation Training.



Cadets Marick, Manke Pantalion & Bulver during the 2019 Army Ten-Miler.



Gopher Battalion conducting a road march during the Fall Field Training Exercise.



Gopher Battalion ready for the Army Physical Fitness Test 2-Mile run event.

**Spring 2020 Calendar**


Spring Semester Begin	21 Jan 20	Bataan Death March	13-16 Mar 20	Joint Service Review	25 April 20
CWST	12 Feb 20	CFTX	16-19 Apr 20	Senior Dinner	25 April 20
Northern Warfare Challenge	22 Feb 20	GAFPB	27-29 Mar 20	Commissioning Ceremony	14 May 20
Spring Break	9-13 Mar 20	KU Ranger Challenge	3-5 Apr 20	Commencements	14-17 May 20




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If you are interested in making a donation please contact (612) 624-3080 or send to Attn: Campus Life Program Cadet Fund, 15 Church St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455

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