Welcome to the Summer 2020 edition of the AFROTC Det. 330 newsletter!

We’re proud to share with you all the different and impressive things our Cadets and Cadre have done this past summer. We’d like to thank everyone who contributed to these newsletters, and to all of our readers. We are looking forward to a great semester!!

Hope you enjoy and don’t forget to follow us on social media!
MEET YOUR DET COMMANDER

UPDATE: there’s a new face lurking the Cadre Hallway and his name is Colonel Steven J. Jantz! Col Jantz has taken over as Detachment Commander following the retirement of Former Det/CC Col Bacot last Spring.

A California native, Colonel Jantz entered the Air Force in 1993 as a distinguished graduate from the United States Air Force Academy. After attending graduate school at the University of Washington, he completed Pilot Training in 1996. His flying assignments have included duties as an Instructor Pilot, Flight Commander, Wing Standardization and Evaluation Flight Examiner, Operations Officer, and Squadron Commander. Colonel Jantz also enjoyed assignments as an air liaison officer, as an Olmsted Scholar, as an Air Attaché, and as a Vice Wing Commander. Colonel Jantz is a command pilot with more than 2,500 flying hours including over 230 F-16 combat hours with tours in Operation Southern Watch and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is married to Rebecca Jantz, and they have three children: Emily, Deborah, and Jonathan.
Q: What made you decide to pursue a career in the Air Force?
A: Growing up as a kid, I always had this fascination for airplanes and my dad saw that in me. So even though I didn’t really know a whole lot about the Air Force in general he knew I liked airplanes and he had a couple of friends that had retired from the Air Force and one in particular was a pilot and actually had retired and built his own acrobatic airplane. So I got a chance to go and talk to him about what he did in the Air Force and then he took me up in his plane and just had me hooked on wanting to fly and so that was kind of how it mostly started as I was in high school.

Q: Describe your experiences at the AF Academy. What did you learn from schooling there?
A: The freshman year at the Academy is not fun for anybody back then. I think that’s still true to some extent. Their goal there at the time was to kind of break down your individuality a little bit and make you part of a team. So there was just a lot of the discipline and a lot of the military training that went on there that I knew was happening, but I wasn’t quite ready for. But man, it really did help me. I mean, I learned a lot of confidence in myself and my abilities. I learned a lot about what teamwork meant and how to look out for each other and that I don’t have to do it all myself. That’s what this whole team of Air Force and unit you’re involved with is for and I think that was instilled in me as well as the core values. I think we’re a big part of that, which I feel like I had going to the academy, but it kind of hammered all those home as well. So but like I said the confidence, some leadership, and teamwork were probably the top three things that I would say I learned from the academy.

Q: Have you had any misconceptions about ROTC from your time prior to joining Det. 330 that you have noticed to be different since taking on your new position?
A: I think a pleasant surprise is how much this Detachment is Cadet run versus Cadre run. I know the Cadre oversee it, but it’s really cool to me to see how much cadet leadership we have and that we just give you guys tasks and you run with it. You guys come up with ideas and we say yeah run with it. And so there’s just so much that I didn’t realize was the cadets taking care of that I see now that I’m looking forward to seeing how much more that goes on and I’m excited to be part of that.

Q: What has been your favorite assignment and why?
A: The second time I was in Misawa, Japan. I was there for the first year as a DO (Directorate of Operations) for a Fighter Squadron and then the last two years I was a Squadron Commander of an Operation Support Squadron. So I think that was probably my favorite job, favorite assignment because I was getting to fly. It was really a true leadership experience in the flying world, especially in Fighters. A Fighter Squadron is comprised mostly of officers and so there’s not a whole lot of enlisted leadership opportunities. So that was really a good time for me to learn about and learn how much I need to rely on some of my enlisted leaders to help me with leading a whole squadron. And so I think that was my favorite assignment.
Q: Do you recall any failures during your AF career? And what did you learn from it?
A: I'll give you some general ideas because I don't have any specific stories to tell but I would
say in general there have been times in my career where I was focusing way too much on
myself versus the unit. I always wanted to make
sure that I looked good, so I would do things
that focused on that too much and it was
maybe to the detriment of my relationship with
those around me. Another thing I think I've
gotten better with over my career is just being
available. When I was a squadron commander,
some of my flight commanders thought I came
across as being disinterested or that I didn't
care what was going on in their flights and so it
almost made them feel like I wasn't interested
in what they were doing or what was going on
in their flights. My perspective was to try to stay
fairly hands off and let them lead and try to
kind of stay out of their realm and let them be
leaders within their own flights or their own
offices/units, but I think I took it too far. I didn't
want to be a micromanaging, doing everything
and getting my fingers on everything that's
going on. But I think I took that to the extreme
in the other direction and so you got to find
that balance between allowing other people
within your unit to lead but making sure that
they know that you're always available to come
to talk to them to let them show you what
they're doing, so that you can see what the
great things that they and their folks are doing.

Q: What is one piece of advice that you can share to
Det.330 Cadets (newly joined --> about to commission) on
how to be successful as a student and cadet?
A: You know it may come as no surprise, but just give it your
all. That core value of excellence in all we do just strive for
that. Whether it's grades in your degree program, whether
it's your ROTC classes, whether it's you know learning
whatever it is in LLAB situations, and even looking for
leadership positions because even if you don't think that it's
right for you then go for it anyway, because you learn a lot.
Look at all the different options. Even if you know exactly
what you want to do still be open to other ideas because
number one you may not get your first choice and then you
got to have some backup plans. But number two you may
just stumble across something that you didn't even really
know about or that know that you might like and you can
get involved in that. So keep your perspectives open, but
man just work. Now is the time to work hard because if you
can get started off on the right foot doing what you love
doing, then that's good. That obviously is going to make the
next however many years you decide to serve worthwhile
for you. So don't hold back now. It's the time to go for it.

Q: What do you like to do in your free time? Any interests
or hobbies? Do you still get the chance to get out in the air
to get some flights in?
A: I haven't had a chance to fly lately, so I don't know if there
will be a chance for me to do that around here or not, but
I'll at least have to jump on these flight simulators at some
point and check that out. But I do and I love sports in
general. I love playing basketball. I still try to get out of
much as I can to play basketball. I'm a lot slower and can't
jump as high as I used to but I still enjoy playing ball when I
catch a chance to and any team sports. I think I'm okay at
most things just not really good at anything. So I don't mind
that position because then I can get out and contribute and
do whatever and just have fun playing. Also, I've always
been very involved in a church from Protestant Christian
background. And so I've tried to get plugged into a church
everywhere we've lived.

Q: Any parting words to share to the cadets for this
semester?
A: I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to be part of this
Detachment. I've heard such great things about it. Not only
from Colonel Bacot as we were doing our turnover, but
from our cadre here and then the cadet interaction I've had
so far that's just been great. It seems like a really strong unit,
a strong detachment, a great group of folks, and I'm looking
forward to being part of this and seeing how we can work
together to make the Detachment better and continue to
develop these Cadets and leaders in the Air Force.
Life as a CTA

STORY BY CADET JULIA PARSONS

I had the opportunity to be called CTA Parsons this past summer! Right now, I am studying Environmental Science - Natural Resource Management at the University of Maryland College Park. Outside of LLAB. I work as a Park Ranger and referee for paintball. But, during the Fall 2020 semester, you’ll see me walking around as the 27th POC Squadron Commander.

The role of a CTA wasn’t anything that I had envisioned it as. What initially sounded like a grueling summer spent yelling, sweating, and baking under the hot Alabama heat - was nothing like that. Being a CTA has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever gotten the chance to be a part of. From meeting some of the most amazing cadets and cadre from across the country to seeing the breathtaking sunsets to being able to watch my own flight grow as one, there is nothing I have done that can compare to this.

About a week before I flew out to Field Training, I was notified that I was selected as a back-up CTA after initially turning down my CTA position in favor of Project GO. This news was completely shocking and very exciting. I quit my job, got my duffle thrown together, kissed my family goodbye, and hopped on a plane to Georgia. After navigating the slightly familiar airport, I met some of my best friends, CTA Violante and CTA Homolka. After our first Corona test, we were put into isolation before getting our results. CTA Violante and I realized we could in fact talk out the windows and it made isolation a little better. Our rag-tag crew of new CTAs had dubbed ourselves “the sick boys.” Don’t worry, we were all healthy in the end. Even though we couldn’t work with cadets directly in Max B, we did get to enjoy the spectacular sunsets Maxwell offers. Our first taste of real CTA time was when we were released to work Support. Cadets - you would not believe the amount of time, effort, and planning that goes into every second of every day. Even though some days we were up at 0200 for a 0300 meeting only to be raking sand at 0400, it was the people I shared my time with that made it worth it. The CTAs I worked with were some of the most dedicated and driven people I have ever met.
While I shuffled my way into TOC (basically Field Training Mission Control Center) for the morning brief, there were always people cracking a joke and CTA Kraatz making the best pot of coffee. Yes, the days were long and rough, but who wouldn't want to look for an IED someone lost in a grassy field? Not many people can say they did that.

It was Max C that I had the opportunity to co-train Oscar Flight with CTA Kruger. After breaking my foot TD-1 from kicking a door way too hard, I knew it would be an interesting Max. Oscar flight left the gate running, and I had the chance to see a real team grow and mesh and meld. CTA Kruger unfortunately was unable to continue training, so I was the flight CTA from about 0400-1700. Talk about long days! But, let me tell you.

Every second was worth it. While the night time CTA mafia games were off the hook, CTA Cao held down the DFAC as the Chow Cao, and Violante, Homolka, Verzaal, and Purdy made the off time fun. Nothing comes close to when you see your team finally get it. They get the point of it. They get why we are making them do these things. And goodness gracious when they see that, they take it and run with it.

Oscar Flight will always be my Warrior Flight. When they asked me to lead them in Blood on the Risers as we marched to the prop and wings, I felt my team as one. I tried to drop little gems of wisdom here and there, but most importantly, I learned from them about my why. Why am I doing what I do? Why am I here? And my why is simple - I am here because I love my people and want them to grow. Masked or not - I love my people.

This is CTA Parsons, checking out for the last time. I leave you with this bit of wisdom my flight heard all the time: BE BOLD! Take control of your life, stop asking questions, and act!
Field Training, COVID Style
THE MOST FUN YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO HAVE AGAIN

By Cadet Elizabeth Martinez

Every cadet in AFROTC knows the feelings of nervousness and excitement that comes when thinking about Field Training. Preparing for 1-2 years creates lots of suspense and expectancy, yet you still don’t know exactly what’s going to happen when you get there. This summer was even more unpredictable, all the way through the end of Field Training.

This summer all cadets had to spend 14 days quarantining prior to arrival and 3 days in isolation with our roommate once we arrived at Maxwell AFB while we waited for our COVID-19 (that we hoped were negative) test results. After every cadet in the encampment received their test result we were able to commence training. At Maxwell plans changed daily, hourly, and we had to flex and adjust many times throughout Field Training. Each MAX had a different experience, however, we were still able to meet the objectives necessary to prove we had what it took to be a part of the POC. This is a huge testament to how tenacious our Air Force is, that we do hard things to get the mission done.

I know due to the unique situation with the pandemic this past summer was unlike any other Field Training experience ever. I knew I would bond with my Flight but didn’t realize we would end up as close as we did. Pushing ourselves and cheering each other on in extremely uncomfortable situations caused us to grow close quickly. My self confidence grew greatly during those 13 days as I proved to myself I can do hard things. My biggest takeaway was that with my team behind me, we can do more, even seemingly impossible things together, than one could ever do alone. I saw this not only in my flight but the CTAs, cadre, and all the staff involved in making FTU 2020 happen.
Q: As a Field Training Officer (FTO), how would you explain the duties of your position?

**Captain Rager:** As an FTO, I had a partner FTO so there were two FTOs to a flight and my partner FTO was prior ROTC and she was there last summer so she was very familiar with the process. We decided along with our STO (Squadron Training Officer) to assign morning and afternoon shifts and my partner preferred mornings and I much preferred evenings, so I pretty much met our flight wherever they were for lunch and me and my partner CTA would do a little bit of turnover with the morning crew and we would also spend our morning kind of looking at the schedule seeing what’s coming up meet with our CTA to kind of make sure we’re on the same page and have an idea as to what we’re going to do with all of our time because sometimes there’s like chunks of time where it’s not exactly clear what needs to happen and we have to fill that time. It’s called FTO time where we have the ability to be a little bit creative and either talk or do Leadership Lessons, mentorship type stuff. GLPs all kind of different things but essentially it varied from day to day where we were at in the max you know early on with training and then we get into the evaluations and that’s pretty much it. Max A and B were real similar. Max C was totally different. So I was on afternoons the entire time for the most part and then turnover with the morning crew about halfway through. Sometimes I would help out in the morning and sometimes the morning crew would be with the evening. It just depended if they needed all hands on. It varied, but usually we were able to stick to our shift schedule so we would get normal sleep schedules.

Q: Did you have a favorite event during Field Training? If so, why?

**Captain Freund:** You know, I really liked once we got done with the first few days and like doing the mandatory sort of classroom days and the drill evaluations. I really looked forward to going to Vigilant Warrior. I thought those days were a lot of fun. They went by really fast. We got to like sort of see them (the cadets) having fun because they were getting these paint balls and stuff and I guess maybe because it was towards the end of their two weeks, so they were a little more high spirited I guess you could say. I think I looked forward to those days the most because it’s just kind of fun being on the field as opposed to being in a classroom. It’s kind of nice to like actually do military things.
Q: As your first time as an FTO, was there anything that you found as challenging or something that you needed to work on from how you held your position?

**Captain Rager:** I wouldn’t say particularly hard, but I definitely relied on my partner FTO to show me the way because there is training for the FTO’s, but a lot of it is you kind of figure it out as you go and I’m very thankful that she was my partner and she was there last summer and she went through ROTC as a cadet not too long ago. So during Max A it was kind of following her lead and figuring out how my tone should be and what settings I should use that tone. And I found out that sometimes I have to adjust myself. Maybe I was being too intense or not intense enough or being too soft at times so you kind of got to know the right times to react in certain ways. But you know, I also offered my advice to her as well. But she was an awesome partner and she just really helped set both of us up for success.

Q: Being your first time, Was there anything that you didn’t expect to happen that happened when you went to Field Training?

**Captain Freund:** I came in with very little expectations because I obviously had never been to Field Training as a Cadet or CTA or anything and so I wasn’t really sure what exactly it would be like. I guess one of the things I didn’t realize was that the CTA’s would be doing most of the in your face yelling and stuff like that where as the FTO’s were more of the evaluators and we can, depending on our personalities, get involved in that as well. So, that was like one of the big eye opening moments for me. But it was one of those situations that it was what you made of it. They give you a lot of FTO time and as we kind of progressed through different Maxes we sort of learned, you know, what was an effective way to spend that time and what wasn’t. So we started towards Max C doing a lot of discussions on leadership and stuff and luckily I had a really good CTA that was good about coming up with things to talk about. So basically it seemed like it was what you made of it.

And as it kind of progressed, you sort of realized how much fun I was actually having because I got to be around people the whole time and I got to develop those bonds, you know, not just with people I work with but with the trainees in a professional sense and it ended up being something I came back from and I was like, I really enjoyed that actually.

Q: What kind of relationships did you end up building with your partner FTO, CTAs, and Cadets through Field Training?

**Captain Freund:** It kind of depended honestly. So my fellow FTO and I were pretty close. We always did handoffs and stuff and luckily I was fortunate to have a good partner FTO to work with. She was from Texas A&M actually and we switched our Detachment patches for the first max. So we could kind of throw them off and we didn’t want them to know where we were from. For Max A and Max B, the CTA I primarily worked with was this one guy who was very much louder than I am which is kind of what we did intentionally to sort of balance each other’s personalities out. So like I’m sort of a quieter guy and the other FTO was more of a gung ho person. So she partnered with the quieter CTA and I partnered with the louder CTA and it ended up complementing each other really well. We got along great, especially the CTA I was working with. He and I sort of learned from each other the whole time and I had a chance which I hadn’t had in a while where I actually felt like I was mentoring someone which was kind of cool. I gave him some feedback on things that I had seen in the past. Then my other CTA that I worked with for Max C was different and she was really good. She was way sharper than I was as a Cadet and so I learned a lot from her just in terms of organization and professionalism and things like that. Trainee wise, I would say like the first 12 days I kept them pretty much at a good distance just sort of addressing them when I wanted to like hammer a point across or like have a discussion on something and then like the last day came around and I actually tried to get to know a little bit more about them and you know where they’re from and stuff.
Q: Do you have any big takeaways from being an FTO at Field Training?

**Captain Rager:** Oh, the main thing was I enjoyed the work and getting a broader scope of how the whole process of Air Force ROTC works. Especially being the Operations Flight Commander (OFC) this year, it helped me understand the big picture and what all the training that you all are doing at the Detachment and on the zoom and all the things that I saw when I first arrived and in the spring that I didn’t really totally understand. I couldn’t connect all the dots as to why we were doing certain things, but now it makes total sense. Like I can totally connect why certain things were happening in the Armory as to how it makes sense at Field Training because I was an evaluator at Field Training and I know that we went through all that stuff at the Armory. So yeah, it was like connecting the dots and seeing the big picture for the whole ROTC process.

Q: After this summer, do you have any recommendations to give to AS200 Cadets that plan to go to Field Training this upcoming summer?

**Captain Freund:** I would say be prepared if you are quieter person, which I know we have a lot of quieter 100s, be prepared to fake it till you make it in a sense, at least for those few weeks, because we don’t have a lot to go on as FTOs and CTAs. It’s 14 days, but in reality it’s only like 12 days of actually seeing cadets and training them. So if they’re naturally quieter people, try to get out of their comfort zone and start getting used to that now as a 100 and 200. So start getting into situations where you have to march people and if they have the time and availability get involved in the Arnold Air Society and Honor Guard stuff and get used to putting themselves in stressful situations, so that when Field Training comes around they’re ready for it. Marching was a big focus point this year because of the fact that we had a lot of the spring cut off and so people came in not as well prepared as they otherwise would have been among that aspect. I would say those are the biggest two things: making sure your marching is good and making sure you’re motivated and prepared to lead others as best as you can.

Q: After this summer, do you have any recommendations to give to AS200 Cadets that plan to go to Field Training this upcoming summer?

**Captain Rager:** Yeah. My recommendation is to utilize your time within Air Force ROTC wisely. If you’re in the program your goal is hopefully to earn your commission. And for those 200s, this is a very important year to decide whether this is something for them or not. You know your first year is kind of feeling things out and your second year is usually a make or break on whether you’re going to get an EA and you’re going to get to Field Training and hopefully become a POC and earn your commission. But you get out what you put in and take it seriously. Make Air Force ROTC a priority in your life somewhere towards the top. It doesn’t have to be number one, but somewhere up there towards the top and carve out a chunk of time in your day and your week for ROTC and be prepared. Utilize your time wisely and that’s my advice and prepare and listen to your Flight Commanders.

"Start getting into situations where [you] have to march people ... and get used to putting [yourself] in stressful situations, so that when Field Training comes around [you’re] ready for it."

- Captain Freund

"You get out what you put in and take it seriously. Make Air Force ROTC a priority in your life somewhere towards the top. It doesn't have to be number one, but somewhere up there towards the top"

- Captain Rager
Hello everyone! My name is C/Majid and I am a sophomore here at UMD studying Aerospace Engineering. I was asked to talk a little bit about my summer internship so here goes! I intern at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab (APL) in Laurel, MD. APL is a world-renowned research center where both civilians and military personnel focus on creating solutions to tough engineering problems. I have interned here since I was a sophomore in high school and the past two years, I’ve had the chance to spend my summers working full time in the Space Exploration Sector. Typically, us interns find housing around the DMV area and commute to work, but this summer, COVID made our internship completely online. Every year, I have had the opportunity to work on a totally new project. This summer I focused on a project entitled SPACE - BASED KILL ASSESSMENT (SKA). It’s just as cool as it sounds but unfortunately, I can’t go into too much detail about it.

In high school, I worked on an instrument which detected water particles on the moon and last year I worked with the Iridium satellite company to collect data on a constellation of satellites deorbiting Earth. Interning at APL for the past four years was my motivation for switching from computer engineering to aerospace engineering. Typically, APL hires a few hundred interns from across the country and even though we all have our projects to focus on, we end up creating long lasting friendships – in fact, one of my best friends is a girl who interned with me my sophomore year of high school. Our day during the summer consists of getting to work around 0900, attending meetings, working on code, eating lunch at the Chick-Fil-A with friends, and usually partaking in the tons of intern opportunities APL has set up for us. Depending on the projects we work on, we also have the opportunity to apply for Secret and Top-Secret Security Clearances.

APL is an extremely intern friendly environment where we have access to all kinds of labs, go on field trips around the DMV area, and attend intern events like the Annual Pi Eating Contest. For the record, I hate pie. As APL interns, we are also encouraged to create connections with the employees we work for. My mentor, Ben Rodriguez, challenged me this summer to set up Zoom meetings with APL employees who are retired/reserve Air Force officers to learn more about the career opportunities the Air Force has to offer. I come from a very non-military background and so this was extremely beneficial. Thanks to my mentors (and also AFROTC!), I hope to serve as a developmental engineer in the Space Force or Space Operations Officer. Reach out to me if you have any questions or are looking to apply to APL next summer!
Cadet Hannah Sizenbach is an AS200 in the AFROTC program. She started out in the Spring 2020 semester as an AS150. She joined the program to jump start her career in the Air Force, with hopes to commission as an officer and pursue the Office of Special Investigations. She is a political science and global studies major, with a minor in photography at UMBC.

C/Sizenbach has always liked learning languages; over the years, she has learned American Sign Language, Spanish, German, and Latin. She joined the Project GO-Portuguese program to learn a new language and become more involved in the ROTC program. The class started late May and continued until early August. Class was in session five days a week from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The program was through San Diego State University and was supposed to be held there; however, it was moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her Portuguese class contained 6 other cadets, some Army ROTC and others Air Force. C/Sizenbach’s favorite part was meeting and forming friendships with the different cadets from across the country, and of course, learning the new language. Her professors were Brazilian and taught cultures and traditions, in addition to the Portuguese language.

C/Sizenbach has hopes of being stationed in Europe, specifically Portugal or Germany as a Special Investigations Officer. To anyone who is thinking about participating in the program, C/Sizenbach has one key advice for you: “make sure you keep up with your assignments and work, as it is a huge course load.” Up next, C/Sizenbach is planning to participate in an upper-level, Project GO- Portuguese internship in Brazil.
In this piece you will get to hear some perspective from our one and only wing commander, C/Col David Fuentes. Cadet Fuentes brings an experienced, realistic, and refreshing persona to lead our Cadet Wing. Det. 330 cadets have the utmost respect for him and we are looking forward to an unprecedented, yet exciting semester under his reign. Read below to learn more about himself, his lessons learned, and his advice for younger cadets. Enjoy!

Q: Tell Us a little of your background (Hometown, school, studying, aspiring AFSC, etc.)

A: So I’m obviously David Fuentes. I’m currently from Frederick Maryland. I grew up as an Army brat, so I spent a lot of time living pretty much throughout the United States, but for the most part concentrated in the South that’s where a lot of Army installations are so most of the time was either Fort Benning in Georgia, Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico, or Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state. I go to the University of Maryland Global Campus. I study Applied Math and Information Systems Management. Essentially, it’s a lot of telecommunication and database management stuff with statistics and all that good jazz attached to it. I enjoy the school. I was ahead of the curve with online schooling when Corona came around so shout out to UMGC for that. My biggest motivator for ROTC is probably family. Just the background that I have. My dad was in the Army for a career. He retired from the Army after all and I kind of just felt like that’s what I wanted to do from a very young age. Whether it was the Army-Navy Etc. I just wanted to join the military making a career out of it wasn’t really a decision that I had come to terms with until probably high school when I was like ‘yeah, that’s definitely what I want to do’. It’s pretty cool starting a career in your 20s. You can retire after 20 years and you’re still in your 40s and then you get another job and get a second retirement.

My biggest thing was career-focused for the service. One just for job security, but two I grew up in this environment. I love the military environment. I wasn’t one of those kids who joined the program and was dead-set like I’m going to be a pilot. I want to be a CSO. I just wanted to join the Air Force and whatever job they gave me, you know, I’ll do it the best of my abilities and I’ll make the most of it just because I think I kind of just go with the flow for the most part. But when the rated boards came around I was like, you know what I’ll throw my name in the hat and I got a combat systems officer selection. I am still waiting to get my physical done, so if all that is green then I’ll be a CSO in the Air Force which is pretty cool. CSO was my number one choice just because of my experiences during our career days the CSOs kind of stood out. Mostly because they’re like, yeah, we get to fly and do all this other stuff, but also that’s not our main job. We’re doing other things other than within the aircraft. A lot of mission planning, strategy, and logistics planning happens out of the aircraft under the CSO role. So it’s pretty all-encompassing. If I don’t pass my flight physical, number one and two choices on my form 53’s are Logistics and Acquisitions just because I kind of like the organizational aspects behind them, but more importantly the travel opportunities that both of those career fields have right off the bat as a second lieutenant. I can commission and my fiancée and I love to travel so I put a couple overseas slots on my dream sheet as well as places in the U.S. that we’d like to visit and it’s the pretty good odds that we might get stationed somewhere we want but there’s also pretty good odds that we might end up somewhere else and that’s fine. But really the management aspect is kind of what I like and the people aspect of managing getting to work with a lot of people right off the bat is super cool. I want to make an impact on as many people as I possibly can for the positive. Like kind of steering people into the right direction or giving them resources to steer themselves instead in the right direction.
Q: What got you interested in ROTC? Why did you join this way into the military versus other possible paths?

A: So I initially actually wanted to enlist out of high school. I was kind of steered away from it by my parents. They were playing the long game. They said you know, why don’t you give college a shot your first year. If you don’t like it then you can do what you want. You’re an adult but you know try college, study things that interest you, and if you like it then continue and if not make the decision for yourself. So in my first stint, I did go to the University of Maryland, College Park. I was kind of studying things but I really didn’t find what I wanted to study. Then at the end of my freshman year I kind of got a whiff of ROTC. I saw people recruiting, so I got to talk to them. Now Lieutenant Lawless was one of the first people that I sort of interacted with in ROTC and I was like how do I join that. So my sophomore year at College Park I joined as a 250 and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the program. I enjoyed the camaraderie aspects of it and kind of just getting to meet people who are from different walks of life who have their own reasons for making the decision to join ROTC. Also, the fact that there’s no template or mold for leadership. It’s sort of we’re in this together and we’re all going to figure out how exactly we can best lead ourselves, which is cool. But, after my 250-year things academically weren’t working that great. So I actually dropped out of college and took time to figure out what exactly was the path I wanted to get on. I was again re-evaluating if I wanted to enlist in the Air Force. Do I want to try and go the ROTC route one more time? So I went back to college. I actually was studying something that I enjoyed. That was my biggest issue, which is why I want to heavily push to study what you enjoy, figure out what you enjoy and study that because everything else truly does sort of fall in line once you figure that out. But, I got my associates. I was doing applied math at Montgomery College and then I transferred to UMBC and I was like cool what do you have that’s math-related? They said we have liked math and information systems. So I said cool, what’s info systems and they said it was databases and information technology. So I said, all right, sign me up for that. At the same time I was reaching back out to the Cadre at Det. 330 to see what my options were for ROTC. They said yes, we’ll give you another shot. It seems that you’re up on your feet. You have a positive outlook on all these things. Don’t mess up though. So far I haven’t messed up and we’ll see what the future holds. I’m looking for those butter bars in the spring.

Q: What has been the best and worst parts of being in ROTC?

A: I would say having the opportunity to get to know a bunch of different people and that team mentality. I know that there are a lot of people especially in our class who might not get along naturally, but we all kind of manage those relationships and at the end of the day, we’re sort of all in it together. We all want to commission get those butter bars and that’s just not something you really find in a lot of places. You probably do if you dig deep enough, but it’s definitely not like the traditional college experience I feel. So that’s like the high point. The low point is probably when I realized that I was too invested in ROTC and not invested enough in my academics. So that was very crucial to establishing my own skills that I’m implementing now to manage my workload both with school and ROTC and then my personal life because at the end of the day school and my personal life trumps what’s going on in ROTC. Because if something happens and I’m no longer in the program. Those things are still here. So that’s definitely the low point but even then there were lessons to be learned and I think I’ve learned from them and I’m implementing those changes.

Q: So how do you now kind of maintain your ROTC-School balance?

A: Prior to COVID I worked at the University Book Center as a supervisor over there and I was working full-time and also in school and right then and there was when I really was like dang like this is what it’s like to juggle multiple responsibilities like I’m in school and I’m paying for school and I’m also working so that I can pay for school. So being able to manage my time with work and school and then also going home to my fiancée. I was like dang, that’s what life is going to be in the future regardless of whether I go ROTC or if I get a real job in the private sector, but that is going to be life. It’s work. It’s balancing my work commitments, my personal commitments, and whatever I’d like to do on the side. So Google Calendars was definitely something that helped me out from the start being able to link it to my phone and then plug in all of the big events that happen throughout the week. On top of google calendars, I kind of just googled like a college schedule planner and plugged in my classes and what times I want to get school work done and kind of prioritizing what needs to get done before I can do X, Y, and Z. So like I just developed a system that works for me and know that if someone else were to copy exactly what I did that it might not work and that’s fine. You just got to tweak it to how you learn, how you live, but I’m still learning. I’m still trying to improve my time management. I don’t think anyone is perfect at it and if they are saying that they are then they’re lying because there’s no one who’s like one hundred percent the time management killer. Maybe Cadet Loveridge.
Q: What do you do in your spare time? Any hobbies, interests, hanging with the fiancée mostly?
A: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So free time. I do have a fiancée, we have a dog. So a lot of things that I do in my free time, we usually do together just because we’re always around each other and we enjoy a lot of the same things. So, you know, whether it be sitting down and watching Netflix, we try to exercise together, play with Winston - he’s our dachshund (there’s a picture of him in the UO). But just those sorts of things like nothing too crazy. I mean, I do want to go skydiving. She doesn’t know that, but just normal stuff, like we’ll go hiking we’ll go out on the town every now and then but nothing super crazy. I’m just living a normal life.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
A: I hope to still be in the Air Force in 10 years just because again my plan is to make a career out of it, but you don’t really know if that’s the plan until you actually get in it. But other than that, I mean we’re getting married in January. So starting a family. I mean a couple of kids probably and balancing again work, personal life, kids, and all of that sort of stuff. It’s not going to go away and just living life I think is what the answer is.

Q: What advice would you give to underclassmen that have just begun their ROTC Career?
A: Underclassmen and just new cadets in the program in general, my biggest point of advice is to get out of your comfort zone. Be comfortable with getting out of your comfort zone. I think that’s really when you’ll find your own sense of confidence. If you’re not willing to get out of your comfort zone and risk it then I don’t think you can really experience true growth. You might learn some things but when push comes to shove will you be able to perform under pressure? Other than that definitely professionalism.

I’m not saying you have to have a pull strap across your back or any of that nonsense, but just be a normal person, be yourself, but also be courteous and respectful. That’s all I have. Like I’m not saying you always have to be going ‘Yes, sir. Yes sir. Yes sir. No, sir. No, ma’am. Whatever.’ But, if someone walks by say ‘hey, what’s up?’ or ‘Hey, how’s it going?’ Or if you have questions, ask them in a professional manner. But like just be a decent person. That’s it.

Q: Any parting words for the wing for the semester?
A: I’d say be prepared for anything. Be flexible. Right now we are all very hopeful that we can operate safely in a COVID environment. We still don’t even know if next week UMD is going to change course and go virtual. So be ready to stick out the semester in a virtual format and come to every single function ready to learn, ready to perform, and with a positive attitude. Staring at a computer screen for a few hours is not pleasant, but remember the purpose of why we’re doing this. It’s to develop leaders of character. For you underclassmen, it’s to send you to Field Training and for you to return as a POC. For the POC, it’s to continue to hone your leadership skills and your repertoire with your peers and find opportunities to develop yourself further as a follower and a person before you cross that finish line and commission. For the seniors, we still have a year, but don’t get complacent now. It’s tempting to kind of just go, ‘Alright cool senior year woo we did it.’ But again, remember the Why. You seniors set the example for the rest of the wing. Remember that the way you present yourself has ramifications beyond the superficial. It really does have an impact. So we should all remind ourselves to maintain a professional appearance when it comes to training and be ready to either conduct lead lab safely in person and virtually or 100% virtually. We don’t know just be flexible. That’s it.

"If you're not willing to get out of your comfort zone and risk it then I don't think you can really experience true growth. You might learn some things but when push comes to shove will you be able to perform under pressure?"
-Cadet Fuentes
Summer in Photos

Top center: C/Bishop enjoying the great outdoors at his local reservoir
Top left: C/Schooley horseback riding in the Rocky mountains
Mid left: The five Det. 330 CTA representatives that attended Field Training this summer (C/Enokian, C/Ables, C/Buck, C/Cayanan, & C/Parsons)
Bottom left: C/Retzbach perfecting his Kan Jam skills with his mid summer mane in Hilton Head, SC.
Bottom center: C/Byfield attempting an Obstacle course with his flight at FT
Bottom right: C/Ochoa at the Luray Caverns in Virginia
Mid right: MHG performing the Summer Commissioning Ceremony for three now LTs.