

Students in Army ROTC prepare for duty

Kassandra Cloos
News Editor

For students in the Reserve Officer's Training Corps at Elon University, the day often begins long before morning classes. With physical training starting at or before 6 a.m. multiple times per week among many other commitments, ROTC students' preparation for Army service requires dedication.

"It's difficult at times, being a student also, because you can't stay up late like the traditional college student," junior Demarco Crum said. "I enjoy it, but it's difficult."

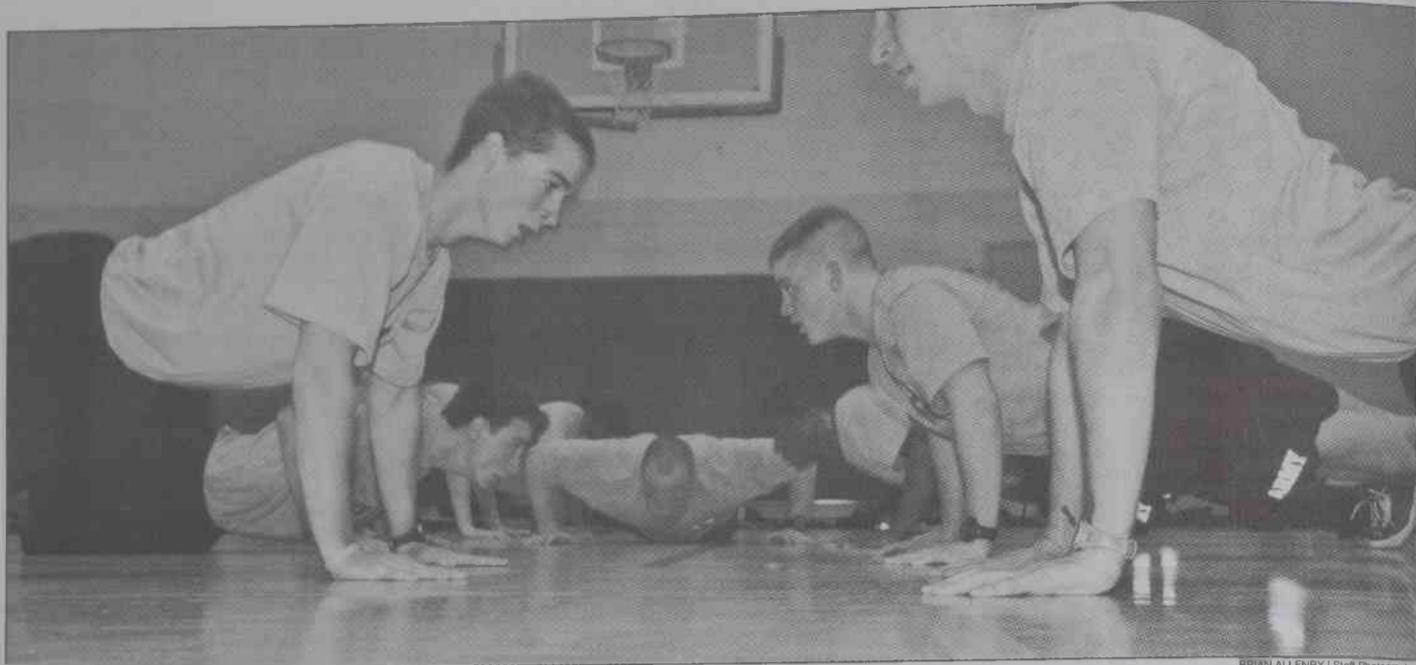
Maj. Stephen Thompson, assistant professor of military science, said students can join the ROTC either during or after their freshman year of college.

"Progression cadets are the ones who start as freshmen and then move all the way through the four years of college," he said.

Crum, whose tuition is covered by an ROTC scholarship he secured before starting at Elon, said this year is all about preparing him and the other juniors for the Leader and Development Assessment Course, a camp in Fort Lewis, Wash., that ROTC cadets attend the summer before their senior year of college.

"For a cadet, that's the Super Bowl," Thompson said. "It's a big event for them. Next to GPA, their score at camp is the next big discriminator of what really sets them apart, that's going to be able to show how good they are. Ultimately how they do at that camp, how they do with their GPA will determine what they do in the Army."

Crum said camp is highly realistic and all students have the opportunity to act as leaders. It's important, he



Members of Elon's ROTC have grueling schedules during their time in college. Cadets take classes on top of physical training, which is located about 45 minutes away. BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer

said, for all cadets to be able to handle every situation under intense pressure.

"If even one person doesn't understand exactly what's going on, the whole mission is at stake," he said. "Lives are at stake."

According to Crum, a lot of the camp involves learning how to work with other people.

"It's how you can deal with people, and complete strangers," he said. "So it's not quite realistic, if you're in a unit, you know those guys, those men and women, you know them well, you've trained with them, you sweat with them, hell, even sometimes you've bled with them, in battle."

Crum said much of his motivation for joining the ROTC came from his parents, who have both been active in the military.

"I'm one of the many who,

post 9/11, understood that at the time a lot of the manpower is being decreased in Iraq," Crum said. "At the time of the signing, we had two major conflicts going on. I knew what I was saying when I signed that dotted line and honestly I'd go back and sign it again."

First Lt. Joe DeNenno, class of 2009, said he decided he wanted to be in the ROTC during orientation weekend his freshman year at Catch the Fire.

"I don't think any of us deserve, per se, the rights we have just being born here," he said. "I've always wanted to do my part to give back."

DeNenno received a full-tuition ROTC scholarship and Elon provided him with room and board. He said if he had not received the scholarship, he would have attended Elon for one year and then enlisted with plans to return to college

later.

"Any ROTC experience is not going to be your typical college experience," he said. "You had to really want it. It was five days a week driving one and a half hours round trip to PT. It started a foundation for really knowing what you want."

DeNenno is now a company-fire support officer.

"Primarily, I lethally or non-lethally target and engage the enemy," he said.

"With all different possibilities and majors, I think I have one of the luckiest combinations of the two," DeNenno said. "Now, I get to market peace to people."

DeNenno said the different skills he learned at Elon through his professors and extracurricular activities have all played a part in qualifying him for the position he currently holds.

"If I could do it 100 times

over, I don't think I'd do anything different," he said. "Everything I did at Elon has somehow impacted what I do in the military."

DeNenno said he is nervous to deploy to Afghanistan in the coming weeks, but is also excited for the experience.

"Imagine being on a sports team and training for a game for five to six years and you finally get to play that game," he said. "I'm anxious to get over there. It's dangerous and scary but I've accepted that and I'm ready to go."

His unit, Charlie company, 2nd battalion, 87th infantry regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th mountain division, is the most deployed unit in the United States and has deployed every other year since 1992.

"Every morning you have to wake up and be fully committed to what you do," DeNenno said.

Administration strives to eliminate obstacles, create more opportunities for all students to study abroad

Gabriela Szewcow
Design Chief

When Adam Constantine graduated from Elon University in 2009, there was one thing he always regretted. Because he was an athlete, he was unable to study abroad, a common situation among student athletes.

As a member of the basketball team, his season overlapped fall and spring semester, as well as Winter Term. But athletes aren't the only students who miss out on Elon's study abroad opportunities.

Seeking to identify other factors preventing students from studying abroad, Elon administration is working to increase availability of these programs.

One theme of The Elon Commitment is "an unprecedented university commitment to diversity and global engagement," which the university plans to accomplish by making study abroad programs available to 100 percent of students on campus.

Seventy percent of Elon's most recent graduating class studied abroad, which Woody Pelton, dean of international programs and director of the Isabella Cannon Centre, believes is a good percentage. It's the 30 percent not going abroad that the university is attempting to reach by pinpointing barriers.

"There are some things that we've been able to identify," Pelton said. "Probably the No. 1 reason would be money."

He said some students think studying abroad is more costly than it actually is. A semester program usually ends up being less costly than a Winter Term program, which is why Pelton directs students to semester term programs if they are financially constrained.

Aside from financial reasons, Pelton identified high levels of student involvement as another deterrent from studying abroad. Because of this, many students have to make the choice between remaining on campus and being involved in their respective organizations or taking the opportunity to study abroad.

"Those are tough decisions to make, and I think that sometimes students choose against studying abroad," Pelton said.

Alana Dunn, assistant director for short-term study abroad programs, identified Greek Life, the theater program and athletics as primary obstacles preventing students from studying abroad.

"We're collaborating across campus and working to find opportunities and eliminate obstacles for students to study abroad," Dunn said.

The university has been speaking to focus groups of recent graduates who were unable to study abroad for various reasons, including athletic commitments and financial issues.

By hearing directly from students about why they did not study abroad, the university hopes to cater to the same demographics from which the

What does 100 percent really mean?

Elon is not expecting 100 percent of students to study abroad, but wants 100 percent of students to have access to the programs.

"This means money should not be an issue," Pelton said. "This should be an option to every student regardless of what their parents do for a living or how much of a scholarship they're on. And discipline should not rule you out either. And neither should being an athlete, being a member of Greek Life or being in the theatre program."

graduates came and give them more study abroad opportunities.

"We're working with academic departments to find programs for those departments that are predetermined for a specific major," Dunn said.

She said she believes it is the goal of Elon's study abroad programs to fit into students' plans and complement their studies.

"It's not just our goal, it's the goal of the entire university," she said. "We're at the core."

Pelton said he believes giving students a variety of options is key.

"That's why we offer the Winter Term study abroad time," he said. "It's less disruptive to students' involvements on campus."

According to Constantine, athletics is one of the biggest obstacles that stand to studying abroad.

"Even for sports whose seasons don't overlap in semester, it is still near impossible to study abroad due to the pre and post season workouts that are established by each collegiate sport," he said.

Because of this, Pelton plans to work with coaches on finding a solution to allow student athletes to study abroad. The study abroad office is also working directly with academic departments in a similar manner.

"Every department, if they work with us, can weave a study abroad into their eight-semester program," Pelton said. "I think it makes you better understand the United States and yourself because you have to look at it through a lens that's different from what you have used all your life. You become more curious about the world and I think that in itself makes you a better student."