

Jax State ROTC Alumni Newsletter

Spring 2025



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings Gamecock Battalion Alumni,
As we sit on the doorstep of Spring, I hope your year is off to a great start! Things are moving and shaking on the Jax State campus and the semester is well underway. I wanted to take a moment to update you on some recent changes to the Directors and Officers for the ROTC Alumni Network. Regretfully, COL(R) Jason Benefield has stepped away from the President's role due to personal reasons. COL(R) Benefield led at a critical time in the life of the network, and he will be missed. In the interim, I have agreed to step back into the role of President. The members currently on the board have all agreed to stay on and serve, but there will be a search for a new President to lead us into the future. That said, this is an invitation to find your place to plug in and serve on the board. We all know it is best to volunteer now versus being voluntold later! There will be more information to follow but if you would like to inquire about serving on the board, please feel free to reach out to me. My contact information is below.

Anthony Whitley

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MILITARY ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Nominations are now open for the 2025 Military Alumnus/a of the Year!

The criteria for consideration as the MAY award are:

- Must be a graduate of Jax State

- Must be an officer on active duty or active in the National Guard or Reserve.
- Must join or be a member of the JSU Alumni Association.
- Must play an active role in promoting the university.
- Must have shown outstanding military achievement.
- Must be able to attend Homecoming to receive the award.

Nominations for the MAY award may be submitted from any source and are due by **25 April 2025**. Nominations must be accompanied by a written biographical sketch and photo. The individual is selected by consensus of the Network's board, and the President will notify the individual of the selection. The President also notifies the JSU National Alumni Association. Nominations should be submitted to either the **Alumni Engagement office at alumni@jsu.edu or to Anthony Whitley at anthony.whitley36@yahoo.com.**



ALUMNI BANQUET

We cannot have a MAY award winner without a banquet! Please mark your calendars for the
30th Annual ROTC Alumni Banquet.

It will be held on **Friday, 19 September 2025**, at the University Recreation Center. Homecoming festivities will take place the next day. More information to follow!

Update from LTC Eddie Walker, Gamecock Battalion Professor of Military Science

Gamecock Alumni,

As we move through the spring semester, I want to take a moment to update you on the remarkable achievements and events within our program while also recognizing the challenges we have faced.

It is with a heavy heart that we share the loss of Cadet Drakken “Tru” Graham on December 14, 2024. Tru was a dedicated member of our battalion, embodying the values of leadership, service, and camaraderie. He was a recent Airborne graduate this past summer, the Ranger Challenge Team Captain and one of the top MSIII cadets in his class. To honor his legacy, we established the Drakken “Tru” Graham Memorial Scholarship, which will support future cadets in their academic and military endeavors. The cadets raised \$2,500 to fund this scholarship for the next five years. We invite our alumni to join us in remembering his contributions and ensuring his impact continues for years to come.



Last semester, through unwavering commitment from our Gamecock Alumni, we raised ~\$150,000 towards the Rowe Hall Renovation. A lot of changes on the horizon for Rowe Hall. We plan on showcasing those renovations in the Fall and look forward to seeing everyone for Homecoming.

Ranger Challenge 2025 – A Strong Performance

Our cadets showcased their determination and resilience at the Ranger Challenge 25 competition at Fort Benning in January 2025. Their outstanding effort reflected the hard work and training they put in, and we couldn't be prouder of their performance. This year's team finished in the top 15 for multiple events during the three-day competition. I was blown away by the under classmen and excited for next year!

Preparing for Spring FTX

As the semester progresses, our cadets are gearing up for Spring Field Training Exercise (FTX). With the pending continuing resolution, we have a lot of uncertainty with the training location (Ft. Benning or Clarke Range). Regardless, we're locked in on refining their tactical skills, leadership abilities, and teamwork in preparation for their future roles as Army officers.

Spring Awards Ceremony – April 17th, 1430 at Rowe Hall

We will take the opportunity to recognize the exceptional dedication and achievements of our cadets during the Spring Awards Ceremony on April 17th at 1430 in Rowe Hall. These awards highlight their leadership, academic excellence, and commitment to service.

Military Ball – April 18th on Ft. McClellan

The following evening, on April 18th, we will celebrate our cadets' hard work with our annual Military Ball—an evening of camaraderie and tradition that strengthens the bonds within our battalion.

Commissioning and Commencement

We are honored to be commissioning six outstanding cadets on April 30th at 1500 at the Stone Center, marking their transition from cadets to officers. Their journey continues with commencement ceremonies on May 1st and 2nd, where they will celebrate their academic achievements alongside their peers. Major General (Retired) Dave Bryan will be the commissioning guest speaker, please join us in welcoming the Army's newest officers to the ranks.

Advance Camp Summer 2025

Looking ahead, we anticipate sending 20 MSIII cadets to Advanced Camp this summer, where they will undergo rigorous leadership training at Fort Knox to prepare for their final year in the program.

We deeply appreciate the continued support and engagement of our Gamecock Alumni. Your mentorship, encouragement, and contributions help shape the future of our cadets. If you would like to support the Drakken "Tru" Graham Memorial Scholarship or participate in upcoming events, please reach out.

Thank you for being a part of our Gamecock family. We look forward to staying connected and sharing more updates throughout the year.

Scholarships and Rowe Hall Renovations

Follow us on social media!

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

Respectfully,
LTC Eddie D. Walker Jr.
Professor of Military Science
Jacksonville State University



SCHOLARSHIP GIVING

While we continue to emphasize scholarship giving so we can endow those scholarships recognizing our Alumni killed in action, I wanted to pass along a few changes regarding scholarships. Due to some administrative requirement changes from the University, the Director of Alumni Engagement will become the account manager of all ROTC Alumni Chapter Foundation accounts. The JSU Professor of Military Science will remain the account manager of the ROTC Departmental account(s) held within the Foundation. The Director of Alumni Engagement will work with the ROTC Alumni Network Board regarding how the different accounts (annual scholarships, endowed scholarships, unrestricted funds, etc.) are administrated. The Director of Alumni Engagement will provide the ROTC Alumni Network Board of Directors periodic reports regarding fund balances of the ROTC Alumni Chapter accounts held within the Foundation. The Director of Alumni Engagement will provide the ROTC Alumni Network Board of Directors periodic reports regarding who has made contributions so that the Network can send Thank You cards/messages to the donors.

We continue to ask for your participation in supporting the scholarships established in memory of our classmates killed in action (KIA) to help move these to an endowed status to preserve these scholarships well into the future.

Online donations can be made [here](#). Click "Make a Gift," and select the scholarship or fund you would like to support. If you are donating by check, please make it out to **JSU Foundation** and note on the check the fund you would like to support. They can be mailed to:

JSU Foundation
700 Pelham Road N
Jacksonville, AL 36265

We encourage you and your classmates to participate in this effort throughout the year.



CHAPTER COMMUNICATIONS

Please remember our main sources of communication with fellow Alumni are through this newsletter, the **Jacksonville State University ROTC Alumni** Facebook page, and on **Instagram**. If you have not done so, please “Like” our Facebook page and encourage your classmates to do the same. Once you do, you will receive information and communications posted on our page. Also, please remember to keep your contact information current with the Alumni Engagement office.
Go Gamecocks!

[Update Your Alumni Information](#)

Jacksonville State University Foundation, Inc.
Jacksonville State University - 700 Pelham Road, North - Jacksonville, AL 36265