



University of North Georgia cadet No. 1 in nation

Jonathan Chase Strickland ranked top among 5,617 Army ROTC cadets

University of North Georgia (UNG) cadet Jonathan Chase Strickland of Gainesville, Georgia, has been ranked the number one Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadet in the nation from among 5,617 cadets and is U.S. Army Cadet Command's Cadet of the Year.

Cadets are ranked on the national Order of Merit List (OML) by achieving superior grade point averages, strong performance in the Army physical fitness test, proving their worth as exceptional leaders in their college ROTC training, and their performance at the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC).

"The UNG Corps of Cadets has a long-standing national reputation for excellence, and I could not be more proud that Cadet Strickland has been named the best in the nation," said UNG President Bonita C. Jacobs. "His academic excellence and outstanding performance at LDAC is a testament to dedication and the exceptional work the Department of Military Science is doing to develop cadets to lead in our communities, across the nation and around the world."

Each fall, in conjunction with their branch selections, ROTC cadets from around the country are ranked in a national Order of Merit List (OML). The OML ranks all Army ROTC seniors across the nation – 5,617 of them are scheduled to graduate and be commissioned in spring 2015.

"I have watched Jonathan develop over the past three years, and there is no doubt this young man is deserving of the title of number one cadet in the 2015 cohort," said Army Col. Todd Wilson, professor of military science at UNG. "Cadet Strickland is currently studying abroad in Rome, Italy, at the NATO Defense War College; I have had the opportunity to speak with Jonathan to congratulate him on this exceptional accomplishment."

A cadet's positioning on the OML can determine his or her priority in being chosen for the branch or occupational specialty of choice.

Strickland, a native of Gainesville, Georgia, is majoring in International Relations with a Middle East concentration and will be commissioned as a second lieutenant in military intelligence upon graduation. He is a graduate of North Hall High School and the son of Jon and Tracy Strickland. A soldier in the Georgia Army National Guard, Strickland and a teammate won the "Best Warrior of the 48th Brigade" competition in 2013.

Strickland learned of his achievement via Skype with Wilson; it took more than an hour of failed attempts before the call was connected.

"When Col. Wilson appeared on the camera, I had no idea what he wanted to talk to me about. He asked me some general questions like 'How is the internship? What did you branch?' I told him I received my first choice, and he said that's what he would expect that from the number one cadet in the nation," Strickland said. "I was pretty excited when I heard him say that. I was pleased to hear about this accomplishment. It is the product of four years of hard work, but it is not an achievement that I set out to accomplish."

Strickland said his goals at UNG have been to succeed academically and seek leadership development through the Corps of Cadets. He feels that he's met those goals and "being recognized as the number one cadet in the nation was only icing on the cake."

"I am thankful for the guidance I have received from family and friends, my academic adviser, and professors. Also, I am thankful for the guidance and professional development that I have received from other military professionals in the National Guard and at the University of North Georgia," he said.

His career plans include attending Infantry Basic Officer Leader School at Fort Benning, Georgia, next summer, followed by Ranger School; Strickland was a member of the UNG Ranger Challenge team and one of the team's leaders in 2013. His top duty station choice is with the 173rd Airborne in Vicenza, Italy, but he won't be disappointed if he doesn't get it.

"Duty station is not a concern. Success in training is my priority," Strickland said.

In addition to Strickland's achievement, several other UNG cadets also achieved high national rankings. UNG is on track to commission 83 officers in 2015, a record high number. Additionally, nearly a third of those cadets finished in the top 20 percent of the national OML, earning the status of Distinguished Military Graduate. Five UNG cadets finished in the top 10 percent in the national rankings.

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University of North Georgia

Positioned in the fastest-growing region of the state, the [University of North Georgia](http://www.ung.edu) comprises four campuses united by a single mission focused on academic excellence and academic and co-curricular programs that develop students into leaders for a diverse and global society.

The University of North Georgia is a University System of Georgia leadership institution and is The Military College of Georgia. With more than 15,000 students, the University of North Georgia is the state's sixth-largest public university. The university offers more than 100 programs of study ranging from certificate and associates degrees to professional doctoral programs. UNG is one of only six senior military colleges in the country.

