

= United States Military Academy =

The United States Military Academy (USMA) , also known as West Point , Army , The Academy or simply The Point , is a four @-@ year coeducational federal service academy located in West Point , New York . The academy , located in Orange County , sits on scenic high ground overlooking the Hudson River , 50 miles (80 km) north of New York City . The Academy traces its roots to 1801 , when , shortly after his inauguration , President Thomas Jefferson directed that plans be set in motion to establish at West Point the United States Military Academy . The entire central campus is a national landmark and home to scores of historic sites , buildings , and monuments . The majority of the campus 's Norman @-@ style buildings are constructed from gray and black granite . The campus is a popular tourist destination complete with a large visitor center and the oldest museum in the United States Army .

Candidates for admission must both apply directly to the academy and receive a nomination , usually from a member of Congress or Delegate / Resident Commissioner in the case of Washington , D.C. , Puerto Rico , Northern Mariana Islands , Guam , American Samoa , and the Virgin Islands . Other nomination sources include the President and Vice President of the United States . Students are officers @-@ in @-@ training and are referred to as " cadets " or collectively as the " United States Corps of Cadets " (USCC) . Tuition for cadets is fully funded by the Army in exchange for an active duty service obligation upon graduation . Approximately 1 @, @ 300 cadets enter the Academy each July , with about 1 @, @ 000 cadets graduating .

The academic program grants a bachelor of science degree with a curriculum that grades cadets ' performance upon a broad academic program , military leadership performance , and mandatory participation in competitive athletics . Cadets are required to adhere to the Cadet Honor Code , which states that " a cadet will not lie , cheat , steal , or tolerate those who do . " The academy bases a cadet 's leadership experience as a development of all three pillars of performance : academics , physical , and military .

Most graduates are commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army . Foreign cadets are commissioned into the armies of their home countries . Since 1959 , cadets have also been eligible to " cross @-@ commission " , or request a commission in one of the other armed services , provided they meet that service 's eligibility standards . Every year , a very small number of cadets do this , usually in a one @-@ for @-@ one " trade " with a similarly inclined cadet or midshipman at one of the other service academies .

Because of the academy 's age and unique mission , its traditions have influenced other institutions . It was the first American college to have an accredited civil @-@ engineering program and the first to have class rings , and its technical curriculum was a model for later engineering schools . West Point 's student body has a unique rank structure and lexicon . All cadets reside on campus and dine together en masse on weekdays for breakfast and lunch . The academy fields fifteen men 's and nine women 's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sports teams . Cadets compete in one sport every fall , winter , and spring season at the intramural , club , or intercollegiate level . Its football team was a national power in the early and mid @-@ 20th century , winning three national championships . Its alumni and students are collectively referred to as " The Long Gray Line " , and its ranks include two Presidents of the United States (as well as the President of the Confederate States of America) , presidents of Costa Rica , Nicaragua and of the Philippines , numerous famous generals , and seventy @-@ five Medal of Honor recipients .

= = History = =

= = = Colonial period , founding , and early years = = =

The Continental Army first occupied West Point , New York , on 27 January 1778 ; and it is the oldest continuously @-@ operating Army post in the United States . Between 1778 and 1780 , the Polish engineer and military hero Tadeusz Kościuszko oversaw the construction of the garrison

defenses . The Great Hudson River Chain and high ground above the narrow " S " curve in the river enabled the Continental Army to prevent British Royal Navy ships from sailing upriver and thus dividing the Colonies . As commander of the fortifications at West Point , Benedict Arnold committed his act of treason , attempting to sell the fort to the British . After Arnold betrayed the patriot cause , the Army changed the name of the fortifications at West Point , New York , to Fort Clinton . With the peace after the American Revolutionary War , various ordnance and military stores were left deposited at West Point .

" Cadets " underwent training in artillery and engineering studies at the garrison since 1794 . In 1801 , shortly after his inauguration as president , Thomas Jefferson directed that plans be set in motion to establish at West Point the United States Military Academy . He selected Jonathan Williams to serve as its first superintendent . Congress formally authorized the establishment and funding of the school with the Military Peace Establishment Act of 1802 , which Jefferson signed on 16 March . The academy officially commenced operations on 4 July 1802 . The academy graduated Joseph Gardner Swift , its first official graduate , in October 1802 . He later returned as Superintendent from 1812 to 1814 . In its tumultuous early years , the academy featured few standards for admission or length of study . Cadets ranged in age from 10 years to 37 years and attended between 6 months to 6 years . The impending War of 1812 caused the United States Congress to authorize a more formal system of education at the academy and increased the size of the Corps of Cadets to 250 .

In 1817 , Colonel Sylvanus Thayer became the Superintendent and established the curriculum , elements of which are still in use as of 2015 . Thayer instilled strict disciplinary standards , set a standard course of academic study , and emphasized honorable conduct . Known as the " Father of the Military Academy , " he is honored with a monument on campus for the profound impact he had upon the academy . Founded as a school of engineering , for the first half of the 19th century , USMA produced graduates who gained recognition for engineering the bulk of the nation 's initial railway lines , bridges , harbors and roads . The academy was the only engineering school in the country until the founding of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1824 . It was so successful in its engineering curriculum that it significantly influenced every American engineering school founded prior to the Civil War .

The Mexican ? American War brought the academy to prominence as graduates proved themselves in battle for the first time . Future Civil War commanders Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee first distinguished themselves in battle in Mexico . In all , 452 of 523 graduates who served in the war received battlefield promotions or awards for bravery . The school experienced a rapid modernization during the 1850s , often romanticized by the graduates who led both sides of the Civil War as the " end of the Old West Point era . " New barracks brought better heat and gas lighting , while new ordnance and tactics training incorporated new rifle and musket technology and accommodated transportation advances created by the steam engine . With the outbreak of the Civil War , West Point graduates filled the general officer ranks of the rapidly expanding Union and Confederate armies . 294 graduates served as general officers for the Union , and 151 served as general officers for the Confederacy . Of all living graduates at the time of the war , 105 (10 %) were killed , and another 151 (15 %) were wounded . Nearly every general officer of note from either army during the Civil War was a graduate of West Point and a West Point graduate commanded the forces of one or both sides in every one of the 60 major battles of the war .

== After the Civil War ==

Immediately following the Civil War , the academy enjoyed unprecedented fame as a result of the role its graduates had played . However , the post @-@ war years were a difficult time for the academy as it struggled to admit and reintegrate cadets from former confederate states . The first cadets from Southern states were re @-@ admitted in 1868 , and 1870 saw the admission of the first black cadet , James Webster Smith of South Carolina . Smith endured harsh treatment and was eventually dismissed for academic deficiency under controversial circumstances in 1874 . As a result , Henry O. Flipper of Georgia became the first black graduate in 1877 , graduating 50th in a

class of 76 . Two of the most notable graduates during this period were George Washington Goethals from the class of 1880 , and John J. Pershing from the class of 1886 . Goethals gained prominence as the chief engineer of the Panama Canal , and Pershing would become famous for his exploits against the famed Pancho Villa in Mexico and later for leading American Forces during World War I.

Besides the integration of southern @-@ state and black cadets , the post @-@ war academy also struggled with the issue of hazing . In its first 65 years , hazing was uncommon or non @-@ existent beyond small pranks played upon the incoming freshmen , but took a harsher tone as Civil War veterans began to fill the incoming freshman classes . The upper class cadets saw it as their duty to " teach the plebes their manners . " Hazing at the academy entered the national spotlight with the death of former cadet Oscar L. Booz on 3 December 1900 . Congressional hearings , which included testimony by cadet Douglas MacArthur , investigated his death and the pattern of systemic hazing of freshmen . When MacArthur returned as superintendent , he made an effort to end the practice of hazing the incoming freshmen by placing Army sergeants in charge of training new cadets during freshman summer . The practice of hazing continued on some levels well into the late 20th century , but is no longer allowed in the present day .

The demand for junior officers during the Spanish ? American War caused the class of 1899 to graduate early , and the Philippine ? American War did the same for the class of 1901 . This increased demand for officers led Congress to increase the size of the Corps of Cadets to 481 cadets in 1900 . The period between 1900 and 1915 saw a construction boom as much of West Point 's old infrastructure was rebuilt . Many of the academy 's most famous graduates graduated during the 15 @-@ year period between 1900 and 1915 : Douglas MacArthur (1903) , Joseph Stilwell (1904) , Henry " Hap " Arnold (1907) , George S. Patton (1909) , Dwight D. Eisenhower , and Omar Bradley (both 1915) . The class of 1915 is known as " the class the stars fell on " for the exceptionally high percentage of general officers that rose from that class (59 of 164) .

The outbreak of America 's involvement in World War I caused a sharp increase in the demand for army officers , and the academy accelerated graduation of all four classes then in attendance to meet this requirement , beginning with the early graduation of the First Class on 20 April 1917 , the Second Class in August 1917 , and both the Third and Fourth Classes just before the Armistice of 11 November 1918 , when only freshman cadets remained (those who had entered in the summer of 1918) . In all , wartime contingencies and post @-@ war adjustments resulted in ten classes , varying in length of study from two to four years , within a seven @-@ year period before the regular course of study was fully resumed .

Douglas MacArthur became superintendent in 1919 , instituting sweeping reforms to the academic process , including introducing a greater emphasis on history and humanities . He made major changes to the field training regimen and the Cadet Honor Committee was formed under his watch in 1922 . MacArthur was a firm supporter of athletics at the academy , as he famously said " Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that , upon other fields , on other days , will bear the fruits of victory . " West Point was first officially accredited in 1925 , and in 1933 began granting bachelor of science degrees to all graduates . In 1935 , the academy 's authorized strength increased to 1 @, @ 960 cadets .

= = = World War II and Cold War = = =

As World War II engulfed Europe , Congress authorized an increase to 2 @, @ 496 cadets in 1942 and began graduating classes early . The class of 1943 graduated six months early in January 1943 , and the next four classes graduated after only three years . To accommodate this accelerated schedule , summer training was formally moved to a recently acquired piece of land southwest of main post . The site would later become Camp Buckner . The academy had its last serious brush with abolition or major reform during the war , when some members of Congress charged that even the accelerated curriculum allowed young men to " hide out " at West Point and avoid combat duty . A proposal was put forth to convert the academy to an officer 's training school with a six @-@ month schedule , but this was not adopted . West Point played a prominent role in WWII ; four out of

five of the five @-@ star generals were alumni and nearly 500 graduates died . Immediately following the war in 1945 , Maxwell Taylor (class of 1922) became superintendent . He expanded and modernized the academic program and abolished antiquated courses in fencing and horsemanship .

Unlike previous conflicts , the Korean War did not disrupt class graduation schedules . More than half of the army leadership during the war was composed of academy graduates . The Class of 1950 , which graduated only two weeks prior to the war 's outbreak , suffered some of the heaviest casualties of any 20th century class and became known sourly as " the class the crosses fell on . " A total of 157 alumni perished in the conflict . Garrison H. Davidson became superintendent in 1956 and instituted several reforms that included refining the admissions process , changing the core curriculum to include electives , and increasing the academic degree standards for academy instructors . The 1960s saw the size of the Corps expand to 4 @,@ 400 cadets while the barracks and academic support structure grew proportionally . West Point was not immune to the social upheaval of American society during the Vietnam War . The first woman joined the faculty of the all @-@ male institution amidst controversy in 1968 . The Army granted its first honorable discharge in 1971 to a West Point cadet , Cary E. Donham , of Illinois , who applied for conscientious objector status in 1970 . The academy struggled to fill its incoming classes as its graduates led troops in Southeast Asia , where 333 graduates died .

= = = Modern era = = =

Following the 1973 end of American involvement in Vietnam , the strain and stigma of earlier social unrest dissolved and West Point enjoyed surging enrollments . West Point admitted its first 119 female cadets in 1976 , after Congress authorized the admission of women to the federal service academies in 1975 . Women currently compose approximately 15 % of entering new cadets . In 1989 , Kristin Baker became the first female First Captain (an effigy of her is now on display in the Museum) , the highest ranking senior cadet at the academy . Three other females have been appointed as First Captain : Grace H. Chung in 2003 , Stephanie Hightower in 2005 , and Lindsey Danilack in 2013 . Rebecca Marier became the academy 's first female valedictorian in 1995 .

In 1985 , cadets were formally authorized to declare an academic major ; all previous graduates had been awarded a general bachelor of science degree . Five years later there was a major revision of the Fourth Class System , as the Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS) became the guidance for the development of all four classes . The class of 1990 was the first one that issued a standard and mandatory computer to every member of the class at the beginning of Plebe year , the Zenith 248 SX . The academy was also an early adopter of the Internet in the mid @-@ 1990s , and was recognized in 2006 as one of the nation 's " most wired " campuses .

At the height of the Cold War in October 1987 , President Reagan visited the Academy and delivered a speech about ending the Evil Empire .

During the Gulf War , alumnus General Schwarzkopf was the commander of Allied Forces , and the American senior generals in Iraq , Generals Petraeus , Odierno and Austin , and Afghanistan , retired General Stanley McChrystal and General David Rodriguez , are also alumni . Following the September 11 attacks , applications for admission to the academy increased dramatically , security on campus was increased , and the curriculum was revamped to include coursework on terrorism and military drills in civilian environments . One graduate was killed during the 9 / 11 terrorist attacks and ninety graduates have died during operations in Afghanistan , Iraq , and the ongoing Global War on Terror . The Class of 2005 has been referred to as The Class of 9 / 11 as the attacks occurred during their first year at the academy , and they graduated 911 students . In 2008 gender @-@ neutral lyrics were incorporated into West Point 's " Alma Mater " and " The Corps " ? replacing lines like " The men of the Corps " with " The ranks of the Corps . " In December 2009 , President Barack Obama delivered a major speech in Eisenhower Hall Theater outlining his policy for deploying 30 @,@ 000 additional troops to Afghanistan as well as setting a timetable for withdrawal . President Obama also provided the commencement address in 2014 .

After the Don 't Ask , Don 't Tell policy was lifted September 20 , 2011 , the academy began

admitting and retaining openly gay cadets . By March 2012 , cadets were forming a gay @-@ straight alliance group called Spectrum . By March 2015 , Spectrum had two faculty and 40 cadet members , a mixture of gay , straight , bi , and undecided . According to a Vanity Fair essay , the LGBT cadets were well accepted .

Brig. Gen. Diana Holland became West Point 's first woman Commandant of Cadets in January 2016 .

= = Campus = =

The academy is located approximately 50 miles (80 km) north of New York City on the western bank of the Hudson River . West Point , New York , is incorporated as a federal military reservation in Orange County and is adjacent to Highland Falls . Based on the significance both of the Revolutionary War fort ruins and of the military academy itself , the majority of the academy area was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1960 . In 1841 , Charles Dickens visited the academy and said " It could not stand on more appropriate ground , and any ground more beautiful can hardly be . " One of the most visited and scenic sites on post , Trophy Point , overlooks the Hudson River to the north , and is home to many captured cannon from past wars as well as the Stanford White @-@ designed Battle Monument . Though the entire military reservation encompasses 15 @, @ 974 acres (65 km²) , the academic area of the campus , known as " central area " or " the cadet area " , is entirely accessible to cadets or visitors by foot .

In 1902 , the Boston architectural firm Cram , Goodhue , and Ferguson was awarded a major construction contract that set the predominantly neogothic architectural style still seen today . Most of the buildings of the central cadet area are in this style , as typified by the Cadet Chapel , completed in 1910 . These buildings are nearly all constructed from granite that has a predominantly gray and black hue . The barracks that were built in the 1960s were designed to mimic this style . Other buildings on post , notably the oldest private residences for the faculty , are built in the Federal , Georgian , or English Tudor styles . A few buildings , such as Cullum Hall and the Old Cadet Chapel , are built in the Neoclassical style .

The academy grounds are home to numerous monuments and statues . The central cadet parade ground , the Plain , hosts the largest number , and includes the Washington Monument , Thayer Monument , Eisenhower Monument , MacArthur Monument , Kosciuszko Monument , and Sedgwick Monument . Patton Monument was first dedicated in front of the cadet library in 1950 , but in 2004 it was placed in storage to make room for the construction of Jefferson Hall . With the completion of Jefferson Hall , Patton 's statue was relocated and unveiled at a temporary location on 15 May 2009 , where it will remain until the completion of the renovation of the old cadet library and Bartlett Hall . There is also a statue commemorating brotherhood and friendship from the École Polytechnique in the cadet central area just outside Nininger Hall . The remaining campus area is home to 27 other monuments and memorials .

The West Point Cemetery is the final resting place of many notable graduates and faculty , including George Armstrong Custer , Winfield Scott , William Westmoreland , Earl Blaik , Maggie Dixon , and sixteen Medal of Honor recipients . The cemetery is also the burial place of several recent graduates who have died during the ongoing conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan . Many of the older grave sites have large and ornate grave markers , the largest belonging to Egbert Viele (class of 1847) , chief engineer of Brooklyn 's Prospect Park . The cemetery is also home to a monument to Revolutionary War heroine Margaret Corbin .

= = = Athletic facilities = = =

West Point is home to historic athletic facilities like Michie Stadium and Gillis Field House as well as modern facilities such as the Lichtenburg Tennis Center , Anderson Rugby Complex , and the Lou Gross Gymnastics Facility . Michie Stadium recently underwent a significant upgrade in facilities for the football team , and the academy installed a new artificial turf field in the summer of 2008 .

== West Point Museum ==

The visitor 's center is just outside the Thayer Gate in the village of Highland Falls and offers the opportunity to arrange for a guided tour . These tours , which are the only way the general public can access the academy grounds , leave the visitor 's center several times a day . The West Point Museum is directly adjacent to the visitor 's center , in the renovated Olmsted Hall on the grounds of the former Ladycliff College . Originally opened to the public in 1854 , the West Point Museum is the oldest military museum in the country . During the summer months , the museum operates access to the Fort Putnam historic site on main post and access to the 282 acre Constitution Island . One of the most notable items on display at the museum are George Washington 's pistols , Napoleon 's sword , a dagger carried by Hermann Goering when he was captured , a revolver that belonged to Goering and a silver @-@ plated party book , signed by Charles Lindbergh , Herbert Hoover and Mussolini etc . Arguably , the most prized artifact on display is a gold @-@ plated pistol that belonged to Adolf Hitler .

== Administration ==

== Academy leadership ==

The commanding officer at the USMA is the Superintendent . In recent years , the position of Superintendent has been held by a Lieutenant General (three star general) . The current Superintendent , Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen , Jr . , took command on 17 July 2013 . Earlier in his career , Caslen served as the 70th commandant of Cadets . The academy is a direct reporting unit , and as such , the Superintendent reports directly to the Army Chief of Staff (CSA) .

There are two other general officer positions at the academy . Brigadier General Diana Holland is the Commandant of Cadets , and Brigadier General Timothy Trainor is the Dean of the Academic Board . General Holland is the first female commandant . There are 13 academic departments at USMA , each with a colonel as the head of department . These 13 tenured colonels comprise the core of the Academic Board . These officers are titled " Professors USMA " or PUSMA . The academy is also overseen by the Board of Visitors (BOV) . The BOV is a panel of Senators , Congressional Representatives , and presidential appointees who " shall inquire into the morale and discipline , curriculum , instruction , physical equipment , fiscal affairs , academic methods , and other matters relating to the academy that the board decides to consider . " Currently the BOV is chaired by Representative John Shimkus and is composed of three Senators , five Representatives and six presidential appointees .

== Admission requirements ==

Candidates must be between 17 and 23 years old , unmarried , and with no legal obligation to support a child . Above average high school and / or previous college grades , and strong performance on standardized testing is expected . The interquartile range on the old SAT was 1100 ? 1360 and 68 % ranked in the top fifth of their high school class .

To be eligible for appointment , candidates must also undergo a Candidate Fitness Assessment and a complete physical exam . Up to 60 students from foreign countries are present at USMA , educated at the expense of the sponsoring nation , with tuition assistance based on the GNP of their country . Of these foreign cadets the Code of Federal Regulations specifically permits one Filipino cadet designated by the President of the Philippines .

The actual application process consists of two main requirements : candidates apply to USMA for admission and separately provide a nomination . The majority of candidates receive a nomination from their United States Representative or Senator . Some receive a nomination from the Vice President or even the President of the United States .

The nomination process is not political . Applicants do not have to know their congressman to be

nominated . The Academy applicant typically provides written essays and letters of recommendation . The applicant then submits to a formal interview . Admission to West Point is selective : 12 @. @ 75 % of applicants were admitted (total of 1292) to the Class of 2012 .

Candidates may have previous college experience , but they may not transfer , meaning that regardless of previous college credit , they enter the academy as a fourth class cadet and undergo the entire four @-@ year program . If a candidate is considered academically disqualified and not selected , he or she may receive an offer to attend to the United States Military Academy Preparatory School . Upon graduation from USMAPS , these candidates are appointed to the academy if they receive the recommendation of the USMAPS Commandant and meet medical admission requirements .

The West Point Association of Graduates (WPAOG) also offers scholarship support to people who are qualified but not selected . The scholarships usually cover around \$ 7 @, @ 000 to civilian universities ; the students who receive these scholarships do so under the stipulation that they will be admitted to and attend West Point a year later . Those who do not must repay the AOG . New Mexico Military Institute , Marion Military Institute , Valley Forge Military College and the Greystone Preparatory School at Schreiner University in Kerrville , Texas , are programs that students often attend on the AOG scholarship prior to admission to West Point .

= = Curriculum = =

West Point is a medium @-@ sized , highly residential baccalaureate college , with a full @-@ time , four @-@ year undergraduate program that emphasizes instruction in the arts , sciences , and professions with no graduate program . There are forty @-@ five academic majors , the most popular of which are foreign languages , management information systems , history , economics , and mechanical engineering . West Point is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education . Military officers compose 75 % of the faculty , while civilian professors make up the remaining 25 % .

A cadet 's class rank , which determines his or her Army branch and assignment upon graduation , is calculated as a combination of academic performance (55 %) , military leadership performance (30 %) , and physical fitness and athletic performance (15 %) .

= = = Academics = = =

The academy 's teaching style forms part of the Thayer system , which was implemented by Sylvanus Thayer during his tour as Superintendent . This form of instruction emphasizes small classes with daily homework , and strives to make students actively responsible for their own learning by completing homework assignments prior to class and bringing the work to class to discuss collaboratively .

The academic program consists of a structured core of thirty @-@ one courses balanced between the arts and sciences . The Academy operates on the semester system , which it labels as " terms " (Term 1 is the fall semester ; Term 2 is the spring semester) . Although cadets choose their majors in the fall of their sophomore year , all cadets take the same course of instruction until the beginning of their junior year . This core course of instruction consists of mathematics , information technology , chemistry , physics , engineering , history , physical geography , philosophy , leadership and general psychology , English composition and literature , foreign language , political science , international relations , economics , and constitutional law . Some advanced cadets may " validate " out of the base @-@ level classes and take advanced or accelerated courses earlier as freshmen or sophomores . Regardless of major , all cadets graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree .

= = = Military = = =

As all cadets are commissioned as second lieutenants upon graduation , military and leadership education is nested with academic instruction . Military training and discipline fall under the purview

of the Office of the Commandant . Entering freshmen , or fourth class cadets , are referred to as New Cadets , and enter the academy on Reception Day or R @-@ day , which marks the start of cadet basic training (CBT) , known colloquially as Beast Barracks , or simply Beast . Most cadets consider Beast to be their most difficult time at the academy because of the transition from civilian to military life . Their second summer , cadets undergo cadet field training (CFT) at nearby Camp Buckner , where they train in more advanced field craft and military skills . During a cadet 's third summer , they may serve as instructors for CBT or CFT . Rising Firstie (senior) cadets also spend one @-@ month training at Camp Buckner , where they train for modern tactical situations that they will soon face as new platoon leaders . Cadets also have the opportunity during their second , third and fourth summers to serve in active army units and military schools around the world . The schools include Airborne , Air Assault , Sapper , Pathfinder , etc .

Active duty officers in the rank of captain or major serve as Company Tactical Officers (TAC Officers) . The role of the TAC is to mentor , train , and teach the cadets proper standards of good order and discipline and be a good role model . There is one TAC for every cadet company . There is also one senior Non @-@ Commissioned Officer to assist each TAC , known as TAC @-@ NCOs .

The Department of Military Instruction (DMI) is responsible for all military arts and sciences education as well as planning and executing the cadet summer training . Within DMI there is a representative from each of the Army 's branches . These " branch reps " serve as proponents for their respective branches and liaise with cadets as they prepare for branch selection and graduation .

== = Physical == =

The Department of Physical Education (DPE) administers the physical program , which includes both physical education classes , physical fitness testing , and competitive athletics . The head of DPE holds the title of Master of the Sword , dating back to the 19th century when DPE taught swordsmanship as part of the curriculum .

All cadets take a prescribed series of physical fitness courses such as military movement (applied gymnastics) , boxing (men) or self @-@ defense (women) , swimming , and beginning in 2009 , advanced combatives . Cadets can also take elective physical activity classes such as scuba , rock climbing , and aerobic fitness .

As with all soldiers in the Army , cadets also must pass the Army Physical Fitness Test twice per year . Additionally , every year , cadets must pass the Indoor Obstacle Course Test (IOCT) , which DPE has administered in Hayes Gymnasium since 1944 .

Since Douglas MacArthur 's tenure as superintendent , every cadet has been required to participate in either an intercollegiate sport , a club sport , or an intramural (referred to as " company athletics ") sport each semester .

== = Moral and ethical training == =

Moral and ethical development occurs throughout the entirety of the cadet experience by living under the honor code and through formal leadership programs available at the academy . These include instruction in the values of the military profession through Professional Military Ethics Education (PME2) , voluntary religious programs , interaction with staff and faculty role models , and an extensive guest @-@ speaker program . The foundation of the ethical code at West Point is found in the academy 's motto , " Duty , Honor , Country . "

West Point 's Cadet Honor Code reads simply that : " A cadet will not lie , cheat , steal , or tolerate those who do . " Cadets accused of violating the Honor Code face an investigative and hearing process . If they are found guilty by a jury of their peers , they face severe consequences ranging from being " turned back " (repeating an academic year) to separation from the academy . Cadets previously enforced collective censure by an unofficial sanction known as " silencing " by not speaking to cadets accused of violating the honor code , but the practice ended in 1973 after

national scrutiny . Also in 1976 , 151 junior cadets were found guilty of ' violating the honour code ' in their exams .

= = Cadet life = =

= = = Rank and organization = = =

Cadets are not referred to as freshmen , sophomores , juniors , or seniors . Instead they are officially called fourth class , third class , second class , and first class cadets . Colloquially , freshmen are plebes , sophomores are yearlings or yuks , juniors are cows , and seniors are firsties . Some of the origins of the class names are known , some are not . Plebeians were the lower class of ancient Roman society , while yearling is a euphemism for a year @-@ old animal . The origin of cow is less known . There are a number of theories for the origin of the term cow ; however the most prevalent and probably accurate one is that cadets in years past had no leave until the end of their yearling year , when they were granted a summer @-@ long furlough . Their return as second classmen was heralded as " the cows coming home . "

The Corps of Cadets is officially organized into a brigade . The senior ranking cadet , the Brigade Commander , is known traditionally as the First Captain . The brigade is organized into four regiments . Within each regiment there are three battalions , each consisting of three companies . Companies are lettered A through I , with a number signifying which regiment it belongs to . For example , there are four " A " companies : A1 , A2 , A3 , and A4 . First class cadets hold the leadership positions within the brigade from the First Captain down to platoon leaders within the companies . Leadership responsibility decreases with the lower classes , with second class cadets holding the rank of cadet sergeant , third class cadets holding the rank of cadet corporal , and fourth class cadets as cadet privates .

= = = Life in the corps = = =

Because of the academy 's congressional nomination process , students come from all 50 states , Puerto Rico , the District of Columbia , the Mariana Islands , Guam , American Samoa , and the US Virgin Islands . The academy is also authorized up to 60 international exchange cadets , who undergo the same four @-@ year curriculum as fully integrated members of the Corps of Cadets . Cadets attend the United States Military Academy free of charge , with all tuition and board paid for by the Army in return for a service commitment of five years of active duty and three years of reserve status upon graduation . Starting on the first day of a cadet 's second class year , non @-@ graduates after that point are expected to fulfill their obligations in enlisted service . Cadets receive a monthly stipend of \$ 1 @, @ 017 @. @ 00 for books , uniforms , and other necessities , as of 2015 . From this amount , pay is automatically deducted for the cost of uniforms , books , supplies , services , and other miscellaneous expenses . In addition the monthly pay that the remaining amount ranges from \$ 100 to \$ 400 in the first three years , cadets receive meals in the dining halls , and have access to the Internet and a phone in their barracks . The student population was 4 @, @ 487 cadets for the 2007 ? 2008 academic year . The student body is 15 @. @ 1 % female . Ninety @-@ two percent of entering students re @-@ matriculated for a second year ; the four @-@ year graduation rate was 80 % and the six @-@ year rate was 81 % .

All cadets reside on campus for their entire four years in one of the seven barracks buildings . Most cadets are housed with one roommate , but some rooms are designed for three cadets . Cadets are grouped into companies identified by alpha @-@ numeric codes . All companies live together in the same barracks area . The academy has the cadets change companies after their freshman or sophomore years . This process is known as scrambling , and the method of scrambling has changed several times in recent years . All 4 @, @ 000 cadets dine together at breakfast and lunch in the Washington Hall during the weekdays . The cadet fitness center , Arvin Cadet Physical Development Center (usually just called " Arvin " by cadets and faculty) , which was rebuilt in 2004

, houses extensive physical fitness facilities and equipment for student use .

Each class of cadets elects representatives to serve as class president and fill several administrative positions . They also elect a ring and crest committee , which designs the class 's crest , the emblem that signifies their class and it is embossed upon their class rings . Each class crest is required to contain the initials USMA and their class motto . The class motto is proposed by the class during cadet basic training and voted on by the class prior to the beginning of their freshman academic year . Class mottos typically have verbiage that rhymes or is phonetically similar with their class year .

Cadets today live and work within the framework of the Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS) , which specifies the roles that a cadet plays throughout their four years at the academy . Cadets begin their USMA careers as trainees (new cadets) , then advance in rank , starting as CDT Privates (freshmen) and culminating as CDT Officers (seniors) . Freshmen have no leadership responsibilities , but have a host of duties to perform as they learn how to follow orders and operate in an environment of rigid rank structure , while seniors have significant leadership responsibilities and significantly more privileges that correspond to their rank .

= = = Activities = = =

Cadets have a host of extracurricular activities available , most run by the office of the Directorate of Cadet Activities (DCA) . DCA sponsors or operates 113 athletic and non @-@ sport clubs . Many cadets join several clubs during their time at the academy and find their time spent with their clubs a welcome respite from the rigors of cadet life . DCA is responsible for a wide range of activities that provide improved quality of life for cadets , including : three cadet @-@ oriented restaurants , the Cadet Store , and the Howitzer and Bugle Notes . The Howitzer is the annual yearbook , while Bugle Notes , also known as the " plebe bible , " is the manual of plebe knowledge . Plebe knowledge is a lengthy collection of traditions , songs , poems , anecdotes , and facts about the academy , the army , the Old Corps , and the rivalry with Navy that all plebes must memorize during cadet basic training . During plebe year , plebes may be asked , and are expected to answer , any inquiry about plebe knowledge asked by upper class cadets . Other knowledge is historical in nature , including information as found in Bugle Notes . However , some knowledge changes daily , such as " the days " (a running list of the number of days until important academy events) , the menu in the mess hall for the day , or the lead stories in The New York Times .

Each cadet class celebrates at least one special " class weekend " per academic year . Fourth class cadets participate in Plebe Parent Weekend during the first weekend of spring break . In February , third class cadets celebrate the winter season with Yearling Winter Weekend . In late January the second class cadets celebrate 500th Night , marking the remaining 500 days before graduation . First class cadets celebrate three different formal occasions . In late August , first class cadets celebrate Ring Weekend , in February they mark their last 100 days with 100th Night , and in May they have a full week of events culminating in their graduation . All of the " class weekends " involve a formal dinner and social dance , known in old cadet slang as a " hop , " held at Eisenhower Hall .

= = Athletics = =

Since 1899 , Army 's mascot has officially been a mule because the animal symbolizes strength and perseverance . The academy 's football team was nicknamed " The Black Knights of the Hudson " due to the black color of its uniforms . This nickname has since been officially shortened to " Black Knights . " U.S. sports media use " Army " as a synonym for the academy . " On Brave Old Army Team " is the school 's fight song . Army 's chief sports rival is the Naval Academy due to its long @-@ standing football rivalry and the intraservice rivalry with the Navy in general . Fourth class cadets verbally greet upper @-@ class cadets and faculty with " Beat Navy , " while the tunnel that runs under Washington Road is named the " Beat Navy " tunnel . Army also plays the U.S. Air Force Academy for the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief 's Trophy . In the first half of the 20th century ,

Army and Notre Dame were football rivals , but that rivalry has since died out .

= = = Football = = =

Army football began in 1890 , when Navy challenged the cadets to a game of the relatively new sport . Navy defeated Army at West Point that year , but Army avenged the loss in Annapolis the following year . The rival academies still clash every December in what is traditionally the last regular @-@ season Division I college @-@ football game . The 2015 football season marked Navy 's fourteenth consecutive victory over Army , the longest streak in the series since inception . Navy quarterback Keenan Reynolds became the first Navy QB to beat Army in four consecutive seasons , and set the NCAA rushing touchdown record in the 2015 rivalry game . Army 's football team reached its pinnacle of success under coach Earl Blaik when Army won consecutive national championships in 1944 , 1945 and 1946 , and produced three Heisman trophy winners : Doc Blanchard (1945) , Glenn Davis (1946) and Pete Dawkins (1958) . Past NFL coaches Vince Lombardi and Bill Parcells were Army assistant coaches early in their careers . The football team plays its home games at Michie Stadium , where the playing field is named after Earl Blaik . Cadets ' attendance is mandatory at football games and the Corps stands for the duration of the game . At all home games , one of the four regiments marches onto the field in formation before the team takes the field and leads the crowd in traditional Army cheers . From 1992 through 1996 , Army won all of the games against Navy for the first time since the legendary days of Blanchard and Davis , and it introduced the fraternal group of players identifying themselves as the Fat Man Club , initiated by the offensive linemen of the Class of 1996 . Between the 1998 and 2004 seasons , Army 's football program was a member of Conference USA , but has since reverted to its former independent status .

= = = Other sports = = =

Though football may receive a lot of media attention due to its annual rivalry game , West Point has a long history of athletics in other NCAA sports . Army is a member of the Division I Patriot League in most sports , while its men 's ice hockey program competes in Atlantic Hockey . John P. Riley , Jr. was the hockey coach at West Point for more than 35 years . Every year , Army faces the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) Paladins in the annual West Point Weekend hockey game . This series , conceived in 1923 , is the longest @-@ running annual international sporting event in the world .

The men 's lacrosse team has won eight national championships and appeared in the NCAA tournament sixteen times . In its early years , lacrosse was used by football players , like the " Lonesome End " Bill Carpenter , to stay in shape during the off @-@ season . The 2005 ? 06 women 's basketball team went 20 ? 11 and won the Patriot League tournament . They went to the 2006 NCAA Women 's Division I Basketball Tournament as a 15th @-@ ranked seed , where they lost to Tennessee , 102 ? 54 . It was the first March Madness tournament appearance for any Army basketball team . The head coach of that team , Maggie Dixon , died soon after the season at only 28 years of age . Bob Knight , formerly the winningest men 's basketball coach in NCAA history , began his head coaching career at Army in the late 1960s before moving on to Indiana and Texas Tech . One of Knight 's players at Army was Mike Krzyzewski , who later was head coach at Army before moving on to Duke , where he has won five national championships .

Approximately 15 % of cadets are members of a club sport team . West Point fields a total of 24 club sports teams that have been very successful in recent years , winning national championships in judo , boxing , orienteering , pistol , triathlon , crew , cycling , and team handball .

The majority of the student body , about 65 % , competes in intramural sports , known at the academy as " company athletics . " DPE 's Competitive Sports committee runs the club and company athletics sports programs and was recently named one of the " 15 Most Influential Sports Education Teams in America " by the Institute for International Sport . The fall season sees competition in basketball , flag @-@ football , team handball , soccer , ultimate disc , and wrestling ;

while the spring season sees competition in combative grappling , floor hockey , orienteering , flicker ball , and swimming . In the spring , each company also fields a team entry into the annual Sandhurst Competition , a military skills event conducted by the Department of Military Instruction .

= = Traditions = =

Due to West Point 's age and its unique mission of producing Army officers , it has many time @-@ honored traditions . The list below are some of the traditions unique to or started by the academy .

= = = Cullum number = = =

The Cullum number is a reference and identification number assigned to each graduate . It was created by brevet Major General George W. Cullum (USMA Class of 1833) who , in 1850 , began the monumental work of chronicling the biographies of every graduate . He assigned number one to the first West Point graduate , Joseph Gardner Swift , and then numbered all successive graduates in sequence . Before his death in 1892 , General Cullum completed the first three volumes of a work that eventually comprised 10 volumes , titled General Cullum 's Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy , and covering USMA classes from 1802 through 1850 . From 1802 through the Class of 1977 , graduates were listed by general order of Merit . Beginning with the Class of 1978 , graduates were listed alphabetically , and then by date of graduation . Seven graduates have an " A " suffix after their Cullum Number . For various reasons these graduates were omitted from the original class roster , and a suffix letter was added to avoid renumbering the entire class and subsequent classes .

= = = Class ring = = =

West Point began the collegiate tradition of the class ring , beginning with the class of 1835 . The class of 1836 chose no rings , and the class of 1879 had cuff links in lieu of a class ring . Before 1917 , cadets could design much of the ring individually , but now only the center stone can be individualized . One side of the ring bears the academy crest , while the other side bears the class crest and the center stone ring bears the words West Point and the class year . The academy library has a large collection of cadet rings on display . Senior cadets receive their rings during Ring Weekend in the early fall of their senior year . Immediately after senior cadets return to the barracks after receiving their rings , fourth class cadets take the opportunity to surround senior cadets from their company and ask to touch their rings . After reciting a poem known to cadets as the Ring Poem , the senior usually grants the freshmen permission to touch the ring . In 2002 , the Memorial Class ring donor program began . Donations of class rings are melted and merged . A portion of the original gold is infused with gold from preceding melts to become part of the rings for each ' Firstie ' class .

= = = Thayer Award = = =

West Point is home to the Sylvanus Thayer Award . Given annually by the academy since 1958 , the award honors an outstanding citizen whose service and accomplishments in the national interest exemplify the academy 's motto , " Duty , Honor , Country . " Currently , the award guidelines state that the recipient not be a graduate of the academy . The award has been awarded to many notable American citizens , to include George H. W. Bush , Colin Powell , Tom Brokaw , Sandra Day O 'Connor , Henry Kissinger , Ronald Reagan , Barry Goldwater , Carl Vinson , Barbara Jordan , William J. Perry , Bob Hope , and Condoleezza Rice .

= = = Sedgwick 's spurs = = =

A monument to Civil War Union soldier general John Sedgwick stands on the outskirts of the Plain .

Sedgwick 's bronze statue has spurs with rowels that freely rotate . Legend states that if a cadet is in danger of failing a class , they are to don their full @-@ dress parade uniform the night before the final exam . The cadet visits the statue and spins the rowels at the stroke of midnight . Then the cadet runs back to the barracks as fast as they can . According to legend , if Sedgwick 's ghost catches them , they will fail the exam . Otherwise the cadet will pass the exam and the course . Although being out of their rooms after midnight is officially against regulations , violations have been known to be overlooked for the sake of tradition .

= = = Goat @-@ Engineer game = = =

As part of the run @-@ up to the Navy football game , the Corps of Cadets plays the Goat @-@ Engineer game . First played in 1907 , it is a game between the " Goats " (the bottom half of the senior (Firstie) class academically) , and the " Engineers " (the top half) . The game is played with full pads and helmets using eight @-@ man football rules . The location has changed over the years , with recent venues being Shea Stadium , Michie Stadium , and Daly Field . Legend states that Army will beat Navy if the goats win , and the opposite if the engineers win . In recent years , female cadets have begun playing a flag football contest , so there are now two Goat @-@ Engineer games , played back to back the same night .

= = = Walking the area = = =

From the earliest days of the academy , one form of punishment for cadets who commit regulatory infractions has been a process officially known as punishment tours . This process is better known to the cadets as " hours " because as punishment , cadets must walk a specified number of hours in penalty . Cadets are " awarded " punishment tours based upon the severity of the infraction . Being late to class or having an unkempt room may result in as little as 5 hours while more severe misconduct infractions may result in upwards of 60 to 80 hours . In its most traditional form , punishment tours are " walked off " by wearing the dress gray uniform under arms and walking back and forth in a designated area of the cadet barracks courtyard , known as " Central Area . " Cadets who get into trouble frequently and spend many weekends " walking off their hours " are known as " area birds . " Cadets who walk more than 100 total hours in their career are affectionately known as " Century Men . " An alternate form of punishment to walking hours is known as " fatigue tours , " where assigned hours may be " worked off " by manual labor , such as cleaning the barracks . Certain cadets whose academics are deficient may also conduct " sitting tours , " where they have to " sit hours " in a designated academic room in a controlled study environment , for which they receive half credit towards their reduction of tours . Cadets ' uniforms are inspected before their tours begin each day . A small number of cadets may be relieved of their tours that day if their uniforms are exceptionally presentable . Another tradition associated with punishment tours is that any visiting head of state has the authority to grant " amnesty , " releasing all cadets with outstanding hours from the remainder of their assigned tours .

= = Notable alumni = =

An unofficial motto of the academy 's history department is " Much of the history we teach was made by people we taught . " Graduates of the academy refer to themselves as " The Long Gray Line , " a phrase taken from the academy 's traditional hymn " The Corps . " The academy has produced just under 65 @, @ 000 alumni , including two Presidents of the United States : Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower ; the president of the Confederate States of America , Jefferson Davis ; and three foreign heads of state : Anastasio Somoza Debayle of Nicaragua , Fidel V. Ramos of the Philippines , and José María Figueres of Costa Rica . Alumni currently serving in public office include Senator Jack Reed , Governor of Nebraska David Heineman , Governor of Louisiana John Bel Edwards and Congressmen Geoff Davis , Brett Guthrie , Mike Pompeo and John Shimkus .

The academy has produced many notable generals during its 212 years . During the Civil War ,

graduates included John Bell Hood , Stonewall Jackson , Robert E. Lee , Simon Bolivar Buckner , James Longstreet , George G. Meade , Phillip Sheridan , William Tecumseh Sherman , J.E.B. Stuart and Oliver O. Howard George Armstrong Custer graduated last in his class of 1861 . The Spanish ? American War saw the first combat service of Lt. (later , Brigadier General) John " Gatling Gun " Parker , the first Army officer to employ machine guns in offensive fire support of infantry .

During World War I , the academy produced General of the Armies John J. Pershing . West Point was the alma mater of many notable World War II generals , Henry H. Arnold , Omar Bradley , Mark Wayne Clark , Robert L. Eichelberger , James M. Gavin , Leslie Groves , Douglas MacArthur , George S. Patton , Joseph Stilwell , Maxwell D. Taylor , James Van Fleet , Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright IV , and Simon Bolivar Buckner , Jr. the highest ranking General to be killed in combat during World War II , with many of these graduates also serving in commanding roles in the Korean War . During the Vietnam War , notable graduates general officers included Creighton Abrams , Hal Moore , and William Westmoreland . West Point also produced some famous generals and statesmen of recent note including John Abizaid , Stanley A. McChrystal , Wesley Clark , Alexander Haig , Barry McCaffrey , Norman Schwarzkopf , Jr . , Brent Scowcroft , Lloyd Austin , and former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency , retired General David Petraeus .

A total of 76 graduates have been awarded the Medal of Honor .

West Point has produced 18 NASA astronauts , including five who went to the Moon . Other noted alumni include Jim Kimsey , founder of AOL ; Bob McDonald , CEO of Procter & Gamble who was later nominated to be the Secretary of Veteran Affairs ; Alex Gorsky , CEO of Johnson & Johnson ; Keith McLoughlin , President and CEO of Electrolux and Alden Partridge , founder of Norwich University . West Point 's contributions to sport include three Heisman Trophy winners : Glenn Davis , Doc Blanchard , and Pete Dawkins . West Point has produced many high government officials , including Brent Scowcroft , the National Security Advisor under Presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush , and Eric Shinseki , former Secretary of Veterans Affairs under President Barack Obama . West Point graduate Frank Medina organized and led the nationwide campaign that brought the Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment , also known as the Borinqueneers .

Among American universities , the academy is fifth on the list of total winners for Rhodes Scholarships , seventh for Marshall Scholarships and fourth on the list of Hertz Fellowships . The official alumni association of West Point is the West Point Association of Graduates (WPAOG or AOG) , headquartered at Herbert Hall .

= = Commemorations = =

On May 26 , 1937 , the U.S. Post Office issued a 5 @-@ cent commemorative stamp honoring West Point , which features several of its buildings along with the West Point 's motto , DUTY * HONOR * COUNTRY , inscribed under its name near the top . On the 200th anniversary of West Point 's founding the U.S.P.S. released a second stamp of 34 @-@ cents in its honor .