It was a real honor to be selected by US Army Cadet Command to attend the Cultural Understanding and Language Program (CULP) this summer. I was selected to deploy on a humanitarian mission to Costa Rica for a total of 31 days. Before I could depart on my mission I had two main tasks: successfully pass five online training programs and then complete pre-deployment briefings at Fort Knox, Kentucky. At Fort Knox I met my cadre leader and nine Cadets from different universities that I would be working with.

Our assignment in Costa Rica was to teach English to high school students, as well as provide help in local communities. We had a host center, the Bi-National Center, which set up all of our assignments and took care of lodging needs. The first two days were spent in San Jose where we met with the American Ambassador at the Embassy in Costa Rica.

After San Jose we traveled to EARTH University, a college where students from all over the world study agriculture, located in Limon. At EARTH we helped in the organic farmland by moving compost piles. We visited the towns of Las Lomas and Siquirres. In Las Lomas we repainted a school, built a trail in the rainforest, and interacted with elementary school students.

In Siquirres we helped high school students with their project, which they then presented in English. We then ventured to a biological research station in La Selva where we hiked through the Rainforest and helped repair trails and pathways. We spent our mornings from 0700-1300 working on the trails. The head of the research station and his assistants worked with us. We also interacted with researchers out on the trails. When our work was complete we travelled back to San Jose to conducted an After Action Review with the Ambassador about our experiences.

My deployment to Costa Rica was a great experience, I not only learned about Costa Rica but I had the opportunity to practice my Spanish with the locals. I highly suggest Cadets of the Royal Warrior Battalion apply for a CULP mission.
Core Leader Competencies

What an Army Leader Does

Leads:
- Leads Others
- Extends Influence Beyond the Chain of Command
- Leads By Example
- Communicates

Develops:
- Creates A Positive Environment
- Prepares Self
- Develops Others

Achieves:
- Gets Results

Combat Diver Qualification Course
By MS III Cadet Michael Stauffer, Marywood University

Regarded by many Soldiers as the toughest military school to endure, Combat Diver Qualification Course is run by C Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. The mission is to train candidates to learn multiple ways of infiltration by use of a waterborne environment. As a Cadet I was fortunate enough to experience some of the best training that the military offers.

The school is located in Key West, Florida and is a self-sufficient organization with an administrative and training facility, barracks, dining facility, classrooms, parachute-drying tower, hyperbaric chamber, boat maintenance shop, docks, the largest pool in Key West, and a dive tower equipped with a nuclear submarine lockout trunk. A Staff Sergeant I was talking to told me the Army is composed of 1% of Special Forces, and of that 1% are combat divers. From that point I had to take a step back and realize where I was and who I was with.

The cadre at the school respect you, but that is as far as it goes. If you have a problem above water or subsurface you have to help yourself because no one will be there to help you in real life out in the ocean. The stress that the water provides is incredible; the ocean is a very dynamic environment. There are life or death skills that you have to master.

Zero Week consisted of pre-scuba with other ROTC cadets and becoming familiar with the surroundings and realizing what the course was actually going to be like. There was no time to take training slowly, so right away we started to learn the “jock up” sequence, pool training and ocean surface swims. All these pre-training exercises were done after warming up with hundreds of push-ups and flutter kicks with charged masks and heavy fins. The prerequisite tests include: APFT with pull ups, running five miles in forty minutes, swimming 50m underwater with no breaths, 2 minute treading, 20 lb clump retrieval, underwater knot tying, equipment recovery, drown proofing, weight belt swim, and timed 1000m/2000m/3000m surface swims. During zero week we drilled on the proper ascent rate and how to valsalva (clear your ears) properly.

The beginning of Week One started similar to pre-scuba, except for the fact that I was now thrown into a class of 76 of the best Cadets, Rangers, Combat Controllers and Special Forces that the army has to offer. We continued pt, ocean swims, and training for the must pass prerequisite events that would be held at the end of introduction week. All events had to be passed in order to move on to pool week.

The first week went right into diving physiology and diving injuries. I learned the processes of the Circulatory, Respiratory, Auditory and Sinus systems. Diving injuries was stressed upon and we had to know signs, symptoms, causes and treatments. Some
injuries that were stressed upon were Pneumothorax, Mediastinal/Subcutaneous Emphysema, Arterial Gas Embolism, Decompression sickness, Oxygen Toxicity, CO2 Poisoning, Hypoxia, Nitrogen Narcosis, Hypothermia, Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, and Caustic Cocktail.

Open circuit week in the ocean started with morning physical training (PT) followed by classes on submarine lock in/out, dangerous marine life, and tides/waves/current. Our first open water dive was a 130ft deep dive off the coast of Key West. After the deep dive we traveled to the local Coast Guard Base where we learned how to do a ship bottom search, as well as how to place mines strategically in order to stop a ship. In the afternoon we would move to wet shoot training. Here we learned how to deal with a parachute landing in the water and how to build SOSOP for when a zodiac would be dropped from a C-130 aircraft. Open circuit ends with learning to perform certain searches for materials underwater and how to make things neutrally buoyant.

The following three weeks we would train on the Draeger Lar V re-breather. First we started in the pool practicing buddy rescue and breathing before moving into the ocean. Procedures for close circuit are more strict because with the re-breather you are taking in pure oxygen. To get use to the system each team would swim six navigation dives. The navigation dives for me consisted of a 500m night dive, 1000m day time dive and 1500m night dive. These days would start at 4am and end well after mid-night once all cleaning and managing of equipment was complete.

Following the azimuth navigations, we practiced contour dives along shore scouting enemy and depth control navigations with dog leg turns. We also practiced high water entries from about 15 ft with full equipment on. Back at the school we would practice submarine operations and build kayaks for the following week’s training. The submarine lockout operation is like being in a closed container and then flooded with water up to your shoulders. Once the pocket is flooded you have to make a pathway to surface with full equipment on. This is just one of the new infiltrations methods the school is teaching. Another way of infiltration is a new product that I was lucky enough to try called “jet boots”. They cost about $20,000 and are basically a belt with propellers attached making it easy to glide in the water.

The seven weeks was a grueling experience, and at times I fought physical fatigue and self doubt. It was the determination, that drive that the Cadre are looking for to always be better which helped me make it. I had a tremendous help/motivation from family, friends and the cadre back home. With this motivation I built up confidence in the water and was determined not to let everyone who had faith in me down.

I experienced a great deal during the seven weeks of dive school. There is no doubt the Dive Badge represents more than what I can say about it. The real truth is that it is as much my badge as it is the cadre's, my families', the Royal Warrior battalion's, and my MSIII classmate's badge. Without the constant motivation, help, and confidence I am almost positive that I wouldn't have been able to pass the course.