This past weekend, the GWU NROTC Drill Team had the opportunity to perform in the 2017 Mardi Gras Drill Meet hosted by Tulane NROTC; but the road to Mardi Gras began in January. This semester, I hold the billet designated as “Drill”, which renders me responsible for all aspects of the Drill Team, however I did not carry this responsibility alone. Luckily, I received guidance from the upperclass Midshipman who held the billet before me (MIDN Stukas), and our unit’s AMOI (SSgt Fuentes). Together, we formed a Drill Team worthy of competing with the best. Weeks of practice followed, and even as the temperature outside decreased, our skills and motivation did the opposite.

On February 22nd, eager and inexperienced, we traveled down to New Orleans, but the practicing did not end. Even on the night before the Drill Meet we practiced in our hotel parking lot, ensuring that our moves were sharp and in sync. On the morning of the Drill Meet we were nervous, or at least I was, but our bearing did not show it. We conducted every event, from Platoon Inspection to Squad Basic, to the best of our ability. I think I speak for everyone on the Drill Team and the Staff present when I say that I am proud of our performance at Tulane, no matter the outcome. We did not take home a trophy, but we did gain experience, which is a better prize in my opinion. Now we’re the underdogs, and it’ll be much sweeter when we take what we’ve learned and turn it into a victory.
On March 24th, members of the Nuke Club and of the unit travelled to Charleston, South Carolina along with Lt. Arnest for this semester’s Nuke FEX; a trip that many had been looking forward to for quite some time. Once arriving in Charleston, the first stop was at Nuclear Power school, a place many have heard of but have never had the chance to visit. During their visit, the Midshipmen had the opportunity to hear what the average day was like in Power School from an instructor as well as a few Junior Officers. For those interested in the Nuke community, especially MIDN 1/C Kasturas who will be starting his six-month long journey in Charleston this summer, the information that they received gave them a better idea of how rigorous the curriculum was and what is expected of them. Among Nuclear Power School, the Cold War Memorial, CSS Hunley, and Patriots Point - home of the USS Yorktown, USS Laffey, and USS Clamagore - were all stops on the trip.

Having just learned about the CSS Hunley in Naval Science, it was particularly interesting to see it in person after nearly 150 years of resting on the ocean floor off the coast of South Carolina. In 1995, the Hunley was discovered, and 5 years later, it was raised out of the ocean. We were told that the restoration efforts have been going on since and most likely will for at least another 5 years. While the mystery still remains of how it sunk, one day they’ll be a little closer to knowing.

After a day of visiting all the ship museums and memorials, there was still time to relax in downtown Charleston and experience the local cuisine as well as few hours at the Isle of Palms beach. Overall, the trip was a success. Regardless of if you want to do Surface Warfare, Fly, or go Nuke, the trip gave you an insight on what the Nuke community is like and how it relates to the rest. In addition to hearing about the current practices, being able to see the changes that have been made since the very beginning, with the Hunley, to the mid 1900’s aboard the Clamagore was incredible.

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