

West Point Cadets Participate in DEOMI Pilot Internship

Story by DEOMI Public Affairs

Photos by Michael Marks



(From Left) Lt. Jayson Rhoton, Cadet Sarah Speck, Cadet Elizabeth Gilbert, Dr. Morten Ender, Cadet Surin Jang, and Maj. Roshonda Gilmore.

PATRICK SPACE FORCE BASE, Fla. – The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) hosted three United States Military Academy West Point rising senior cadets as part of a pilot Summer Research and Professionalization Internship Program (SRPIP), from June 21st to July 11th.

The pilot SRPIP is part of a broader ongoing research collaboration, established in 2021, between DEOMI’s Research and Development (R&D) Directorate and West Point. Key members behind this pilot program worked closely with West Point Sociology Professor, Dr. Morten Ender, to select cadets who would be most capable of completing the internship.

“This program will help DEOMI by building relationships with future Army leaders,” said Dr. Jessica Lowen, a SRPIP key member and research scientist with DEOMI’s Research Analysis and Special Initiatives (RASI) team. “In turn, the cadets offer a valuable perspective about the next generation of leaders,” she added.

As senior West Point sociology majors with plans to continue in a military career after graduation, Cadets Sarah Speck, Surin Jang, and Elizabeth Gilbert perfectly represented the “future Army leaders” participants Lowen was hoping to have for this pilot program.

The three week program is designed to provide the cadets with opportunities to collaborate with DEOMI’s research staff on the various forms of research used to identify factors that impact and foster inclusive cultures, according to SRPIP key member and DEOMI Research Program Manager, U.S. Army Maj. Roshonda Gilmore.

Lowen added that the program also provided cadets with several mentorship opportunities. For instance, the cadets were able to speak candidly with senior officers about career goals and future challenges they may face after graduation.

“Everywhere you turn is a mentorship opportunity here. The level of engagement was awesome and it gave me an opportunity to expand my people skills,” said Gilbert, a Dallas native.



*Everywhere you turn
is a mentorship
opportunity*



“I was able to talk to some amazing and very accomplished women, who gave very realistic and helpful tips on how to be a great leader,” said Jang, a native of Auburn, Alabama. “I have a better idea of what to expect when going to my first duty station,” added Jang, hoping that duty station is in Korea so that she can be closer to family.

“The mentorship, along with the hands-on work involved in this program, provided a unique experience to add to your toolkit as a professional in the Army,” said Speck, a native of Syracuse, New York. “You will have a better understanding and appreciation for the resources and education that goes into the human management side of the military; which, I believe makes you a better leader,” she added.

Near the end of their time at DEOMI, the cadets reflected on what they learned and how it will influence their military careers in the future.

“I had a phenomenal experience here,” said Jang. “I got real-life experience of what the functional army is like, while doing something that is relevant to my major,” she added.



“I realize how important the work being done here at DEOMI is and I was happy to support in any way I could,” said Gilbert. “This experience will help me leave a legacy for the class after me.”

The institute is looking into the possibility of continuing this program permanently and adding it to DEOMI’s current internship program options, according to U.S. Navy Lt. Jayson Rhoton, SRPIP key member and chief research scientist of DEOMI’s RASI team.

DEOMI currently offers two internship programs. The first internship is the Naval Research Enterprise Internship Program (NREIP), which caters to selected university/college and Master’s/Ph-D level graduate students. The second internship is the Science and Engineering Apprenticeship Program (SEAP), which caters to selected high school students, who have completed at least ninth grade.



In the past, DEOMI typically hosted between 5-7 interns each year. Adding SRPIP to the DEOMI internship lineup will not only increase the number of interns the institute could host annually, it will also allow DEOMI an opportunity to expand its goal of encouraging high school, college, graduate-level, and now military academy students to consider careers in the Department of Defense (DoD) once they have completed their education.

The DEOMI team is an inclusive force that values and develops all individuals and thrives on their contributions. Since its inception in 1971, then known as the Defense Race Relations Institute, DEOMI has developed and delivered innovative education, training, research and collaborative solutions to approximately 52,000 DEOMI military and civilian graduates.

To learn more about DEOMI, please visit www.defenseculture.mil and www.facebook.com/DEOMI.DoD. DEOMI’s website provides a variety of tools, training products, and information to support leaders across the DoD in improving their organizational culture.

For more information about DEOMI, visit:

Website: <https://www.defenseculture.mil>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DEOMI.DoD>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm1APivtHDywpDJGeX7XkBA>