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IUP ROTC wins 2010 Ranger Challenge, for second time

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Students have all walked up the hill toward Foster Dining Hall during their time at IUP.

Now make that same hill gravel and add another 1.85 miles, a helmet, four quarts of water, a 35 pound rucksack, a 10 pound radio and a rubber six pound weapon.

That is only part of the Army ROTC Ranger Challenge 6.2 mile course.



Contributed Photo

The IUP Army Reserve Office's Training Corps (ROTC) Ranger Challenge Team finished first place overall at the competition held in Camp Smith, NY this past weekend. They competed against 22 Division I and Division II schools such as Penn State, Rutgers, Slippery Rock and Valley Forge Military Academy.

The 10-member team trained five days a week, plus additional training, for the Ranger Challenge events.

Winning the 2010 Ranger Challenge, "represents IUP's ROTC program and the University on a national level," Major Aaron Felter said. "It shows that a small D-II school can produce outstanding results."

The 10-member team consisting of juniors, sophomores and freshmen that pushed themselves in training two months prior to the Ranger Challenge.

For those two months, these men and women had physical training (PT) five days a week from 6 to 7 a.m., as well as two hour labs two to four days a week working on the events that they will perform at Ranger Challenge.

The competition began with a 4 a.m. wake up Saturday morning. The team's first event was the Army Physical Fitness test.

After the test came a two-mile movement to weapons assembly and a land navigation course. Each event is based off a point system, and IUP came in first on the land nav. with a score over 30 points higher than the second place contender.

Following the two miles, the team showed marksmanship in the Engagement Skills Trainer (an electronic simulation of a live firing range).

This event ended in a three-way tie, forcing a "shoot off" by team captain Alexander Deets. Deets came out on top.

IUP then moved on to the movement on urban terrain course (MOUT).

The team had to negotiate its way through three buildings with paintball weapons and equipment, while gathering intelligence and engaging targets.

IUP finished first in this event with their second first place in an event at the competition.

"My personal favorite event is the MOUT," Rob Spaulding said. "You get to run through a mock village, while explosions are going off, and try to clear rooms of bad guys. It's a really fast-paced and exciting event."

Upon "clearing" the buildings the team was tested on providing first aid to a simulated casualty. IUP then moved on to the One Rope Bridge event, where the team had to establish a rope bridge between two poles approximately 50 feet apart. With superb execution, the team moved to its final event of the day, a written examination of the

knowledge from Military Science classes 101-402. The team which began its day at 4 a.m., finished at 8 p.m.

After a night of well-deserved rest, reconfiguring strategies and cross loading equipment, the team woke up at 6 a.m. Sunday to compete in the final event of the competition, a 6.2 mile roach march with full gear. IUP's team completed the course in one hour and nine minutes.

This is the second time in the school's history that IUP's ROTC has won the Ranger Challenge, the last time in 2007. IUP's ROTC should find out in a week if their score beat the top team from this coming weekend's competition.

If IUP has the better score, they will start training for the West Point Sand Hurst Military Skills Completion, an international competition that will be held at West Point in April.

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