

In the Navy

JULIET O'BRIEN '16, THE FIRST CASTILLEJA GRADUATE TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY, FINDS HER OWN SENSE OF BELONGING

A typical day in the life of **Juliet O'Brien '16** begins with a workout at 0530 and formation with her company at 0700. There is class, a noon meal formation that includes swords, a mandated two-hour workout, dinner, briefings, and study period until 2300, which is lights out if you're a plebe (freshman). "Pretty much every minute of the day is structured, but this place is designed to teach you how to manage your time effectively and perform well under stress."

How did a Castilleja girl with a lifelong passion for dance decide to attend the United States Naval Academy? She applied on a whim for Summer Seminar, a week-long experience designed to give rising high school seniors a glimpse at life at the academy, and discovered a sense of service that inspired her. "I'll never forget getting a call from my congresswoman, Rep. Jackie Speier, in February right before watching *Arts with a Heart* my senior year at Casti, saying that I had made it into the Naval Academy." Juliet would be the first Castilleja alumna to attend the university in Annapolis and one of 315 women in her class of 1,125 midshipmen.

Looking back over the past four years, Juliet admits, "this place does a good job of challenging you in several different ways. Learning to deal with anxieties about not running as fast as some others, or not being the loudest voice in the room has taught me that being a leader involves finding your own approach to situations." Proud of how she has been able to integrate her passions for the humanities, arts, and languages with life in the Navy, she has found a sense of belonging in many places, including on the Navy Dance Team. "Casti instilled in me the value of developing and maintaining a strong core group of female friends, which has been essential in an institution that is predominantly male." She is grateful to have found a niche on the team, which practices daily and performs at football and basketball games.

Juliet studied abroad in Morocco last fall and cherished the opportunity to "live with a host family, learn Arabic, and study public policy in French at a local university. It was a chance for me to live as a civilian for a semester, but also to fall in love with a new culture and think about how I can apply an interest in diplomacy and development with



Juliet (pictured middle, bottom row) and the Navy Dance Team

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experience in the defense arena as well." While looking ahead to future possibilities, Juliet also spent time reflecting on the mentors who had helped her along the way: "Madame Repellin^{HA} and Madame Schryver^{HA} for kindling a love of languages and exposing me to Maghrebi culture through French literature classes, which has led me to explore an entirely new culture and language. Ms. Kertsman for her leadership in the ACE Center and everyone who worked on the Global Investigator Trip when I was there...that was truly one of the most formative times of my Casti career."

Now a senior at USNA, Juliet will soon embark on a new career, commissioning as a Surface Warfare Officer on the *USS Porter*. As a 2019 Truman Scholar, she plans to pursue a master's degree in international development and modern Middle Eastern studies, pending Navy approval.