

STILL REVOLUTIONARY: The West Point Corbin Forum

West Point is home to dozens of monuments. The majority of these monuments memorialize the famous men associated in one way or another with West Point: George Washington, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Sylvanus Thayer, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower and more. But only one of West Point's many monuments has a N.Y. state historical road marker announcing its presence, the monument and grave of Margaret Corbin, whom its sign labels, "Revolutionary Heroine."

Corbin fought in the Battle at Fort Mifflin during the Revolutionary War and was the first woman to receive a pension from the U.S. military for the wounds she suffered in that battle. What's more, none of West Point's famous men have a cadet club named after them, but Corbin does.

In 1976, the same year that it first admitted female cadets, the United States Military Academy established the **Margaret Corbin Forum**. Originally a setting to discuss gender assimilation issues, the Corbin Forum grew and was formalized as a cadet club with the **Directorate of Cadet Activities (DCA)** in the early 1990s. Today, Cadet Christa McKee '15, the Corbin Forum's Cadet-in-Charge, says that

the club is regarded as a vehicle for diversity programming with the Corps of Cadets. Furthermore, she says, the focus of the forum has broadened beyond issues of gender. "This year we have really expanded our programming to all types of diversity: gender, sexuality, race, socio-economic status, etc.," McKee says.

The broadening of focus is not the only change McKee has seen in her time with the Corbin Forum. "When I first joined there would be maybe 30 cadets at our monthly luncheons, and there were only two cadets on the executive board," she says. "This year we had at least 80 participants at each of the luncheons, with several topping 100, and we have nine cadets



Cadets presented thesis work on topics related to diversity and inclusion at the Annual Corbin Leadership Summit.

on the executive board." With more than 900 cadets, staff, and faculty on its distribution list, the Corbin Forum has some of the largest participation numbers of all DCA clubs. It is also one of the most active clubs, holding two guaranteed events each month: the aforementioned luncheons, which focus on a variety of topics such as career advancement, personal finance, marriage and family issues, Army branch information, PT standards and more; and a mentorship circle meeting, | **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6** |

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which allows cadets to connect with faculty and staff mentors and learn about topics directly related to their future careers as Army officers.

But today's Corbin Forum is also more than monthly luncheons and mentorships meetings. In 2014, the Corbin Forum introduced the Annual Corbin Leadership Summit, a three-day, cadet-run conference during which students from other service academies and area ROTC detachments discuss topics relevant to the future of women in the military and as leaders. At the 2nd annual summit, held in February, panel topics included barriers to inclusion, embracing difference, building and leading diverse teams, and best leader practices. The Corbin Forum also hosts an annual branch seminar, a

relationships in the military panel, summer internships, and trips to conferences. "Several cadets had an opportunity to attend a leadership conference in Boston this year," McKee says. "It was a great experience that gave us a platform to spread our mission and an opportunity to both learn and network." The Boston event was sponsored by Friends of the Corbin Forum, a group of supporters that now includes alumni, members of the Armed Forces, business and civic leaders, and members of academia that seek to enrich the cadet experience.

McKee credits the impact of such experiences to the generosity of donors. "Support from donors allows the Corbin Forum to have greater flexibility in the programs and services it offers as a club," she says. "While our participation is heavily female—something rare in an 80-percent male Corps—we make sure our programming is as widely applicable as possible." An exciting event that the Corbin Forum recently

sponsored was the USMA visit of Sheryl Sandberg, the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, who spoke to some 300 Second Class cadets in Robinson Auditorium on the benefits of diversity in leadership and addressed three biases in the gender-leadership gap: competence ("systematically underestimating female performance"), likability ("power and likeability need not be antithetical when it comes to women"), and responsibility ("there needs to be more gender balance in support roles and in family chores").

Like its namesake, the Corbin Forum views itself as progressive and making an impact with both female and male cadets. And with the lifting of the Combat Exclusion Policy and the requirement to fully integrate women into the force next year, it is only a matter of time before West Point adds more monuments to females on its hallowed grounds, and the work of the Corbin Forum will have played a role in making that happen.



This spring, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg spoke to cadets about diversity and gender equity in the workplace and leadership.

Private Funding & DCA

- DCA is one of the most robust extracurricular programs in the country with 140 clubs and forums.
- Donations make up 60% of clubs' operating budgets.
- Approximately 65% of the Corps, or nearly 3,000 cadets, are DCA club members with upperclassmen involved in more than one club.
- DCA teams beat Navy and Air Force 60% of the time.
- In Academic Year 14–15, there were more than 1,000 DCA club competitions and events.
- Last year, 9 clubs received national titles (Triathlon, Men's and Women's Handball, Parachute Team, Fencing, Judo, Orienteering, Pistol, and Chess)