



# **SIUE Army ROTC Cadet Kerkemeyer Earns Prestigious Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Achievement**

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Army ROTC Cadet Kevin Kerkemeyer has been awarded the esteemed Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Achievement, a highly competitive national award that honors exceptional achievement in areas of scholarship, physical fitness, leadership and citizenship/volunteerism.

Nominees from all branches of military service are eligible, with 60 awardees named annually. This year, 12 Army ROTC Cadets earned the award, out of tens of thousands of peer nominees.

“Cadet Kevin Kerkemeyer is without hesitation the best suited cadet I’ve seen for the Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Achievement Award,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Timothy Clark, PE, chair of the SIUE Department of Military Science. “He stands out for his exceptional academic and leadership performance in SIUE’s Cougar Battalion. He is a remarkable cadet and will be a remarkable officer.”

A native of St. Charles, Mo., Kerkemeyer is a senior majoring in computer management and information systems (CMIS) in the School of Business. He has a 4.0 GPA and a 4.0 military science GPA. He participates in the School’s Emerging Leaders Improving Through Experience (E.L.I.T.E.) organization, serves as vice president of the Tactics Club, participates in the Spanish Club and is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma. He works part-time at the SIUE Student Fitness Center and volunteers at Oasis Food Pantry in his hometown.

Additionally, the cadet obtained the German Armed Proficiency Badge in Silver, was part of the Ranger Challenge Team and earned his Airborne wings. According to Clark, Kerkemeyer has served as a squad leader, platoon sergeant and in platoon leader positions with distinction. He teaches tactics and leads physical training weekly, and is assigned as a formal mentor to a squad of junior cadets.

“As testament to his superior officership potential, Kevin ran the entire 12 miles of our last ruck march,” Clark noted. “He was so far in front, he could have been finished and released hours earlier than the average cadet. Yet, he would stop and cheer for peers he came across when the course loops overlapped. Then, upon completion, he would jog back out and bring each of his peers’ home to the finish.”

“I was surprised to receive this award considering the excellent quality of my fellow cadets in the SIUE Army ROTC program,” Kerkemeyer said. “Our program is a group ‘crowded with excellence.’ I am thrilled to represent our ROTC program and SIUE on a national level.”

“This program allowed me to pursue two of my life goals at the same time—joining the military and earning a college degree,” he explained. “I chose CMIS, because I consider myself a problem solver, and technology is the single greatest problem-solving tool that people have. This has become obvious to everyone in recent times.”

Kerkemeyer noted his firm commitment to the Cougar Battalion’s motto: “Cougar Pride Never Dies.” He is slated to graduate in May 2021.

“After I complete my degree, I will begin my career in the Army in the active duty component using the skills and knowledge that have been gifted to me,” he said. “I plan to keep an open mind about the future and seek out opportunities that interest me.”

Clark emphasized that Kerkemeyer is the type of citizen with which the Army loves to partner: a well-rounded person who cares. That’s a true leader.

He quoted President Theodore Roosevelt’s prescription targeting those maybe feeling overcome by odds or the situation: “Do your best with what you have, where you are, right now.”

“Kevin embodies what President Roosevelt would admire as ‘the strenuous life,’” Clark explained. “Not just physical tenacity, but in academic pursuits, and with a willingness to get involved, to act, to try yet sometimes fall short, to learn and to keep coming back a little better in each area until you’ve climbed the proverbial mountain. Kevin not only has done that, but he also is inspiring that culture in Army ROTC.”

That culture, and the personal growth and leadership development that the ROTC offers, is for everyone, according to Clark.

“SIUE’s School of Business and the SIUE Army ROTC are world class organizations with world class people like Kevin,” Clark said. “We attain above average scores on numerous metrics, and compete head to head in our varsity sport, ‘Ranger Challenge,’ with regional powerhouses like Mizzou. SIUE punches above its weight class, so to speak, both academically and in the student experience. We follow that high-achieving model in the Cougar Battalion.”

“You don’t have to want to spend your life on active duty to benefit from the Army ROTC program,” he explained. “I encourage individuals to try it out, with no requirements other than taking a class. If you want to stay through commissioning, you can select to serve in your community as a Guard or Reserve Soldier. It’s not an enlistment, and basic training is not required. We help students find solutions to financial challenges to either come to school or stay in school. Service comes after.”

For more information on the SIUE Army ROTC program, visit [siue.edu/rotc](http://siue.edu/rotc). Details on the Legion of Valor of the United States of America, Inc. can be found at [legionofvalor.org/history](http://legionofvalor.org/history).

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River's rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 13,000.