

# CPT(P) Barry Ammons

## **Please tell us a little about yourself**

I graduated from the United States Military Academy in 2006 with a major in International/Strategic History. Following graduation, I served as an Infantry Officer in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY and the 4-2 Stryker Brigade at JBLM, WA – including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. As part of the Eisenhower Leader Development Program, I received my MA in Organizational Psychology from Teachers College (Columbia University) prior to becoming a Company Tactical Officer for G-2. I'm married to my amazing wife Abby, and we have two daughters, Emily Claire and Catherine.

## **Can you please describe your duties as a Tactical Officer (TAC)?**

In short, Tactical Officers are leader-developers. It is ultimately our responsibility to integrate the academic, physical, military, and character programs into a single effort aimed at preparing our Cadets to be future leaders. To fulfill this obligation, TACs act as the legal company commanders for their companies; coach, teach, mentor, and counsel Cadets of all classes within their companies; collaborate with external agencies and personnel within USMA to facilitate Cadet development; closely assist the Cadet chain of command at the Company, Battalion, and Regimental Level with their respective duties; and serve as professional examples for the Cadets.

## **What made you decide to serve as a TAC?**

Quite frankly, I wanted an assignment after company command where I would both get developed/broadened and have an opportunity to “give back” a little to the Army in the realm of leader development – two things my former BDE Commander really helped me prioritize when considering post-command assignments. Becoming a West Point Tactical Officer met those desires exactly.

## **What has been the most rewarding part of serving as a TAC?**

As a TAC, you not only serve alongside top-caliber officers and NCOs, you supervise and develop the next crop of superstar officers to graduate from USMA. Every time a Cadet walks into my office with a question, wants to discuss our profession, or a former Cadet reaches out for advice now that they are in the force, I know that this job matters. That is the most rewarding part of serving as a TAC.

### **How has serving as a TAC prepared you for future assignments back in the operational Army?**

Serving as a TAC prepares you for future assignments in three very tangible ways: 1) the graduate school experience affords an opportunity for reflection and thinking that few other jobs offer as you transition from Company level leadership to Field Grade leadership, 2) in the Tactical Officer role, you are able to exercise more organizational leadership, especially since you are able to observe, coach, and mentor the Cadet chain of command from the outside, and 3) you are getting a practical application experience of the Columbia education as you develop leaders in your Cadet company and the Corps.

### **What was your graduate school experience like at Teachers College – Columbia University?**

Graduate school at Columbia is an amazing experience. Not only is the education top-notch and pertinent to our profession and future roles in that profession, but you are surrounded by talented and successful peers from the civilian sector. The mix of perspectives you are exposed to in the classroom, on the campus, and in NYC are just as rich as they are diverse. It does take some adjusting to get back into the student role/mindset and it can be a challenge at times to do all of the work, fully experience Teachers College and NYC, and still have time to reflect – but, in the end, it was a phenomenal year.

### **How has this assignment been in terms of family time and work-life balance?**

During the Eisenhower Leader Development Program, you have a lot of control over your schedule outside of class and seminars, so the work-life balance is easy to manage and weighs heavily in favor of the family. As a Tactical Officer, like any position in the Army, you have to be more deliberate in how you strike that balance. There is always work that can be done and at the end of the day, you have to prioritize where you can have the most impact on Cadets and still maximize the remaining time with your family.

### **What advice would you give to officers who are considering applying to become a TAC?**

I would whole heartedly recommend applying – with two considerations. 1) Pay close attention to your professional timeline and make sure that you have the time available to fulfill your commitment to the Brigade Tactical Department and USMA (3 years AFTER graduate school) without limiting your timeline or other things that you might want to do, and 2) Be prepared to work as a Tactical Officer. Coming to USMA to be a Tactical Officer is not “taking a knee” as some may think. Are you ramping up to deploy with JRTC/NTC rotations followed by a year in Iraq or Afghanistan? No. But, you do work a lot of late nights, most Saturdays, and TACs are decisively engaged in summer training for the majority of every summer. Not bad at all, but just some thoughts to help you enter this assignment with all things considered.