

Supporting Materials from The Citadel 13.d. Strategic Communications: Media Relations Programs and Projects

CASE Entry: Illuminating the Evolution of Women at The Citadel through Media Relations Strategies Promoting the First woman Regimental Commander

Included in this document:

- The New York Times cover story
- Photo of Zorn being interviewed by CBS Morning News anchor Norah O'Donnell
- Zorn appearing Junior Scholastic magazine
- Screen shot of Zorn outranking Beyonce on Cosmopolitan's Top 30
- Other earned media placement samples

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The New York Times

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The Citadel Fought the Admission of Women. Now a Female Cadet Will Lead the Corps.



The Citadel Fought the Admission of Women. Now a Female Cadet Will Lead the Corps.

Sarah Zorn is scheduled to become the Citadel's first female regimental commander — in essence, the head of the student body — in a ceremony on Friday. Credit Alyssa Schukar for The New York Times

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By Richard Fausset

May 4, 2018

CHARLESTON, S.C. — When Sarah Zorn applied for admission to the Citadel four years ago, she had not heard the story of Shannon Faulkner, the first woman to gain full admission to the famed Southern military college.

Ms. Zorn did not know about the two-and-a-half-year legal battle that had forced the college to accept her, or the death threats, or the sexist epithets spray-painted on her parents' house, or the federal marshals who escorted Ms. Faulkner to campus on her first day as a cadet in 1995, or that she had dropped out a week later.

She knows now. But the 21-year-old college junior believes that the 175-year-old South Carolina institution that once fought admitting women as if they were an invading army has made its peace with the idea.

And her accession on Friday as the Citadel's first female regimental commander — the top cadet — is her proof.

"I think that women are fully embraced as cadets here," Ms. Zorn said in an interview. "You hear a lot of times from fellow cadets, and even from alumni, that having women here has even improved the college."

On Friday afternoon, Ms. Zorn, in a dress uniform and a black shako, officially took over the post during the Citadel's pomp-laden graduation parade, known as the Long Gray Line. As the college's 2,400 undergraduates stood at attention, she received, with great formality, a gilt-handled sword from her predecessor, Dillon Graham.



Cadet Zorn has excelled in physical training at the Citadel. “You hear a lot of times from fellow cadets, and even from alumni, that having women here has even improved the college,” she said in an interview. Credit Alyssa Schukar for The New York Times

There was no announcement that she was making history. But nearly everyone present recognized a sign of irrevocable momentum in a long process of change.

“It says we can,” said Catherine Hill, 18, a freshman whose father graduated from the Citadel in 1990. “It says we can be with the guys — that we can do this.”

Citadel officials acknowledge today that the ugly reaction to Ms. Faulkner, which made international headlines, was a deep embarrassment to the institution. They also concede that the college moved too slowly in the years that followed to accommodate the women who came after her.

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“I don’t think our story was good for the first — I’m just going to throw it out there — 10 years or so,” said Geno F. Paluso II, a 1989 Citadel graduate and retired Navy captain who serves as the [Commandant of Cadets](#).

Now the Citadel, one of the few state-supported military colleges in the country, is eager to promote a different story: that women are welcome and in many cases thriving on campus.

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“I will tell you that I’ve only had one negative phone call” from an alumnus about Ms. Zorn’s selection, Mr. Paluso said. “It was pretty easy. I called the guy a Neanderthal. Then I educated him on how there’s no all-male military institutions, there’s no all-male corporations in America — I mean, come on. It’s 2018. She’s the best qualified cadet. So get over it.”



Cadets leaving the Padgett-Thomas Barracks for an awards ceremony on Thursday. Including this year’s class, the Citadel has graduated 475 women since 1999. Credit Alyssa Schukar for The New York Times

According to college officials, women make up 10 percent of this year’s 516-member graduating class, and 9 percent of all undergraduates. Including this year’s crop, the Citadel has graduated 475 women since 1999. Officials say that on average, female cadets maintain a higher grade-point average and are more likely to graduate than males; 75 percent of women go the distance.

For many years, anyone able to survive the Citadel’s notoriously grueling four-year undergraduate program has been accorded special respect in the South. It begins with a freshman year in which new students, called knobs, are put through an intense period of what the former military personnel who instruct them call “the infliction of artificial stress,” a boot camp-style effort to break down egos and then build confidence.

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New cadets' days often begin with a 5:20 a.m. muster, followed by rigorous physical training, memorization of rules, cleaning of barracks, and full academic course loads. And by tradition, they get a very hard time from senior cadets for any infractions, real or imagined.

Some accommodations are made for women. As in the military, they are held to somewhat lower standards on physical fitness tests. Female knobs are not made to shave their heads as the men are, though they must keep their hair very short. Women and men live and train in the same barracks, but not in the same rooms.

Ms. Hill, the freshman, said that compared with male cadets, she and her fellow women "have to try twice as hard as they do, because just biologically, they can be stronger."

But while dressings-down are common, Ms. Hill and others said, sexist comments are not. "All of our classmates have been very helpful," said Michelle Banzon, another freshman. "They're like brothers, actually."



Cadet Zorn, 21, a junior, said she believes that the Citadel, which once resisted the admission of women, has now embraced the idea. Credit Alyssa Schukar for The New York Times

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The gradual acceptance of women at the Citadel is part of a broader narrative of evolution at one of the country's most proudly hidebound institutions.

This year, uniformed cadets marched for the first time in the Charleston Pride parade, and plaques around campus designate "safe zones" for L.G.B.T. students. Mr. Paluso, who returned to the college as an administrator four years ago, has sought to identify and [stamp out](#) decades-old and notoriously sadistic culture of hazing. The hazing has included students forced to work out under hot showers until they passed out and, [according a 1992 Sports Illustrated report](#), an upperclassman holding a pistol to the heads of knobs while they tried to memorize the college guidebook.

Mr. Paluso led an investigation in 2015 that identified and disciplined 19 students involved in hazing incidents.

The first days of college for knobs, long referred to as Hell Week, is called Challenge Week these days. But college officials say the experience has not gotten any easier.

"I don't want there to be any idea that we've become a kind and gentle and soothing place," said John L. Dorrian, a retired Air Force colonel and the college's vice president for communications and marketing.

Ms. Faulkner's swift withdrawal — she was felled by an intense heat wave on her first day of military training — remains a sensitive topic. In March, she was invited back to the college, where she told a crowd that she considered herself an alumna. That drew a rebuke from the first woman to graduate, Nancy Mace, now a Republican state representative for the Charleston area.



Image

Cadet Zorn received the Citadel's first Lila K. Whetstone Women in Leadership Excellence award during a ceremony on Thursday. Credit Alyssa Schukar for The New York Times

"There is no edification or achievement in her failure," Ms. Mace [wrote](#) on Facebook.

Some have said that Ms. Faulkner did not come physically prepared, but the same cannot be said of Ms. Zorn, who took part in Junior R.O.T.C. in high school and has earned a reputation for posting impressive physical training scores. She can do more than 70 push-ups in two minutes, and has black belts in three karate disciplines.

She made an impression on college officials during her first week on campus, following the death of the beloved aunt who had cared for her after her mother died. She was given a brief leave to attend the funeral, and returned after 30 hours. Charles Graham, a retired Marine lieutenant colonel who works at the college, said that many students would not have been able to do so after such a shock.

"The corps became her family real quick," Mr. Graham said. "She was in physically great shape, and she was mentally tough."

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The top cadet each year is selected by a small board headed by Mr. Paluso and made up of staff members and students. After interviewing a number of candidates, Mr. Paluso said, he was impressed that Ms. Zorn seemed out to do a job, not make a political point.

“There wasn’t anything about, ‘Aw, I’d be honored to be the first female,’ there wasn’t anything about, ‘I’m a trailblazer,’ ” he said. “Very humbly, she said, ‘I just want to be the regimental commander.’ To me, that’s very mature, and very impressive.”

In an interview at the library, Ms. Zorn spoke with care and precision. She said her mother, an Air Force veteran who died when she was in high school, instilled in her a love of country. She won a four-year Army scholarship, and will serve for at least five years after graduation; about a third of Citadel graduates go on to join the military.

David Days, 20, a junior who will serve next year as Ms. Zorn’s second-in-command, said that he and most other cadets were excited for her, though a small group did not want to be led by a woman.

Those cadets have apparently decided not to broach the topic with the triple black belt. If sexism remains at the Citadel, Ms. Zorn said, she has not experienced it personally.

“You’re treated as an equal,” she said, “and you are expected to perform as an equal.”

(Scroll down for more please)

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Cadet Col. Zorn being interviewed by CBS Morning News anchor Norah O'Donnell



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JUNIOR SCHOLASTIC MAGAZINE

Marching Into History

More than 150 years after Mary Edwards Walker became the U.S. Army's first female doctor, women are still breaking through military barriers. In May 2018, Sarah Zorn became the first female regimental commander in the 175-year history of the Citadel, one of the nation's most prestigious military colleges. She now leads 2,000-plus cadets through the school's rigorous academic and physical program.

American women had no official paths to military service until separate support units were created after the U.S. joined World War II (1939-1945). In 1994, women were allowed to serve in the same military units as men—except in combat. The combat ban was finally lifted in 2016. Today, more than 210,000 women are serving in the U.S. armed forces—making up 16 percent of active-duty troops.



Louis Brems/The Citadel Photography Department

Sarah Zorn, the Citadel's first female regimental commander

COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE

- Best 30 Moments for Women 2018
Zorn listed as number 10, just before Beyoncé, #11
- <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/a25564154/best-moments-women-feminism-2018/>

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11. *Beyoncé blows minds at Beychella.*

OTHER RELATED PLACEMENT SAMPLES

Thursday
March 22, 2018

1. Citadel picks first woman to command entire student corps

A woman will become regimental commander of cadets at The Citadel in South Carolina for the first time in the military college's 175-year history.

Sarah Zorn will lead the South Carolina Corps of Cadets as regimental commander, the highest-ranking cadet officer who commands the entire 2,350-student corps, the Military College of South Carolina said Tuesday.

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Published in: *Stars and Stripes* - Online

[\(view article\)](#) (no cache)

2. Cadet to make history as Citadel's first woman regimental commander

Cadet Sara J. Zorn will make history as the first woman to lead the South Carolina Corps of Cadets as regimental commander at the Citadel Military College.

Regimental commander is the highest-ranking cadet officer in command of the entire 2,350 student Corps. It's the first time a woman will lead the corps of cadets in the history of the 175-year-old military college.

Published in: *WWAY 3* - Online

[\(view article\)](#) (no c

Wednesday
March 21, 2018

1. Cadet to make history as Citadel's first woman regimental commander

A cadet is set to make history as The Citadel's first woman regimental commander.

Officials with the military college say Sarah J. Zorn will be the first woman to lead the South Carolina Corps of Cadets as regimental commander in the history of the 175-year-old military college. The regimental commander is the highest-ranking cadet officer in command of the entire 2,350 student Corps.

Examples of other media sources reporting this story include:

Hawaii News Now - Honolulu, HI

Fox 19 Now - Cincinnati, OH

Tucson News Now - Tucson, AZ

Fox 8 - New Orleans, LA

Published in: *WCSC Live 5 News* - Online

[\(view article\)](#) (no cache)

Wednesday
March 21, 2018

2. In a First, Citadel Cadets Will Be Led by a Woman

The Citadel spent years in court trying to prevent female students from enrolling in the South Carolina military college, conceding defeat on the issue only in 1996, after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the Virginia Military Institute to admit women.

On Tuesday, the Citadel announced that -- for the first time -- a female student will lead its Corps of Cadets. The Citadel said Cadet Sara J. Zorn (at right) will be the regimental commander -- the top student position leading the corps -- in the next academic year.

Published in: *Inside Higher Ed* - Online

[\(view article\)](#) (no cache available)

Wednesday
March 21, 2018

3. Zorn to make history as Citadel's first woman regimental commander

Cadet Sara J. Zorn will make history as the first woman to lead the South Carolina Corps of Cadets as regimental commander at the Citadel Military College.

Published in: *ABC News 4* - Online

[\(view article\)](#) (no c

Monday
March 5, 2018

1. First woman to join Corps of Cadets at The Citadel returns for Pat Conroy event

Shannon Faulkner walked on The Citadel's campus today for the first time since 2005 to celebrate the life of the late Pat Conroy, a graduate of The Citadel and an accomplished Lowcountry author. The daylong event featured presentations and panels with guests that included Conroy's friends and loved ones. Faulkner made international headlines when she became the first woman to join the Corps of Cadets at The Citadel in 1995. She was admitted to the college in 1993 after she did not indicate her gender on her application.

Examples of other media sources reporting this story include:

[Stars and Stripes](#)

[ABC News](#)

[The Washington Post](#)

Friday
May 4, 2018

2The Citadel to pass Corps of Cadets command to first woman Friday

The Citadel will make history during as part of its graduation ceremonies Friday. The school hosts the Long Gray Line parade Friday afternoon at Summerall Field. During the event, class of 2018 Regimental Commander Dillon Graham will pass the sword and control of the South Carolina Corps of Cadets to Class of 2019 Regimental Commander Sarah Zorn.

Published in: *WBTB 3* - Online

[\(view article\)](#)

Friday
May 4, 2018

1The Citadel Fought the Admission of Women. Now a Female Cadet Will Lead the Corps.

When Sarah Zorn applied for admission to the Citadel four years ago, she had not heard the story of Shannon Faulkner, the first woman to gain full admission to the famed Southern military college.

Ms. Zorn did not know about the two-and-a-half-year legal battle that had forced the college to accept her, or the death threats, or the sexist epithets spray-painted on her parents' house, or the federal marshals who escorted Ms. Faulkner to campus on her first day as a cadet in 1995, or that she had dropped out a week later.

She knows now. But the 21-year-old college junior believes that the 175-year-old South Carolina institution that once fought admitting women as if they were an invading army has made its peace with the idea.

Published in: The New York Times - Online

[\(view article\)](#)

**Monday
May 7, 2018**

1A triple-black belt from a small town will be first woman to lead Citadel's Corps of Cadets

With the passing of a ceremonial sword on Friday, Sarah Zorn made history. For the first time in The Citadel's 175-year existence, a woman has been chosen to lead the Corps of Cadets.

Zorn's selection as regimental commander for the next school year represents an about-face for the public military college, which admitted its first female cadet in 1995 after a federal court ruling forced its hand.

Published in: *The Post and Courier* - Online

[\(view article\)](#) (no cache available)

**Monday
May 7, 2018**

2The Citadel passes Corps of Cadets command to first woman

The Citadel made history during as part of its graduation ceremonies Friday. For the first time in The Citadel's 175-year history, the military college passed the Corps of Cadets command to a woman. Regimental Commander Dillon Graham passed the sword and control of the South Carolina Corps of Cadets of Class of 2019 to Regimental Commander Sarah Zorn.

Published in: *WCSC Live 5 News* - Online

[\(view article\)](#)