

Branch Night

Branch selection is made during the Fall of Firstie Year. During their previous three years of summer training, the Cadets have been exposed to the various combat branches, and during the academic years, they have had some contact with some of many of the non-combat branches. Branch selection is a several step process, and the final results are determined according to Class Rank and Army regulations. This process begins with a briefing of the Firstie Class by the Department of Military Instruction, and is followed, probably few days later, by a Branch Open House, enabling the Firsties to ask more questions about the various branches. The Firsties then designate their top three preferences by computer. With that information, the Army will then assign branches.

Class ranking, which is based on overall performance (including academics, leadership, and physical) is critical to this process. Figuratively speaking, the Firsties are lined up by class rank. Each branch has a minimum and a maximum number of cadets that can choose that branch (some by gender, some open to men only (combat arms)). The first cadet in the class gets his/her first choice, the second gets his/her first choice, provided no branch has closed out, and the is goes. If one branch gets its maximum number, then it is CLOSED and no other cadet may select it. Some branches may not meet their minimum quota, and consequently so some cadets at the low end of the class ranking may be forced into those branches. Usually, almost all cadets get one of their top three choices. The higher the class standing, the greater the chances are of getting one's first choice. It used to be that all the Firsties were marched into an auditorium in class-rank order, where they each would stand up in turn and select his branch from those branches which were still open. Now this process is done by computer.

The Department of Army Branching Policy is determined by the needs of the Army. The combat arms branches (Air Defense Artillery, Armor, Aviation, Engineers, Field Artillery, and Infantry) must be 80% men and 20% women. The support branches (all the others) can be up to 20% men and up to 80% women. Only 2% of the Class may choose Medical School, and no more than 1% can choose a different branch of service (Navy or Air Force).

Branch Night is huge event in the life of a cadet. The Firsties march down to Eisenhower Hall, wearing BDU's, and sit by company with their TACs. They are each given an envelope with their branch insignia in it, and in unison, they open them. The branch insignia is then pinned onto the collar of BDU's. This is a very emotional night for the Firsties, as they realize it is the beginning of their being split up. Their commitment and loyalty to each other is great, and the friendships that cadets build in four years are rather unique.

US Army Branches:

- Adjutant General
- Air Defense Artillery
- Armor
- Aviation
- Chemical
- Engineers
- Field Artillery
- Finance
- Infantry
- Medical Service Corps
- Military Intelligence
- Military Police
- Ordnance Corps
- Quartermaster
- Signal Corps
- Special Forces
- Transportation