



NEWS / PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

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Providence College ASTP Unit Dedicates Plaque Honoring Fallen Comrades

Providence, RI — Nearly 50 veterans of the Providence College Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) contingent recently gathered at the college from throughout the United States to dedicate a memorial plaque honoring their 37 classmates and comrades-in-arms who were killed in action during World War II. All of the veterans who attended have been awarded the Purple Heart and Combat Infantry Badge, and most also have a Bronze Star.

The men were among the 380 soldiers assigned to Providence College in a program designed to provide specialized training to prepare them for military tasks in engineering, mathematics, medical/dental areas and foreign languages, while ensuring skilled and well-educated professionals would be available after the war ended. The Army paid their room, board and tuition costs while they attended classes in mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, geography and English, taught by the college's Dominican faculty, that ran simultaneously but separately from the college's normal curriculum. The soldiers were billeted in Aquinas Hall and used the college's athletic fields for training exercises.

In March of 1944, the program was abruptly canceled and the soldiers were reassigned to the 328th infantry regiment of the 26th Yankee Division and sent to reinforce troops stationed at the front lines. They fought from October 1944 to the end of the war in April 1945 with duty that included the Battle of the Bulge, the bloodiest battle of the war.

Keynote speaker for the ceremony was the Honorable Joseph Weisberger, chief justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. The veterans also viewed an archival display of the history of the ASTP at Providence College and toured the campus. Cadets and officers of the college's ROTC program participated in the dedication ceremony.