



Barnwell County School District

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BCSD News Release: Distinguished by Excellence: Warhorse Battalion Earns Top JROTC Honor

Contributed by: Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Skhylur Davis, Battalion Commander and Cadet 2nd Lieutenant Onyx Winns, Battalion Public Affairs Officer

August 25, 2026 – The Barnwell High School Warhorse Battalion has earned one of the highest honors a U.S. Army JROTC program can receive: the Honor Unit with Distinction (HUD) designation.

The achievement followed a JROTC Program for Accreditation (JPA) inspection held April 16, 2026 at Barnwell High School. The inspection evaluated the battalion's cadets, instructors, training, leadership, and overall performance throughout the school year. Cadets and instructors spent months preparing for the evaluation, which placed the battalion's hard work and dedication under close review. During the inspection, evaluators interviewed cadets and examined their knowledge, leadership skills, and involvement in the program. Cadets presented information about service-learning projects, community service and other battalion activities. The evaluators also observed military drill and marching, along with other areas of the program used to assess the battalion's readiness and effectiveness.



Many cadets participated throughout the inspection, representing the Warhorse Battalion and Barnwell High School. Although the pressure of the evaluation caused plenty of nervousness among the cadets, their preparation and teamwork helped them perform at a high level.

The battalion's performance placed it in the top tier of the JROTC's fourth brigade, which comprises 335 schools in 6 states and the District of Columbia. The successful inspection ultimately resulted in Barnwell receiving the Honor Unit with Distinction designation.

Lieutenant Colonel Marvin Brown, US Army Retired and Sergeant First Class Jerry Smith, US Army Retired, the battalion's instructors, worked alongside cadets throughout the preparation and



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inspection process. Their leadership, combined with the effort of the cadets, contributed to the battalion's success.

Barnwell High School Principal, Derek Youngblood, also witnessed the accomplishment when he visited after the inspection. After hearing the evaluators' assessment, he was told that the battalion had "crushed it" and performed exceptionally well. The recognition is especially significant for the Warhorse Battalion because the unit has not received this distinction in approximately eight years. The achievement reflects not only the work of the cadets who participated in the inspection, but also the dedication of the entire battalion throughout the school year.

As a result of earning the HUD designation, Warhorse Battalion cadets will now be authorized to wear the HUD gold star on their JROTC uniforms, a visible symbol of the battalion's achievement. The Honor Unit with Distinction designation recognizes exceptional performance across a JROTC program and is considered the highest rating a unit can receive.

For the Barnwell Warhorse Battalion, the gold star represents more than an award. It represents months of preparation, leadership, teamwork and commitment—and gives the cadets another reason to proudly represent Barnwell High School and the Barnwell community.



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