

MARINES



David Galindo Castellon, a Marine Corps veteran.

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# THE NEXT GENERATION

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AFTER TIME IN THE MILITARY, MANY FIND THEIR NEXT PATH THROUGH THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION. STORY BY KRISTEN MORALES

**T**HE U.S. ARMED FORCES are very good at training a person's mind and body. As it happens, so is the University of Georgia College of Education.

This is likely one reason why the College is home to the third-largest population of student veterans across campus. At the College, the number of veterans enrolled has grown in recent years—up about 5 percent in the past year, to 30 students total, according to UGA's Student Veterans Resource Center.

Some find their way to the College because they took on a teaching role in the military and want to build on those skills in civilian life. Others find a passion for physical therapy, sport, or fitness through their military training and decide to make that a career after their time in the service is done.

Their success is due in large part to the efforts of Ted Barco, director of the Student Veterans Resource Center, who makes sure the transition from military life to rigorous college courses goes as smoothly as possible. Across the country, about 50 percent of veterans who attend college after their service don't get a degree; but at UGA, student veterans graduate at the same rate as their more traditional counterparts.

"Veterans do very well here," says Barco, who has conceived a multilayered coaching solution to keeping veterans from falling through the cracks. "We are the top Tier 1 university in the nation last year for support for student veterans, and I think the fact that we have such good success has a lot to do with that. And the College of Education has a lot of involvement—that's part of the story."

Part of this involvement is simply the nature of the programs—students, no matter their major, are immersed in experiential learning. As a result, they feel a greater connection to the larger community and if they start to run into issues they are more likely to reach out for help. Another contributor to this involvement is faculty and staff, who help coach student veterans past college pitfalls.

Rob Lynall, assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology, found athletic training after spending time in the Marines. Today he's working with two students as they begin their own post-military journey. He says it's

**“TO ME, IT IS ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS I HAVE EVER MADE.”**

interesting to see the ways vets turn their myriad experiences into a civilian career.

"Everyone has their own story," he says. Lynall joined the Marines after 9/11 and became a crew chief on a C-13 cargo plane. "I got into exercise and the human body while I was in the military, so I started putting two and two together ... that's what's cool is the unique experiences people have and how they apply their time in the military to what they're doing now."

We spoke with four College of Education students, one from each military branch, about how they found their way to UGA. Here are their stories.

## GO BIG OR GO HOME

**DAVID GALINDO CASTELLON** is pretty good at adapting to change.

Born in El Salvador, he immigrated to Georgia when he was in high school. The transition was tough, he says—learning a new language and a new culture, all as you are about to enter adulthood.

So what does he do? He changes it up again and enlists in the Marines as soon as he graduates.

"To me, it is one of the best decisions I have ever made," he says. "It has offered me so many opportunities, and the opportunity to help people in need and to help the helpless."

Stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, Castellon was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, an infantry battalion that was deployed to Helmand Province in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. But while he served in a combat zone, his job was multi-faceted—one part protection, one part winning over the local residents, and one part training Afghan police and Army personnel.

"I learned a little bit of Farsi and Pashtun; I love learning new languages, so that was one of my passions," he says. "I learned a few words because after we started training the Afghan police and the Army, you need to know words to communicate with them. And also to interact with the locals, be-

cause that was a big part of our mission.”

Now, Castellon is putting his love of languages to use in the classroom. He is a junior majoring in world language education in the Department of Language and Literacy Education with the goal of again giving back to a country and state that he loves.

It hasn't been easy—as a second-language-learner himself, Castellon transferred to UGA after pushing himself in a smaller college to get his grades up. “My GPA wasn't the best, but I was very dedicated to come to Georgia, so I was working hard and kept my goal in mind, which was to attend UGA.” He now has a 3.7 grade-point average.

“I always heard great things about the University—it is a well-respected university nationwide, and I always try to join the best,” he adds. “I joined the Marines because it's the best, and to me, I came to UGA because it is one of the best schools in the United States.”

Combining his love of languages and his desire to help people takes his experience in the Marines and moves it forward to the next phase of his career.

“My goal is to get my degree from the University of Georgia, then stay in Georgia and teach,” he says. “I love serving the community, so that's one of the things that inspired me to be a teacher. I love this state, I love the people, and I have many friends here. I call Georgia my home.”

ARMY



Andi Broom, an Army veteran.

## A NEW WAY TO GIVE BACK

**WHEN ANDI** Broom joined the Army, she was ready to leave her past behind—the old high school crowd, a few lackluster semesters at UGA, and even the contents of her apartment.

“I joined the military without my parents knowing; I called from basic training, and my dad had to come up to Athens and get all my stuff,” she says.

The change was what she needed, though. A star softball player in high school, Broom tore her rotator cuff during her senior year, changing her prospects for an athletic scholarship. In the Army, though, she regained her stride. She was stationed at Fort Campbell in Tennessee, home to the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, where she had many friends. She wanted to join them.

There aren't many roles for women in Special Operations, but she applied and, after one deployment with a Navy SEALs unit, was recruited for an elite Special Operations team. This was her calling, and for more than six years she experienced the rush of adrenaline every time she was sent on top-secret missions in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Much of her work involved parachuting, which fit her fearless nature. But one day, on perhaps the 10th jump of a day of training exercises, everything changed.

There was some bad weather coming in, but all was fine as her parachute deployed and she prepared for landing, following the swooping pattern paratroopers follow as they return to earth.

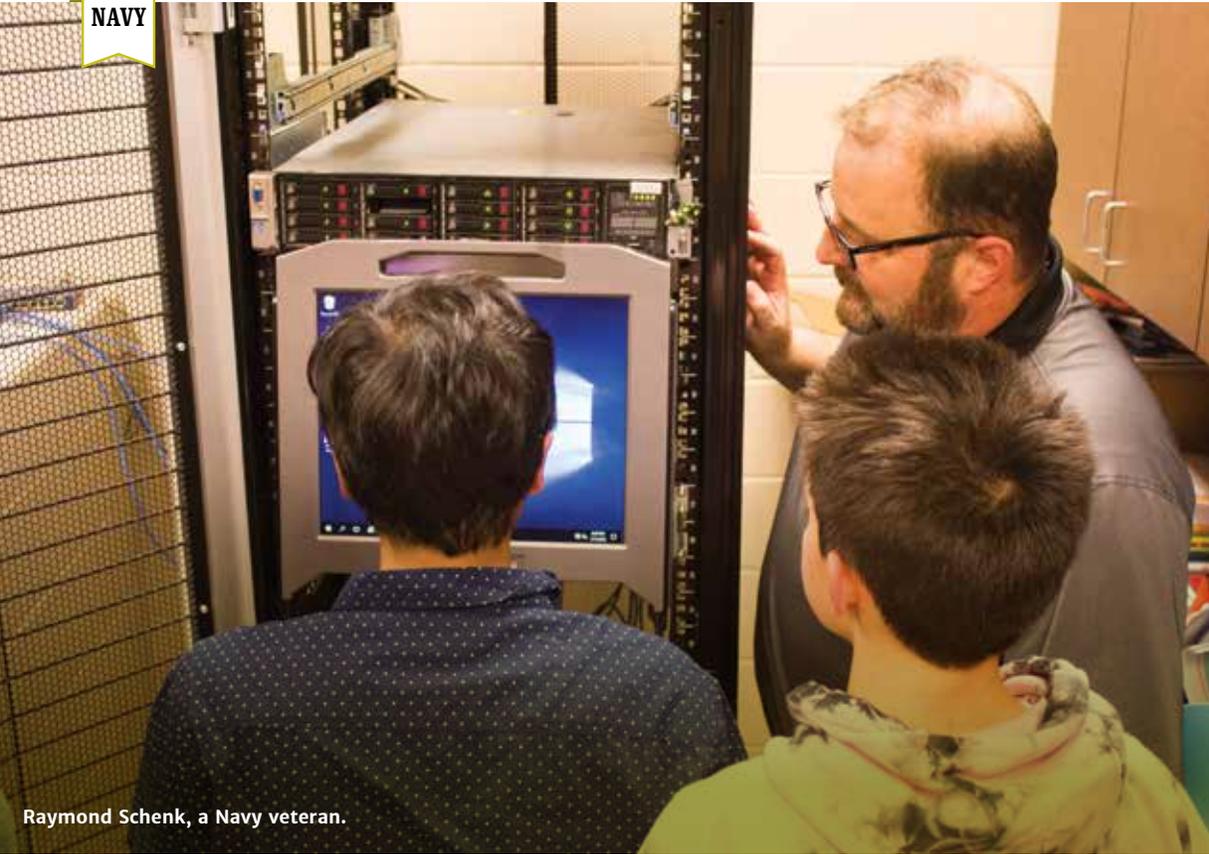
“At about 65 feet, I was coming in to my final turn and as soon as I turned a gust of wind hit me.” She had turned deep, too, which meant her parachute was nearly collapsed in half as she navigated to land. When the wind caught it, it sucked the remaining air out of it. There wasn't enough time for it to catch more air, and Broom dropped roughly six floors to the ground.

The impact collapsed both of her lungs, tore her aorta, broke arm and leg bones, and shattered her pelvis. She was taken to a nearby civilian hospital rather than a military one, where, as luck would have it, a heart doctor from the Cleveland Clinic happened to be on call. Yet, doctors told the dozens of friends gathered to say goodbye—they didn't think Broom would survive the night.

“My friends were like, ‘No, you don't know her. She's stubborn as hell.’”

Dozens of surgeries later, Broom made a commitment to deploy again. This required relearning how to talk, walk, and use her right arm. But she knew her body couldn't handle the rigors of the job over the long term. After rehabilitating at EXOS Athletes Performance Institute in Florida, she realized the effect exercise can have on a body's ability to heal. It also helped her find her way back to UGA, where she is now taking classes toward a dual degree in athletic training and exercise and sport science in the College's Department of Kinesiology.

“I shouldn't have survived—who survives that?” she says. “So, I want to give back in a different way than when I was in the military, and this is what I can do now.”



Raymond Schenk, a Navy veteran.

## BREAKING THE CODE

**WHEN THERE** is a fire drill at John’s Creek High School, Raymond Schenk’s students know how to find their tribe. Just look for a black flag sporting a skull and crossbones.

“This is nerd paradise. We fly the black, and on a windy day, they love it,” says Schenk, the school’s AP/STEM computer science teacher. “All the nerds come, and I tell my people, ‘I’m the king of the nerds.’”

Schenk is in his third year of cranking out 17- and 18-year-old experts in computer languages such as Python, C#, and Java. He is pursuing his teaching certificate through the College of Education’s M.Ed. in Workforce Education program with the long game in mind: Train top programmers who can battle cyber terrorists as we move into the next generation of warfare.

As a commander in the Navy, where he served for 21 years as a Hawkeye pilot with expertise in electronics warfare, he saw data breaches and hacks. Now that he’s a civilian, he’s creating his own army to fight it. “Teaching gives me the ability to instill in these guys the right way to do it.”

After retiring from the Navy, Schenk first tried to conquer this task himself. In 2007, he assembled a team of investors and launched a programming company to patch the holes in the military’s networks. But while the idea was

good, the timing was off—it was the height of the recession, when fixing computer breaches was less of a priority.

When he left the company, friends and family pointed to his next career move: Teaching.

“What I was looking for was the ability to pass along to the future what I knew needed to be done,” he says. “I’m trying to change the game of information security.”

While it may not have been obvious then, now that Schenk looks back on his military career and his experience at his company working with coders around the world he realizes he’s been teaching the entire time. But the trials of high school seem a lot less dramatic after you’ve been in a combat situation.

His most recent mission took him and his students on the “world’s shortest field trip”—an undercover operation to snag an unused school server, giving his advanced students a place to practice C# code in a .NET framework.

Compare that to his last combat tour, where Schenk was the chief of combat operations in Doha, Qatar, during the time of heavy battles in Fallujah, Afghanistan. “I was running all the airstrikes, operationally, for Iraq, Afghanistan, and the horn of Africa. I had a senior intel guy beside me and a JAG on my other side to keep me out of jail when I sent a missile somewhere,” he says, deadpan. “No pressure.”

**“I WAS HELPING PEOPLE GET BACK UP AND PROGRESS, AND I DECIDED THAT’S WHAT I WANTED TO DO.”**

## IT’S NOT A JOB IF YOU LOVE IT

**AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT**, Mandy Enloe recognized the importance of letting your passion drive your work.

She had a pilot’s license and loved to fly. Enlisting in the Air Force seemed like a great way to pursue that dream.

“I really wanted someone to pay me to fly, so I decided to join the Air Force with the hopes of getting my degree and being a pilot. But I found out I’m too short; I could fly helicopters but ...”

She shrugs. It’s just not the same.

In the Air Force, Enloe was crew chief on U2 reconnaissance planes—aircraft that fly more than 70,000 feet up to gather intelligence and other top-secret data. She was responsible for their upkeep once they returned from a mission.

During this time, she took on a second duty: fitness trainer. If other airmen failed a basic fitness test or felt they might have difficulty with it, she would work with them to find a fitness program that would get them back into shape.

“I was helping people get back up and progress, and I decided that’s what I wanted to do,” she says. “I fell in love with fitness and working out and teaching other people.”

After serving her four-year contract, Enloe decided to go to school for fitness training. She signed on for one more year in the Air Force to plan her exit; this meant saving some money, getting her college credits in order, and applying to schools.



Mandy Enloe, an Air Force veteran.

She knew she wanted to go to UGA, and the kinesiology program was a perfect fit. She is now a junior studying health and physical education with plans to continue for her master’s degree in strength and conditioning.

Moving from military life to college life wasn’t easy, though. As a first-generation college student, it’s just her own lived experience that she has to guide her. “It was tough, especially that first semester, figuring out where to go and all,” she says. “But the SVRC and Ted Barco have been crucial to my success and continued education here.”

Enloe is now working with students at Barnett Shoals Elementary School, but staying true to her passion, she sees her future outside of a school.

Her goal? To advance to a master’s program and work as a fitness coach for special forces through the U.S. Department of Defense or become a strength and conditioning coach for a professional sports team.

But first she wants that UGA degree.

“Once a Dawg, always a Dawg,” says the native Georgian. “I want that Dawg on my diploma.” ■