



News Release

U.S. ARMY SUSTAINMENT COMMAND

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Minority College Recruitment Program helps dreams come true

By Jon Connor, ASC Public Affairs

ROCK ISLAND, Ill. – With his brown hair and green eyes derived from French-Irish ethnicity, his enrollment in the Army’s Minority College Relations Program could be seen as peculiar.

Turns out, program participants don’t have to be members of a minority group, said Jason Casey, who is enrolled in the MCRP for a second time. You just have to be attending a minority college, Casey said, a veteran with two tours in Iraq and two internships with the Army Sustainment Command at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.

The program is facilitated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at RIA.

“I think it’s ironic,” Casey said. “It’s really a wonderful program.

“I will be the first of my immediate family to graduate college other than my stepmom,” Casey said.

The MCRP’s mission is to foster relationships between historically black colleges and universities, including tribal, Hispanic, and other minority institutions of higher learning. The idea is to promote their participation in and benefit from Army programs and opportunities.

According to the MCRP mission statement, partnering with these institutions enhances the Army’s future readiness by drawing minorities into its workforce other than those in uniform.

The program’s motto is “A Pathway to Federal Opportunities.”

Casey said the program helped him understand what working for the federal government is like and highly recommends it to his peers.

“I definitely tell them it’s a good opportunity. It’s a steady job.”

He hopes the education he seeks now will land him a “good job” one day. That being defined as achieving success at a relatively young age, ambitiously climbing the career ladder

“It opened my eyes to other opportunities,” Casey said of his first stint with MCRP. During that time, he worked in ASC’s History Office. That also brought him three credits while working here from June through August 2008 during the 10-week summer program.

While there is no guaranteed path to success, Casey has taken a road with interesting turns and forks which, of course, has led him to where he is today.

Casey, 25, attends the University of Texas-El Paso, where he is majoring in political science with an emphasis in public administration at a university which is predominately Hispanic. The “Sun City” school is known for its excellent engineering program, Casey said.

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, and then seeing the Army’s Rangers in subsequent action, Casey said furthering his education, while noble, was something he realized he could temporarily put on the shelf in order to serve his country.

He was just starting his post-high school education at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

“I guess, yeah, envious,” he said describing his feelings toward the Rangers. “I wanted to be a part of it.”

And so the Eagle Scout did, enlisting in the Army as a medical healthcare specialist.

After basic and advanced individual training for his specialty, fate took him to Fort Bragg, N.C., after becoming airborne-qualified and earned the Expert Field Medical Badge, a highly coveted recognition among Army medics.

His unit was 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. During his four years of service, Casey deployed twice to Iraq - once during the initial campaign to Baghdad and then returning there eight months later. During this period, he earned the Combat Medical Badge.

After fulfilling his military obligation, Casey enrolled in Austin Community College in Texas and went two semesters before enrolling full time at UTEP.

Now with 76 credits, Casey is enrolled in the 15-week winter-spring program - January through April - and works for ASC's Command Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office or CACIO.

"As an intern I am learning a lot," he said, but "there's obviously a big vocabulary gap" learning CACIO's internal buzzwords.

This time around, Casey is applying networking skills for his plans to be eventually chosen for a Fellows Program with the Joint Munitions Command at RIA. It would be part of an overall master's degree program in business administration through the Texas A&M University-Texarkana.

Aside from this, Casey said he's "here to work and learn."

In April, Casey and the other students will brief Maj. Gen. Robert M. Radin, commanding general of the Army Sustainment Command, on their completed projects.

"It's pretty hard not to be nervous," Casey said. "This is like talking to a CEO (chief executive officer) of a global company."

Additionally, Casey and seven other students in the program at RIA were given a Logistics Intern Program briefing to learn more about the career potentials of that profession. And, a few weeks ago a pizza luncheon was held in their honor which allowed them to meet some graduates of the program now working at Rock Island Arsenal.

Other interns this semester include:

Lequita Barfield, Mississippi Valley State; Adeola Adutola, Alabama A&M; Roxanne Riva, University of Texas-El Paso; Autumn Martin, Alabama

A&M; Perla Gomez, New Mexico State University; Veronica Espinoza, UTEP; and Marcus Lanier, North Carolina A&T.

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