

The VFW Helps Veteran Keep Eye on the Prize

'Knowing ... someone is in our corner, making sure that veterans are successful in their academic careers, makes it so much easier to be who we strive to be'

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Veteran Adam Lawrence sees a bridge between his devotion to the military and his love of mathematics and computer science. This Valencia, Calif., native joined the Army directly out of high school without giving it a second thought. He had watched both his father and grandfather devote their lives to the military so it felt natural to him, even though neither of them ever pushed him toward enlisting.

Lawrence was a light infantry team leader and sergeant, stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y., and deployed to Baghdad for a year.

Now he attends Claremont Graduate University in a master's program for Computational and Applied Mathematics. Lawrence has found a lot of assistance along the way from his school's incredibly helpful financial aid department, and they informed him about the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship."

He is extremely thankful to VFW's donors, staff and everyone who has any part of the scholarship program.

"Knowing there is a 'safety net' out there and someone is in our corner, making sure that veterans are successful in their academic careers, makes it so much easier to be who we strive to be. It really encourages us to pursue academics and without it, I believe many might not go to a university," Lawrence said.

Lawrence isn't stopping with his master's degree but plans to complete a doctorate as well. He wants to focus on Partial Differential Equations (PDE), applied mathematics, fluid

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dynamics, image processing and computer vision.

To explain the practicality of his research aims, he credits his time served where he learned as an infantryman how heavily troops on the ground rely on their “eyes in the sky.” Lawrence will use his degree to ensure technology is delivering the best imagery and information.

Lawrence has a clear direction, but he has helpful advice for veterans at any stage of their transition back to civilian life and careers.

“If a veteran isn’t quite sure what their future holds both academically and socially, I believe community college is a fantastic resource for them. They have veteran resource centers and counselors that are trained to help veterans with their needs. They are the first people I believe veterans should contact in the civilian world. At community colleges veterans can find out what they want in life, with little to no price tag,” he explained.

Another benefit of having financial support from the VFW is that Lawrence can focus completely on research and academics by picking up campus jobs closely related to his studies. He will seek an adjunct position after graduation, and his experience as a TA, grader and seminar coordinator have prepared him for the next phase of his career.

“As a professor at a community college, I want to assist veterans or any other student who is on the fence about pursuing a STEM major,” he concluded.