

*30<sup>TH</sup> Annual Commander's  
Off-Duty Voluntary Education Ceremony*

2025

June 6, 2025 | Base Theater | Camp Lejeune, NC

# Graduation Program

**Processional,  
Pomp and Circumstance**

2nd Marine Division Band,  
Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**Presentation of Colors**

Color Guard, Headquarters and Support Battalion,  
Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**National Anthem**

Samuel K. Lewis, Primary Prevention Integrator,  
Marine and Family Programs, Marine Corps Community Services

**Invocation**

Captain William Riley, United States Navy, Command Chaplain,  
Marine Corps Installations East- Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**Retire the Colors**

Color Guard, Headquarters and Support Battalion,  
Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**Remarks**

Brigadier General Ralph J. Rizzo Jr., Commanding General,  
Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**Confirmation,  
Conferring of the Degrees**

Ashley Adamovage, Education Services Officer,  
Marine and Family Programs, Marine Corps Community Services

**Presentation of Graduates**

Monique Glover,  
Personal & Professional Development Program Manager,  
Marine and Family Programs, Marine Corps Community Services

**Benediction**

Captain William Riley, United States Navy, Command Chaplain,  
Marine Corps Installations East- Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**Anchors Aweigh  
and The Marines' Hymn**

2nd Marine Division Band, Marine Corps Installations East-Marine  
Corps Base Camp Lejeune

**Recessional**

2nd Marine Division Band,  
Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune



22 May 2025

Dear Graduates and Family Members:

On behalf of the many proud Marines, Sailors, civilians, and families aboard Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, welcome to the 30th Annual Off Duty Education Ceremony. It is a pleasure to host this annual event.

We gather to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of all who have worked so hard to complete programs of study during the 2024-2025 academic year. Today's commencement ceremony signifies the achievement of long-term educational goals reached while serving as active-duty Service Members of our United States Armed Forces, working full-time jobs, or often while raising families.

The primary goals of the Voluntary Education Program are to provide opportunities for personal and professional development, to improve the competencies of military personnel, to enhance career progression, and to prepare for life after military service. The John A. Lejeune Education Center and the New River Education Center are privileged to provide quality and diverse educational programs and testing services to active-duty personnel, reservists, family members, Department of Defense employees, and civilians of our community.

Graduates, I salute your diligence, your talent, and your intellect. Family members, I appreciate your willingness to ensure continuous support for your graduate and hope you enjoy this celebration of their accomplishments.

Congratulations to you all!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. J. Rizzo, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

R. J. RIZZO, JR.

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commanding General

Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune



## Commanding General, Marine Corps Installations East **BRIGADIER GENERAL RALPH J. RIZZO, JR.**

Brigadier General Rizzo was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts. He graduated from Western New England College in 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a minor in Criminal Justice.

After working in local law enforcement, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and graduated from MCRD Parris Island in 1990. After completing Recruit Training, he reported to the School of Infantry where he attained the MOS of 0341 Mortarman.

In January 1991 he received orders to MarBks Ground Defense Force, Subic Bay, Philippines where he participated in Operation Fiery Vigil in June 1991. Upon the deactivation of MarBks, Subic Bay he received orders to 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, 1st Marine Division as an 81 MM Mortar Platoon Section Leader and promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

In August 1994 he was accepted for the Enlisted Commissioning Program and attended Officer Candidate School, The Basic School (with Honors), and Infantry Officer Course, obtaining the MOS 0302. Brigadier General Rizzo accepted augmentation in November 1998 in conjunction with the supplementary MOS program and reported to Logistics Officer School where he received the MOS of 0402.

Brigadier General Rizzo's operational assignments include: Platoon Commander, 81MM Mortar Platoon Commander, and Executive Officer, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines; Weapons Company Commander, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines; Company Commander, 2nd Maintenance Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Operation IRAQI FREEDOM); Battle Major/Senior Watch Officer, CJTF-76 (Operation ENDURING FREEDOM); Commanding Officer, Combat Logistics Battalion-6 (Operation ENDURING FREEDOM); and CJ4, CJTF-HOA.

His staff and joint assignments include: S-4 Officer, Camp Johnson Area/MCCSSS; Recruit Station Commanding Officer, Recruiting Station Detroit, MI; Program Analyst, Joint Fires Div., J6, CJCS; Global Force Management Future Operations Officer, Current and Future Operations Branch, PP&O; Commanding Officer, MARCOR Det. Fort Leonard Wood, MO; AC/S G4, III MEF; Chief of Staff, III MEF; Deputy Commander, Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, NC; and Commanding General, Marine Corps Installations East-Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, NC.

Brigadier General Rizzo is a graduate of The Basic School (with Honors), Infantry Officers Course, Logistics Officers Course, U.S. Naval War College (with Honors), Marine Corps War College, and High Command and Staff Course at the United Kingdom Defence Academy.

Brigadier General Rizzo assumed the duties of commander, MCIEAST-MCB Camp Lejeune, in May 2024. Following U.S. Senate approval, he was promoted to his current rank of Brigadier General on Jan. 13, 2025, making him the tenth commanding general of MCIEAST-MCB Camp Lejeune.



Message from the Education Services Officer:

Welcome to the 30th Annual Commanding General's Graduation Ceremony, a momentous occasion where we honor the achievements of our local Marines, Sailors, veterans, military spouses, DoD civilians, and their families who have embraced the power of education to transform their lives and enhance their personal and professional growth. The Education Assistance Branch (EAB) is honored to work alongside Brigadier General Ralph J. Rizzo, Jr., in hosting this significant event, showcasing our unwavering commitment to empowering the military community through innovative educational programs and proactive support.

As the driving force behind the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Program, the EAB is dedicated to providing a wide range of educational opportunities to all those we serve East of the Mississippi. We firmly believe that education is the cornerstone of personal growth, professional development, and lifelong success for every individual within the military community. Our highly trained academic advisors and career counselors offer personalized guidance, mentorship, and cutting-edge tools to help each person forge a clear pathway to prosperity and a meaningful career. By nurturing the mind, body, and soul, we enable all members of the military community to make a profound difference in society while building a foundation for lifelong wellness and fulfillment.

Today, as we celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of our graduates, we also recognize the transformative power of education in strengthening the bonds within the military community. As these graduates shake the Commander's hand and receive their well-earned diplomas on stage, they serve as a beacon of inspiration, demonstrating the limitless potential that resides within each of us.

Congratulations to our esteemed graduates and thank you for being a part of this special celebration!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ashley M. Adamovage".

ASHLEY M. ADAMOVICE, M.P.M.

Education Services Officer

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune - Marine Corps Air Station New River

## AMERICAN MILITARY UNIVERSITY

**Edwin Argueta Pineda**, Bachelor of Arts in Management, Cum Laude

**Deenroy Carlos**, Bachelor of Arts in Management Concentration in Leadership, Summa Cum Laude

**Eric Collevecchio**, Bachelor of Arts in Business, Summa Cum Laude

**Lara DeLeon**, Associate of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, Summa Cum Laude

**Ava Eichensehr**, Bachelor of Arts in Supply Chain Management, Magna Cum Laude

**Jared Game**, Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science, Magna Cum Laude

**Cheyenne Genova**, Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, Cum Laude

**Randy Hughes**, Master of Arts in Intelligence Studies

**Thomas Hull**, Master of Arts in Management/Human Resource Management

**Ernest Jefferson**, Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, Cum Laude

**Christian Katembo**, Associates of Arts in Military History

**Tessa Mattson**, Bachelor of Business Administration, Summa Cum Laude

**Andrew McDermott**, Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, Summa Cum Laude

**Brandon Medina**, Bachelor of Arts in Business, Cum Laude

**Luis Sanchez**, Bachelor of Arts in Business, Cum Laude

**Jonathan Swaffer**, Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, Summa Cum Laude

**Ferdinand Valdez**, Bachelor of Arts in Technical Management/Logistics  
and Supply Chain Management, Summa Cum Laude

**Rafael Vargas**, Bachelor of Arts in Management Concentration in Leadership, Summa Cum Laude

**Lauren Watson-Curtis**, Bachelor of Science in Sports and  
Health Sciences/Nutrition for Health & Fitness, Cum Laude

## ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Keia Duby**, Bachelor of Arts in Education in Educational Studies with minor in English

**Emily Standiford**, Master of Science in Forensic Psychology

## CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY

**Melbin Medina**, Master of Science in Applied Leadership

## COASTAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Alexandria Albert**, Associate in Arts

**Alessa Berdugo**, Associate in Arts, Honors

**Renzo Cardenas**, Associate in Arts

**Micheal Champ**, Associate in Arts, Honors

**John Chilson**, Associate in Science, Honors

**Gnonsoazio Dahou**, Associate in Arts

## COASTAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE (CONTINUED)

**Hannah Guirola**, Associate in Arts, Honors

**Robert Harding**, Associate in Arts

**Cristiano Jordan**, Associate in Applied Science in Electronics Engineering Technology, Honors

**Lecy Lespinasse**, Diploma in Electrical Systems Technology

**Skylar Mahoney**, Associate in Arts

**Delle Martinez**, Associate in Arts

**Kaitlynn Mason**, Associate in Science

**Sarah Muysenberg**, Associate in Applied Sciences in Medical Lab Technology, Honors

**Erin O'Brien**, Associates in Arts

**Aaliyah Perez**, Certificate in Marketing and Customer Service, Honors

**Ebonee Scott**, Associate in Arts, Honors

**Stephan Way**, Associate in Arts, Honors

## COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

**Ashley Robledo**, Associate of Science in Criminal Justice

## EMBRY RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY

**Aracely Lopez**, Bachelor of Science in Project Management

## EXCELSIOR UNIVERSITY

**Donna Simpson**, Master of Science in Nursing Education

## FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE

**Taquayla Richardson**, Bachelor of Applied Science in Logistics, Cum Laude

## GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY

**Jamie Lawson**, Bachelor of Science in Psychology with an Emphasis in Forensic Psychology

**Elijah Recoder**, Bachelor of Science in Risk Management, Summa Cum Laude

## LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Keara Horton**, Master of Science in Criminal Justice: Forensic Psychology

**Keith Kane III**, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration & Data Analysis: Entrepreneurship

**Donna Mitchell**, Doctor of Education (EdD) in Community Care & Counseling: Traumatology

**Jack Mulligan**, Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, Magna Cum Laude

**Jordyn Ridgeway**, Bachelor of Science in Psychology: Crisis Counseling minor in Criminal Justice

**Chris Taylor**, Master of Science in Public Safety

**Nicole Wood**, Master of Arts in Human Services Counseling

## NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**Toney Brown**, Master of Science in Homeland Security & Emergency Management

**Biannca Davis**, Master of Science in Sport Psychology

**Raquel Garcia Zorrilla**, Associate of Arts in General Education

**Mgyver Manzanero**, Master of Healthcare Administration

**Gabriela Ramirez Zavala**, Master of Arts in Human Behavioral Psychology

## NORTHEAST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Luke Tuecke**, Associate of Science

## PARK UNIVERSITY

**Paul Borrero**, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Magna Cum Laude

**Brandon Nash**, Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Administration, Summa Cum Laude

## PURDUE UNIVERSITY GLOBAL

**Yan Ling Huang**, Master of Health Care Administration

## SIMMONS UNIVERSITY

**Nicole Perdue**, Master of Social Work

**Delilah Santos-Kane**, Master of Social Work with Certificate in Mental Health Practice

## SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY

**Osei Enoch**, Master of Business Administration

**Oziel Hernandez**, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Cum Laude

**Katy Jones**, Master of Science in Criminal Justice and Master of Science in Psychology

**Christopher Long**, Bachelor of Science in Finance

**Miriam Tenezaca**, Associate of Science in Criminal Justice, Honors

## TRIDENT UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL

**Andrew Hart**, Master of Science in Leadership

**Noah Lambert**, Master of Science in Human Resource Management, Summa Cum Laude

**Robert Mobley II**, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology Management, Summa Cum Laude

## UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA GLOBAL

**Devereaux Johansen**, Master of Science in Criminal Justice Homeland Security Specialization

**Favour Long**, Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education, Magna Cum Laude

**Louis Olmos**, Bachelor of Arts in Homeland Security and Emergency Management

**Robert Perdue**, Bachelor of Arts in Business Information Systems

**Alan Spillari**, Bachelor of Arts in Instructional Design, Summa Cum Laude

## UNIVERSITY OF CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

**Maxine Ezell**, Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership, Academic Distinction

## UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA

**Haley Zahnd**, Master of Education in Special Education

## UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS

**Crystal Allen**, Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Management

**Ayesha Atkins**, Bachelor of Science in Health Services Management

**Shawn Baker**, Bachelor of Science in General Studies, Cum Laude

**Steven Garris**, Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

**April Gladden**, Associate of Arts in General Studies

**Benjamin Kirwin**, Bachelor of Science in Management Studies

**Wilson Lo**, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

**Walnes Metayer**, Bachelor of Science in Management Studies

**Chananya OBrien**, Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity Technology, Summa Cum Laude

**Lara Vincenti**, Bachelor of Science in Health Services Management, Magna Cum Laude

**Jeremy Williams**, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

## WEBSTER UNIVERSITY

**Donna Gardner**, Master of Business Administration and  
Master of Arts in Procurement and Acquisitions Management

**Jennifer Norena**, Master of Science in Criminal Justice

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Luis M. Sanchez, III  
Bachelor of Arts in Business  
American Military University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps



At 36, Senior Enlisted Marine Luis M. Sanchez III celebrates the achievement of earning his Bachelor of Arts in Business while balancing the demanding responsibilities of military service. With the steadfast encouragement of his wife, Alfreda, and a disciplined commitment to time management, Luis overcame the challenges of a rigorous career and academic workload. As he nears retirement, this degree marks a meaningful milestone in his journey of personal and professional growth. A first-generation college graduate, Luis plans to pursue a graduate degree in real estate and hopes his success inspires others to chase their academic goals, no matter the obstacles.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Ayesha Atkins  
Bachelor of Science in Health Services Management  
University of Maryland Global Campus  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps

For Ayesha Atkins, earning her Bachelors of Science in Health Services Management was more than a personal milestone—it was a commitment to her children, her future, and the communities she hopes to serve. Inspired by the desire to lead by example and build a life rooted in purpose, Ayesha persevered through the challenges of motherhood, the loss of her father, and the demands of school and life transitions. Her unwavering faith, support system, and resilience became the foundation of her success. With her degree in hand, Ayesha plans to advocate for quality, equitable healthcare and lead transformational change in underserved communities. Her journey is a testament to the power of perseverance, faith, and the belief that growth often begins in the face of adversity.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Louis Olmos  
Bachelor of Arts in Homeland Security and Emergency Management  
University of Arizona Global Campus  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Navy



At 40 years old, Louis Olmos pursued his degree in Homeland Security and Emergency Management to show his children that it's never too late to better yourself. Despite facing repeated interruptions in his studies due to operational demands, Louis remained focused by setting realistic goals, leaning on academic advisors, and drawing strength from his family and friends. His educational journey has not only broadened his world view but also instilled invaluable life skills and personal growth. With plans to serve his community through volunteerism, leadership, and philanthropy, Louis hopes to inspire others by being a living example of perseverance and purpose.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Lara Antonette Vincenti  
Bachelor of Science in Health Services Management  
University of Maryland Global Campus  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Navy



Hospital Corpsman Second Class Lara Vincenti, 28, pursued her bachelor's degree in Health Services Management to inspire her children, Liam and Elena, and show them that anything is possible. Balancing the fast pace of military life with the responsibilities of motherhood and marriage, Lara found strength through intentional time management and the loving support of her husband and family. Every late-night study session and quiet moment of encouragement from her children became a reminder of her purpose. Lara's journey has deepened her sense of focus, resilience, and pride—not only as a student, but as a leader, mother, and Sailor. She looks forward to using her degree to lead with compassion and continue making a meaningful impact in military healthcare.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Lauren Sue Watson-Curtis  
Bachelor of Science in Sports and Health Sciences, Concentration in Nutrition  
American Military University  
Military Affiliation: Military Spouse

For 22-year-old Lauren Watson-Curtis, the path to a degree in Sport and Health Sciences was shaped by her experience as a competitive swimmer and her personal journey with health and recovery. After stepping away from athletics due to injuries and the challenges of navigating an eating disorder, Lauren found her passion in fitness and nutrition—thanks to the inspiration of her rehab team. Despite being diagnosed with POTS and managing a full-time job, school, and family responsibilities, Lauren remained focused and determined, supported by her loving family and husband. Her degree is just the beginning; Lauren plans to pursue her master's and become a registered dietitian, continuing her journey of healing, advocacy, and helping others thrive through health and nutrition.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Delilah Milagros Santos-Kane  
Master of Social Work  
Simmons University  
Military Affiliation: Veteran, United States Marine Corps



Delilah Santos-Kane, 37, pursued her Master of Social Work to regain a sense of purpose and contribute to something greater—just as she did during her time on active duty. Throughout her academic journey, she faced the complexities of military life as a spouse, relocating five times across two states, raising three children (including one with special needs), and managing her own health challenges. Yet, Delilah never wavered. With unshakable determination and the steadfast support of her husband, she turned every obstacle into fuel for success. Today, she proudly stands at the finish line with a renewed sense of confidence and clarity. Looking ahead, Delilah plans to make an impact in the fields of social policy or politics, continuing her mission to serve and uplift others.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Deenroy Adrian Carlos  
Bachelor of Arts in Management Concentration in Leadership  
American Military University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps

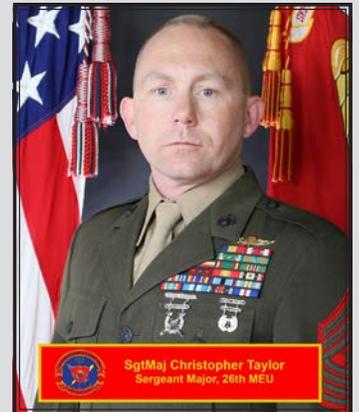


Deenroy Adrian Carlos, 34, has spent over a decade balancing higher education with the demands of active-duty service. Amid PCS moves, deployments, and operations, his pursuit of a degree in Management with a concentration in Leadership was fueled by the steady encouragement of his mother, who never let him lose sight of his academic goals. Through late nights, early mornings, and unwavering determination, Deenroy deepened his understanding of organizational leadership—skills he now applies to enhance his impact as a Marine. With his degree in hand, he is committed to leading with greater effectiveness and using his education to make a lasting difference in the Marine Corps and beyond.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Chris Taylor  
Master of Science in Public Safety  
Liberty University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps

At 42, Chris Taylor set out to sharpen his writing, critical thinking, and leadership skills—ultimately becoming a more well-rounded professional and role model for the Marines he leads. Amid the demands of military life, including an international move and impending deployment, Chris learned to maximize his time—completing assignments in airports and transition spaces rather than letting opportunities slip by. With the steadfast support of his wife Kristy, fellow Marine friends, and Liberty University’s military-friendly resources, Chris found renewed strength and purpose in his academic journey. His degree in Public Safety lays the groundwork for a future of continued service, as he plans to join Sheepdog Impact Assistance after retirement, supporting veterans and first responders through outdoor adventures, disaster relief, and wellness programs.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Donna “Dee” Gardner  
Master of Business Administration & Master of Arts in Procurement and Acquisitions  
Webster University  
Military Affiliation: Spouse of Retiree; Federal Contractor



At 53, Dee Gardner’s dual master’s degrees mark a powerful testament to resilience, self-belief, and lifelong learning. After stepping away from her studies in 2019 due to health challenges, Dee returned in 2023 with renewed determination and completed her academic journey by the end of 2024. From earning her GED to a Bachelor’s in Accounting and now two master’s degrees, Dee’s path proves it’s never too late to invest in yourself. With the unwavering support of her husband and a passion for helping others grow, she now looks forward to teaching at a North Carolina college—sharing her story and empowering students just like her. Dee’s journey reminds us all that the only permission you need to chase your dreams is your own.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Gabriela P. Ramirez Zavala  
Master of Science in Human Behavior Psychology  
National University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps



At 29, Gabriela Ramirez Zavala balanced the roles of Marine, mother, and graduate student with extraordinary determination. Working 10–12 hour shifts while raising a toddler and completing demanding coursework, she pushed forward—motivated by a powerful desire to be a role model for her son. With the unwavering support of her mother, who stepped in to help during exams and projects, Gabriela never lost sight of her goals. Her academic journey has strengthened her resilience and deepened her passion for helping others. She now plans to use her degree to advocate for mental health and support military families, bridging the gap between psychological care and the communities that need it most.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Melbin Medina  
Master of Science in Applied Leadership, Concentration in Organizational Leadership  
Campbell University  
Military Affiliation: Retired, United States Marine Corps

Melbin Medina, 47, proudly graduates summa cum laude with a Master of Science in Applied Leadership, a milestone that reflects decades of perseverance, sacrifice, and purpose. The first in his family to earn a college degree, Melbin began his educational journey while serving on active duty in the Marine Corps, motivated by a promise he made to himself and the example he hoped to set for his children, fellow Marines, and immigrant family. Despite language barriers, long nights, and the ever-present challenge of balancing service, studies, and family life, Melbin never gave up. With the unwavering support of his wife and children—and his faith—he learned to juggle life's priorities with grace. Now working in special education within the DoD school system, he continues to lead by example, mentoring the next generation with wisdom, humility, and heart. Melbin's story is a reminder that education is not only a tool for success, but a legacy of inspiration.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Brandon Christopher Nash  
Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice  
Park University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps



Brandon Christopher Nash's academic journey spans 18 years—marked by deployments, fatherhood, and an unwavering commitment to family. Determined to complete his degree in Criminal Justice to support his post-retirement goal of becoming a homicide detective and to pass on his GI Bill to his son, Brandon balanced rigorous military responsibilities with an equally strong dedication to home. He carved out study time during lunch breaks and maintained peak physical readiness by waking at 0530, all while achieving a 4.0 GPA. With the guidance of a trusted academic advisor and a solid financial plan, Brandon's education not only enhanced his professional skill set but also positioned him to lead in his next chapter. His story exemplifies discipline, sacrifice, and the fulfillment that comes from honoring both family and personal goals.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Robert H. Mobley II  
Bachelor of Science in Information Technology Management  
Trident University International  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps



For Robert H. Mobley II, education wasn't just a personal goal—it was a living testament to the values he hopes to instill in his children. Determined to lead by example and never ask of them what he wouldn't do himself, Robert navigated the demanding balance of military service, fatherhood, and academics with intentional strategy. Between deployments and family responsibilities, he found creative solutions—studying alongside his children during homework time, dedicating Saturdays to coursework, and sometimes working ahead to give his family his undivided attention for a week. With the steadfast encouragement of his wife and mother, who reminded him of his purpose whenever challenges

mounted, Robert discovered renewed confidence in his ability to accomplish anything through determination. Looking ahead, he plans to channel his leadership skills and education toward youth mentorship and continued government service after retirement—showing others, especially young adults, that yesterday's limitations need not define tomorrow's potential. Robert's journey reflects his deeply held belief that while life was never meant to be easy, the struggle itself builds the resilience needed for meaningful growth.

# Congratulations GRADUATES!



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Alan Spillari  
Bachelor of Arts in Instructional Design  
University of Arizona Global Campus  
Military Affiliation: Veteran, United States Marine Corps

At 44, aviation instructor Alan Spillari pursued his Bachelor of Arts in Instructional Design with a clear vision: to transform traditional training into engaging, impactful educational experiences for his learners at FlightSafety International. Balancing full work shifts with family responsibilities—including his son's baseball games and household duties—Alan embraced the challenge of late-night study sessions and assignment completions with methodical organization. His daily checklists became the backbone of his success, breaking overwhelming tasks into manageable steps while keeping his priorities firmly in focus. The supportive environment at University of Arizona Global Campus proved invaluable, with instructors who understood and accommodated the unique challenges faced by working adults with families. Through his educational journey, Alan has deepened his understanding of the systematic processes behind effective training development, preparing him to transition from instructor to creator of innovative aerospace training solutions. Having already accomplished this significant milestone, Alan's thirst for knowledge continues unabated—he's beginning his graduate studies this month, embodying his own advice that persistence is the key to success and that it's never too late to take that first step. His commitment to developing meaningful, practical, and engaging training products stands to make a lasting impact on safety and efficiency throughout the aviation industry.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Yanling Huang  
Master of Health Care Administration  
Purdue University Global  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Navy



Yanling Huang, an inspiring adult learner in her early forties, recently earned a master's degree in Health Care Administration, driven by her ambition to advance in dental health and ultimately become a dentist. Throughout her academic journey, Yanling faced significant challenges, such as managing three classes in one semester and collaborating on group assignments with classmates across different states and schedules. To conquer these hurdles, she employed effective strategies like early communication with her peers, meticulous preparation for group meetings, and sought support from her employer and chain of command during online sessions. She also harnessed valuable educational resources like research databases, including PubMed

and Google Scholar, along with AI assistance to streamline her workload. This journey has not only sharpened her analytical skills and decision-making abilities but has also laid a strong foundation for her future in dental school. Yanling passionately encourages other adult learners to communicate openly with their families and professional networks, stay organized, and seek support when necessary. She aims to leverage her degree to make a significant impact in her community by applying her healthcare administration knowledge and contributing to the field of dental health. Yanling is excited to share her inspiring story at the graduation ceremony, hoping to motivate and uplift fellow adult learners.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Benjamin M. Kirwin  
Bachelor of Science Management Studies  
University of Maryland Global Campus  
Military Affiliation: Veteran, United States Marine Corps

At 34 years old, Ben is set to receive his bachelor's degree in management studies, marking a significant milestone in his journey as an adult learner. Driven by the desire to use education as an income-based asset and push his intellectual limits, he faced the challenge of balancing his studies with the responsibilities of being a full-time husband, parent, and employee. Through effective time management and the unwavering support of his wife, family, and coworkers, he successfully navigated his academic path. His education has expanded his knowledge in management, prioritization, and time management, further preparing him for future career advancements. He encourages other adult learners to prioritize time management and seek out strong support systems to overcome stress. With his degree, he aims to achieve higher positions in the federal government and seize new opportunities. Above all, he hopes his experience will inspire others to view education as a powerful asset in their financial and professional growth.



# WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Tessa Marie Mattson  
Bachelor of Business Administration  
American Military University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps



At 23, Tessa Marie Mattson balances the around-the-clock demands of Marine Corps service with the rigors of academic life, earning her Bachelor of Business Administration with purpose and foresight. Having entered the Corps as a college sophomore, Tessa was determined to complete her degree—motivated by the desire to one day pass her GI Bill benefits to her children. Her strategic approach to time management became the cornerstone of her success, as she dedicated weekdays to her military responsibilities and transformed weekends into focused academic opportunities. With the steadfast support of her significant other and friends during challenging periods, Tessa navigated the delicate balance between service and scholarship. This juggling act of responsibilities became a crucible for her leadership development, teaching her to handle multiple priorities without crumbling under pressure. Looking ahead, Tessa plans to leverage her degree by applying to the

Enlisted Commissioning Program, continuing her Marine Corps journey as an officer. Her experience underscores the importance of self-investment amid competing demands—a reminder that taking time for personal growth, even when surrounded by chaos, is not selfish but essential. Tessa’s message to fellow service members is clear: don’t wait—even one course at a time moves you closer to your goals and opens doors for your future.

# Congratulations GRADUATES!



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Noah Lambert  
Master of Science in Human Resource Management  
Trident University International  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps

At 34, Noah Lambert found that the discipline and focus required as a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island created an unexpected thirst for new challenges, leading him to pursue a Master’s degree in Human Resource Management. Drawing inspiration from his high school principal, Mr. Dominic Jeremiah, Noah embraced a “midnight oil” approach to his studies—finding productivity in the quiet hours when others rested, allowing him to balance new promotional responsibilities with academic demands while maintaining peak physical fitness. The unwavering support of his student advisor and professors provided a foundation of guidance that complemented his determination, helping him navigate his educational journey with confidence. Through this process, Noah experienced a profound shift in perspective, developing new frameworks for understanding complex situations and approaching challenges with enhanced insight. Looking ahead, he plans to apply his deepened understanding of human dynamics to foster a culture of care and support within the Marine Corps, strengthening communication and leadership throughout the organization. Beyond the academic achievements, Noah found unexpected value in the community formed with fellow students and faculty—a collaborative network that enriched his experience and reinforced the essential qualities of empathy and teamwork. His journey stands as testament to the transformative power of education at any stage of life, proving that with determination and proper guidance, we can always reach higher.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Haley Zahnd  
Master of Education in Special Education  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
Military Affiliation: Veteran, United States Marine Corps; Military Spouse



At 27, Haley Zahnd's journey to her Master's in Special Education began unexpectedly—through an MLFC's suggestion to work at EasterSeals UCP after her service as a Combat Engineer. This pivotal recommendation sparked a passion for working with individuals with varying disabilities that would shape her educational path and future career aspirations. Navigating her studies through remarkable personal challenges, Haley balanced multiple military relocations, family responsibilities, and the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining academic excellence. Even as she underwent two rounds of IVF, welcomed a baby, faced thyroid cancer, and coordinated a cross-country PCS in her final semester, her dedication never wavered. Finding focus during late nights after her children were asleep and drawing on organizational skills developed during her professional experience, Haley created structured approaches to manage her complex responsibilities. The unwavering support of

her spouse, extended family, and understanding faculty at UH Manoa—particularly her advisor, Dr. Ortogero—proved essential, alongside crucial financial assistance from the VA's VR&E program. Now, Haley plans to leverage her education to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, developing individualized interventions for children with disabilities in underserved communities. Her story demonstrates that the resilience gained through military life and personal challenges can become the greatest assets in academic pursuits—transforming detours into opportunities for deeper growth and connection.

## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Nicole Mei Nani Wood  
Master of Arts in Human Services Counseling  
Liberty University  
Military Affiliation: Spouse of Retiree; DoD Civilian

For Nicole Wood, earning her Master of Arts in Human Services Counseling has always been a goal expressed upon her by the elders in my family to solidify professional development. Nicole persisted through the challenges of overcoming her lack in confidence, self-doubt, and self-motivation based on "what ifs" that questioned her abilities to reach her goal. Her advice to other adult learners facing similar challenges, "Get excited, as nobody is going to build your own personal legacy but you. The world is full of brilliant opportunities for you to grasp and make a difference one friend at a time."



# WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Jared Brice Game  
Bachelor of Science Environmental Science  
American Military University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps



At age 51, through the support of his family and Commanders, Jared Brice Game learned to balance his personal and professional life to achieve goal of working in conservation and fish and wildlife management upon retirement from the United States Marine Corps. His motivation was to improve himself, and to set an example for his children and fellow Marines. Jared's advice to others interested in furthering their education, "DO IT! Don't think about it, just do it, sign up for a class and then do another, and keep going, make it a priority in your life and before you know it you will have accomplished something you thought was unreachable at times."

# Congratulations GRADUATES!



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

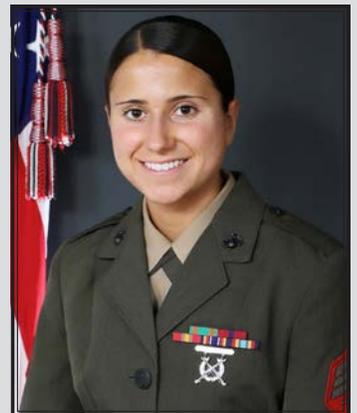
Ava Elizabeth Eichensehr  
Bachelor of Arts in Supply Chain Management  
American Military University  
Military Affiliation: Active Duty, United States Marine Corps

At just 22, Ava Elizabeth Eichensehr approaches life with remarkable discipline and vision, completing her Bachelor of Arts in Supply Chain Management while maintaining the demanding responsibilities of active-duty service.

Viewing education as a continuous journey essential to leadership development, Ava never wavered in her commitment—often tackling three courses simultaneously without breaks between terms, all while fulfilling her military obligations. When faced with financial obstacles after exhausting her Tuition Assistance credits and FAFSA funding, she made the decisive choice to self-fund her education rather than compromise her timeline.

Through meticulous time management—dedicating weekends to academics, working a week ahead on assignments, and embracing early mornings and late nights—Ava created a sustainable rhythm that allowed her to excel in both worlds. With unwavering encouragement from her husband and parents,

particularly her father's consistent reminder of her purpose, she developed a deeper appreciation for perseverance and strategic thinking. Now equipped with a comprehensive understanding of logistics systems across military, commercial, and global contexts, Ava plans to bridge operational effectiveness with logistical innovation—bringing fresh perspectives to ammunition logistics and potentially extending her impact to the civilian sector. Her journey stands as powerful testimony that excellence never waits for the "perfect time"—it thrives in those who refuse to become complacent.



## *The Marine Corps' Voluntary Education Program Empowering Marines to achieve holistic wellness and success through transformative education and proactive support.*

As a cornerstone of the Marine Corps' commitment to developing the total Marine, the base Education Centers provide personalized guidance, mentorship, and innovative tools to help Marines forge clear pathways to prosperity, personal growth, and meaningful service. Our highly trained academic advisors and career counselors offer tailored, one-on-one support, serving as advocates and facilitators for Marines seeking to enhance their overall well-being and military effectiveness. The Voluntary Education Program supports the primary mission of the Marine Corps by maintaining an effective force in readiness, encouraging Marines to use our programs to enhance their military effectiveness and prepare for positions of greater responsibility.



### **ABOUT EDUCATION ASSISTANCE BRANCH**

The Education Assistance Branch (EAB) is charged with carrying out the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Program, providing various educational opportunities to Marines and their family members stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station New River (Lejeune-New River), as well as active duty Marines located East of the Mississippi. The VolEd provides post-secondary education opportunities to the Marine Corps supporting recruitment, retention, and readiness of all Marines in all duty stations.

We provide multiple learning and professional development opportunities in consolidated education centers and use of technology for independent duty and deployed Marines. Command units may reserve classroom or meeting space at no cost, within the Camp Lejeune and/or New River Education Centers. For more information, visit the VolEd website at <https://lejunenewriver.usmc-mccs.org/edu>

John A. Lejeune Education Center  
Building 825, Stone Street  
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina 28547  
(910) 451-3091

Camp Lejeune Testing Center  
Building 825, Stone Street, Suite 120  
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina 28547  
(910) 451-3092 or (910) 451-9289

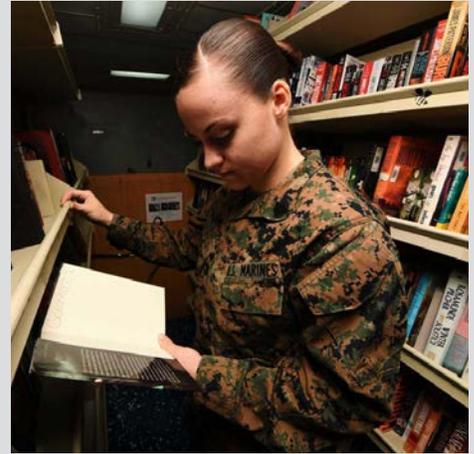
New River Education Center  
Building AS-212, Bancroft Street  
New River, North Carolina 28540  
(910) 449-5421



## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

The Education Centers offers a wide range of services and access to seated and online education and training programs. The team provides one-on-one advising, group information sessions, and unit briefs on the following:

- Academic and Technical Advising, and Career Counseling
- Resources and Referral
- College and Career Planning
- Financial Aid and Information
- Tuition Assistance (TA)
- Academic Skills Program (ASP)
- United States Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)
- Veteran Education Benefits
- On-Base College and Universities
- School and Joint Services Transcript (JST) Assessment
- United States Marine Corps Credentialing (MC COOL)
- Testing Center; military and civilian (limited) testing
- Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)
- Proctoring Services
- Veterans In Piping (VIP) SkillBridge Program
- Various professional development opportunities
- Trainings, workshops, and academic courses
- Base Libraries and academic research assistance



## **ANNUAL EVENTS**

### **COMMANDER'S OFF-DUTY EDUCATION GRADUATION CEREMONY**

Offered either the end of May or beginning of June at the Camp Lejeune Base Theater. Local Marines, Sailors, and their families are given the opportunity to “walk the stage” as traditional college graduates. This unique opportunity allows guests and family members to watch their graduate shake the Commander’s hand and receive their diploma on stage. Participants are even given a coin upon graduation to memorialize the day!



### **COLLEGE AND TRADES EDUCATION SUMMITS (Also known as education fairs)**

The program hosts two summits, one in the Fall (usually September) and one in the Spring (usually March or April), at the John A. Lejeune Education Center. The College and Trades Education Summit includes access to over 60 colleges, universities, and trade schools, and has something to offer any level of learner. Various information sessions and workshops are scheduled throughout the day, and on-site advisors will give students an opportunity to learn which college, university, trade school, or career path is right for them.

# **Become a Unit Education Officer (UEO)**

## **Empower Marines. Champion Education.**

## **Strengthen Readiness.**

Are you passionate about leadership, mentorship, and the power of education? Consider becoming a **Unit Education Officer (UEO)** – a vital role that directly supports Marine Corps readiness and professional development.

As a UEO, you will:

Serve as the **liaison** between your unit and the Education Services Office.

Help Marines access education, credentials, and career planning resources.

Promote programs like Tuition Assistance, the Academic Skills Program, USMAP, and more.

Support Commanders in developing informed, empowered, and resilient Service Members.

### **Why become a UEO?**

Gain meaningful **leadership experience** beyond your MOS.

Develop valuable **skills in advising, planning, and coordination.**

Make a lasting impact on the lives and careers of your fellow Marines and Sailors.

Strengthen your unit's overall readiness and morale.

### **Who can serve as a UEO?**

Officers and enlisted Marines who meet educational qualifications and are appointed by their Commanding Officer.

### **Ready to lead? Want to learn more?**

Contact the Lejeune-New River Education Services Officer at:

MCCS.Lejeune-NewRiverEducation@usmc-mccs.org

(910) 451-3091

<https://lejeunenewriver.usmc-mccs.org/edu>