

Student, national guardsman says thank you to Alfred University

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Alfred University student Dillon Smith talks about his service in the National Guard.

ALFRED, NY As a member of the National Guard, Dillon Smith doesn't have a schedule typical of most college students. There are mandatory training requirements Guardsmen must meet, which may cause a student to miss a few weeks of classes.

In Smith's case, his service caused more than a minor interruption in his studies and his work as a student tour guide in the AU Office of Admissions. Fortunately, Smith says, Alfred University has accommodated his busy schedule.

Smith, a criminal justice and psychology major from Pine Bush, NY, enrolled at AU as a freshman in the spring of 2014. In the spring of 2016, he had completed five semesters of study when he learned he was being deployed to Iraq to serve with the New York Army National Guard 1156th Engineer Company.

Smith worked as an admissions tour guide the summer of 2016 before heading to the Middle East in November. In Iraq, he and members of his National Guard company worked on engineering projects, building new bases, and bringing power to and upgrading existing bases. Last August, Smith returned home and re-enrolled at Alfred, resuming his studies in January.

On Friday, Smith thanked Alfred University and his colleagues in the Admissions Office for helping him make the transition from student to soldier (and back to student again). Smith unveiled a framed Alfred University t-shirt which had been part of a care package sent to him during his time overseas -- signed by members of his Guard unit. The shirt had been attached to a Predator drone and flown during a mission throughout Iraq on May 9, 2017.

"The school has really supported me a lot," Smith said. "It's a thank you for all the support they've given me, helping me along the way."

Smith pointed to several instances where the University helped him juggle his duties as a student and Guardsman. His first semester at AU, he had to travel to Germany for part of his training, and his professors helped him by being flexible with his schedule, allowing him to complete some coursework on-line. During the summer of 2016, as he was preparing to be deployed to Iraq, he was a full-time tour guide in admissions, a position he maintained despite having to leave for three weeks of training. And there were the care packages, sent to Smith and fellow members of his unit throughout the term of his deployment.

Grateful for the help given him, Smith nominated his supervisor in the Admissions Office, Associate Director Michelle Pomeroy, for the Patriot Award, given by the Department of Defense as part of its Employer Support of the Guard and

Reserve (ESGR) initiative. Pomeroy was named a recipient of the award and was presented a plaque in recognition.

Smith is on schedule to graduate in the spring of 2019. Between now and then, he&ll likely need more flexibility in his schedule, as he was promoted from corporal to sergeant. In March, he&s off to Pennsylvania to attend National Guard training required to attain the higher rank.