

# EXPOSURE



## BRAVELY ENDURING

*Facing fatherhood, homelessness and injuries: One veteran's journey to success*

**Story by [Fresno State](#)**

*May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019*

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Fatherhood, homelessness and traumatic brain injury — those are a few of the realities Jordan Cody faced as he earned his bachelor's degree.

The United States Marine Corps veteran started his journey at Fresno State in 2016 in the Veterans Education Program. The program provides an educational re-entry opportunity for men and women who have served or are currently serving in the military.

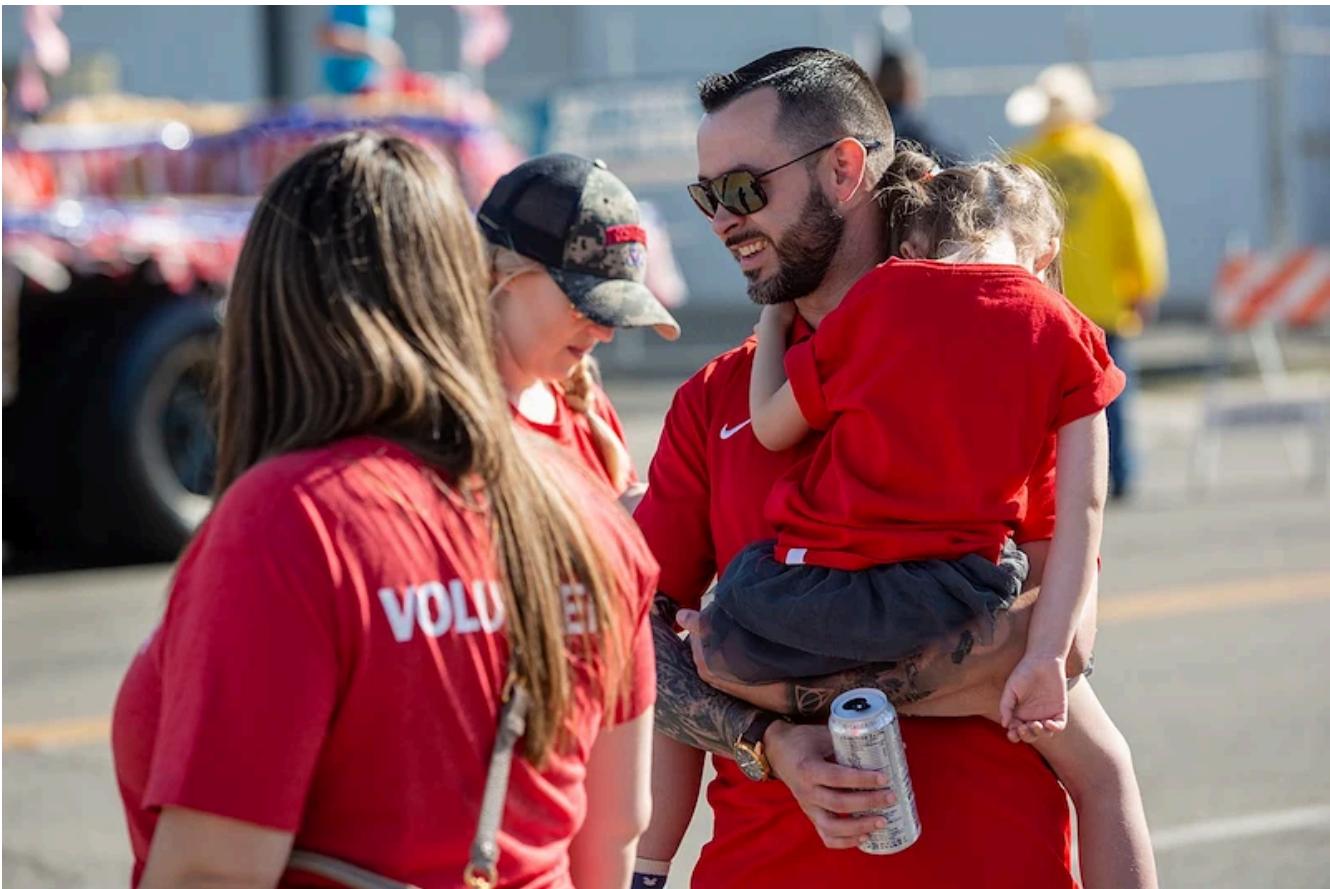
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Now, Jordan is the first student from the program to earn his bachelor's degree — a feat that only took him two years.

Jordan was accepted into six law schools. In the fall, he will begin studying to become a family law attorney.

"On paper, that sounds nice," Jordan says humbly. "But behind the scenes, that wasn't me. I had a village behind me keeping me going."





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## STARTING WITH SERVICE

After finishing high school in small-town Spindale, North Carolina, Jordan was unsure about his future. He admits that he did not have many resources to attend college, and was seeking guidance, structure and purpose.

Following both of his grandfathers' footsteps, Jordan joined the military. He was an infantryman in the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines military unit.

Based in California, Jordan was deployed three times to Afghanistan.

"War is never pretty. It's not glorious. It's not fancy," Jordan says. "I think it helped me grow as a person."

After over six years serving his country, Jordan was medically retired due to injuries. He experienced traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It was very difficult transitioning back to civilian life," Jordan says. "The military, as difficult as it is, is very straightforward. It gave me purpose. It made me matter. The intrinsic details of transitioning — there is a lot of fear."

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⇒ Did you know? 20% of veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan suffer from either major depression or post-traumatic stress disorder; 19.5% of veterans in these two categories have experienced a traumatic brain injury.



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## LIFE IN TRANSITION

Jordan says that in order to “increase your standing in the world, you need to get an education.” He knew where he wanted to go in life — he just didn’t know how to get there.

Then he found Fresno State’s Veterans Education Program.

The Veterans Education Program is the only one of its kind in the California State University system. It provides opportunity and access to resources at Fresno State and connects veterans to support organizations in the Central Valley.

“Fresno State’s extended education offers unique higher education programs to persons not otherwise served by the University; the Veterans Education Program is an example of this unique access,” says Dr. Scott Moore, dean of the Division of Continuing and Global Education.

Upon completion of the two-semester Veterans Education Program, students begin their path toward an undergraduate degree having completed 15 general education units.

“The Veterans Education Program is specifically designed for veterans and service members who often face unique challenges applying to the University,” says Dr. Daniel Bernard,

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executive director of the Division of Continuing and Global Education. Dr. Bernard also directs the Veterans Education Program.

Dr. Bernard served as Jordan's first point of contact at Fresno State. Jordan laughs as he recalls "interrogating" Dr. Bernard about a program that seemed too good to be true. It wasn't.

"Our goal is to remove obstacles and provide a transitional pathway for degree completion," Dr. Bernard says.

The program is provided at no cost to the student veterans; tuition, books, course materials, parking passes, student ID card fees and iPads are provided to each student in the program. It is sustained solely through generous community and private support.

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"I want to say to these donors that what you're doing matters," Jordan says. "From my own personal perspective, the people that created this program and the ones who donate to it, they're giving people a chance at a better life. If you're wondering whether your investment meant something, it did."

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# THE PATH OF PERSEVERANCE

After successfully completing the Veterans Education Program, Jordan became a full-time student majoring in communication. He was carefully balancing his role as a father and as a student while facing significant personal struggles, like homelessness during his first semester.

“That’s another reason I have a tremendous amount of respect for the Veterans Education Program and the people that are involved with it,” Jordan says. “They put me in the dorms that semester. They were there for me. They took care of me.”

⇒ **Did you know? About 11% of the adult homeless population are veterans.**

With housing taken care of, Jordan wanted to immerse himself in life as a Fresno State student. He was part of the Barking Bulldogs Debate Team, was the vice president of the Student Veteran Organization and joined student government as the senator of veteran and transfer affairs.

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“Jordan is an exemplary model of what our returning veterans can achieve when given a chance to succeed,” says Dr. Bernard.

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Just two short years after completing the Veterans Education Program, Jordan walked across the stage at graduation to earn his bachelor’s degree. In the fall, he will attend law school at University of the Pacific.

Jordan credits much of his success to the Veterans Education Program.

“Everyone in the program were always so supportive. It really gave me a foundation, a home base,” Jordan says. “They guided me and helped shape my academic future. So, the program as a whole was tremendous — it was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had.”

## YOU CAN HAVE A HAND IN STUDENT SUCCESS.

**Footnote:** Photos by Cary Edmondson and Jose Romo Jr. Story by Esra Hashem — University Brand

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