

FROM DESERT TO DESK

By ERIKA PRAFDER

WHILE training in the Marine Corps, 28-year-old Steve Moylan knew that the skills that he was developing were invaluable for the battlefield. Knowing how to translate these strengths into a resume for the civilian workplace, however, was challenging.

"I knew that rifle marksmanship wasn't going to be a core competency of my job outside of military service, but the pride and ownership vets take with this task is unmatched," says Moylan, who's currently completing his second year of Fordham University's MBA program.

During the last couple of months of his military service, as Moylan began to plot his transition into academia, he decided to concentrate on the business world.

Moylan, who had excelled as an infantry officer during tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, was accepted to Fordham's business school, but on beginning classes there, culture shock began to set in.

"Coming out of the Marines, you bring a very unique perspective to things. There are such difficult decisions being made. Most business school students have a couple of years of work experience and a different way of looking at the world. During school group projects, there is a lot of petty stuff that occurs. I'd often say [to student colleagues] 'You can't be serious. This is not difficult. Let's figure it out and get it



Steve Moylan (left) discusses his transition into graduate education with Fordham's Edge4Vets director Tom Murphy.

strengths developed in the military and teach them how to apply them as tools to succeed in school, and as a platform for getting a job and career," says Murphy, who launched the series of three workshops this past fall semester and plans to expand the program to other CUNY schools.

As student vets transition from desert to desk, "We want them to move forward, be clear on their assets and become a fish back in water," he adds.

It's widely known that the core beliefs espoused in the military are duty, integrity, justice and honor.

"Businesses look for these character traits — they're very much in demand," says Murphy. "We help student vets identify which of those beliefs are most important to them, and develop a personal action plan to make [them a] part of their life and career."

For example, one vet oversaw the servicing of transport planes at Baghdad Airport, according to

Murphy. "Consequently, using good judgment and a sense of duty are things he takes very seriously," he says. "We're now aiming for him to work at a Silicon Valley incubator in the high-tech department."

Another student vet has worked his way up at the Fordham radio station to become its operations manager.

"Everyone there trusts that he makes good judgments. They're really confident in him," says Murphy.

Edge4Vets also helps student vets overcome the common challenges encountered as they re-enter academic life, which include forging relationships with peers who are, in many cases, younger, as well as dealing with various rules and regulations.

Helping student vets put military techniques into classroom settings

"One fella wasn't doing well in literature class. In Iraq, he was very skilled at breaking down his rifle every day. Cleaning it is something that must be done — it's a life-or-death issue. We advised him to break down his literature assignments like he did his rifle duty. By finding that commonality, he was able to overcome his academic hardship," says Murphy.

For Moylan, one central benefit of the Edge4Vets program is the validation of the re-entry shock he initially experienced.

"In the classroom, the most mind-numbing, tedious tasks would keep us working past five at night, and many students would want to return home. I thought it was just me feeling this was nuts. If a job isn't done in the military, we didn't

just leave," says Moylan.

Murphy's program also enabled Moylan to identify the core values he's looking for in an employer.

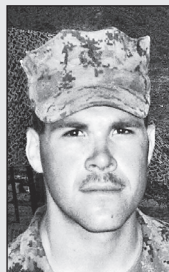
"Tom's worksheets push you to extract civilian job skills out of [your] military skills. This allows me to better [tailor my] resume and answer questions in a job interview."

In the private sector, Moylan will be looking for a position on the operations side of a company that has a culture of responsibility and integrity, he says.

And if a job interview for the private sector doesn't pan out well, "I think vets are uniquely experienced to identify the point of friction of an event. I'll know what I need to work on to improve my plan for the next interview," he says.

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— Steve Moylan, Fordham business school student and former Marine.



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Through an armed forces club at Fordham, Moylan connected with the school's Edge4Vets program (reclaimingthesky.com) launched through the Human Resiliency Institute at Fordham University's Graduate School of Social Science.

Led by director Tom Murphy, the organization leads military-to-career transition support workshops.

"We help student vets identify

FINDING FUNDING

The Montgomery GI Bill This bill offers up to 36 months of educational benefits to veterans who qualify: usmilitary.about.com/cs/education/a/admgib.htm

Troops to Teachers (TTT) This national program aims to assist

eligible military personnel in their transition to new careers as public school teachers in specified schools. Financial aid is available to those who qualify: higher.nysed.gov/tcert/career/ttt.html

Veterans Tuition Awards (VTA)

Offers monetary awards for full- and part-time study for qualified veterans who are matriculating at an undergraduate or graduate degree-offering institution or in various vocational training programs throughout New York State: hesc.com/content.nsf/SFC/2/Veterans_Tuition_Awards