

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI
MAGAZINE



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Steps Up to Safety

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MILITARY
LEADERSHIP

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AMBASSADOR



What defines a CSU Knight?

As a graduate, you are entitled to a little boasting. After all, you've worked hard to get where you are. Knights are early risers, night owls and mid-day crunchers. They know about perseverance and dedication and doing whatever it takes to get the job done.

Do you know someone who has the potential to be a Knight?

Refer a friend, family member or co-worker to CSU and take 20% off at the CSU Bookstore. Once you've chosen your item, wear your new Knight gear proudly! And maybe boast just a little. You deserve it.

Log into your myCSU Portal to learn more.



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Letter From The Editor

Dear readers,

2018 has already brought exciting memories for Columbia Southern University- growth, events, new connections and lots of forward motion. If the rest of the year moves as fast and as fun as the first half of the year has been already, then we're surely in for a wild ride.

Hearing from our alumni and putting your stories to paper never gets old; it's truly one of the most rewarding things I do. For instance, over the past few months, I have really enjoyed getting to know Daryl Hogan, our military spotlight featured on page 17. His story of growth, reflection and giving back is so inspiring and I think many of you will relate.

Another member of our alumni family whom I have had the pleasure of getting to know is Dan Hughes. Dan is a philanthropic safety professional who traveled to a remote neighborhood of Panama to build a much needed bridge for the people who lived there. You can read his story on page 12.

As you peruse through the stories of this magazine, I hope you are able to see parts of yourself in the Knights featured. Like them, you are working to change and improve the world around you every day. For that, we are infinitely proud.

As always, I would love to hear from you! If you have a story idea for a future edition of the CSU Alumni Magazine, I hope you will share it.

None of this is possible without each and every one of you. Together, we can rise to exciting heights.

Happy Reading,

Libby Reilly, Editor-in-Chief

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU



Engage with us on social media or send us an email at CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu



Thinking of Going
Back to School?
**DON'T FORGET YOUR
KNIGHT DISCOUNT**

All alumni who earned their bachelor's or master's degrees with CSU are eligible to receive the Knight Tuition Discount. Take 10% off of your master's or DBA degree with CSU, including:

- » M.S. Criminal Justice Administration
- » M.S. Emergency Services Management
- » M.S. Occupational Safety & Health
- » M.S. Organization Leadership
- » Master of Business Administration
- » Master of Public Administration
- » Master of Public Health
- » Doctor of Business Administration



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To learn more about the Knight Tuition Discount,
visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Knight-Discount.

For more information about our graduation rates, the median debt of students who have completed the program, and other important information, please visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Disclosure.

Hello my fellow Knights,

Once again, I am pleased to be able to share some thoughts and comments concerning our Alumni Association and how we continue to grow and enjoy the camaraderie of education.



Letter From The Alumni Association President

It has been a great year with regard to our outreach; for those of you who have had the opportunity to attend one of the many events around the United States, I am sure you have witnessed the professional demeanor of our alumni and outreach members. There is a true brotherhood and sisterhood that exists among each of us as we sit around and talk about the days, weeks, months and years spent at CSU. We have ALL been there, and many of us continued the trek towards higher degrees, making our endeavors only that much sweeter. WELL DONE!

Much more than the sweet feeling of personal accomplishment, it is the opportunity to help others understand the importance of an education and how CSU provides that opportunity with greater benefits. We continue to improve courses by employing newer methodologies and techniques to make the courses more enjoyable, yet still maintaining their high levels of professional knowledge. We continually look to increase ways we bring our Knights engagement and opportunity. These are some of the many advantages to getting an education at CSU that we need to help others understand.

It is incumbent upon us as torchbearers of CSU to spread the word of the great programs we have experienced and how our education has allowed many of us to succeed in our places of employment or being offered more lucrative employment in other locations. I recently had the opportunity to look at safety resumes, which were submitted to a company in Hawaii, and out of the 14 that I read, seven were CSU graduates, four of those with master's degrees. As both a safety professional and adjunct professor, I know that CSU graduates have acquired the necessary skills to help their industry succeed, which in turn allows the employee to grow.

In closing, it is always with heartfelt pride that I recognize each and every one of you for your efforts and commitment to completing your degrees at CSU. I wear my school shirts and riding gear with pride and let everyone know about the great things CSU is doing. In my worldly travels, I have come across a few of our students and I am constantly on the prowl for an alumni get-together in an area I may be visiting. (For a list of upcoming events, see page 10.)

To those of you who have expended countless hours and days to establish an alumni group in your area, I thank you for your time and efforts. Until next time, I remain your most humbled president.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph Blessing". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ralph Blessing, Alumni Association President

Helping in YOUR Community

WRITTEN BY: ANDIE BILLS

CSU takes pride in being able to affect and support our local Gulf Coast

community. We want to help you be a part of your community, too! This year, the alumni chapters are focusing on finding causes that members are most passionate about and helping them make a mark in their community.

On January 20, CSU headed to Jacksonville, Florida and was able to support Hunger Fight, a non-profit organization that raises money to help provide nutritious meals to children and families deemed food-insecure and hungry in the local community. The organization also emphasizes the school backpack program. With help from our

students and alumni in the Jacksonville area, CSU was able to donate more than \$500 to the cause. In April 2018, CSU will be working with and joining our Los Angeles chapter to form a beach clean-up team and help give back to their community.

Our goal is to help you impact your community. Just as we want to help those in need in our backyard, we want to help you support your local area and passions; however, it needs to come from you! We are always looking for chapter members to reach out and let us know what causes they are passionate about. It is then that we can work on making the idea a reality. If you have a cause that speaks to you, please reach out on your alumni chapter Facebook group or contact CSU-Alumni@ColumbiaSouthern.edu. We look forward to changing lives with YOU!

CSU Asked: What would you like to gain by becoming a member of one of CSU's chapters?

Michael Howze **Class of 2017**

I would like to gain a network of people who are looking to continue doing positive things for themselves and others around them. As a graduate of CSU, I look forward to promoting the University and what it has meant to my growth educationally and personally.

Melanie Johnson **Class of 2017**

Thank you to all of my professors who helped encourage me when I thought I could not go on to complete the program due to working, kids and the rigorous program in homeland security. I would also like to keep my promise to myself/professors to go on and obtain my master's in homeland security.

Antonio Scolley **Class of 2017**

Becoming a member of an alumni organization is a milestone for me. I did not graduate high school; therefore, I did not receive a diploma. The [associate's degree] I received is my first graduate diploma and I am very proud of this achievement. Communicating with the alumni will help me build a network of people to share experiences with, get encouragement or input on topics of concern, and avenues of information that could be most beneficial. Although the closest chapter is a six hour drive from my residence, technology has made interacting with other people easy.

Wade Johnson **Class of 2013**

I would like to connect with other graduates of CSU and help spread the word to my contacts about CSU's great education opportunity.

William Colbourne **Class of 2014**

I would like to network with my fellow Knights and get ideas on future business ventures.

Crancena Ross **Class of 2009**

Connections with all classmates. I would also like to help veterans who are involved with employment. Provide career guidance, encouragement during the academic program, advice on important course and fieldwork, and opportunities to make. Also, become a mentor to others.



See how CSU changes lives in our local area. Visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/About-CSU/CSU-Cares

Chapter & Community Events in Review

To learn more about an event or to organize a get-together in your regional chapter, be sure to join the chapter's private Facebook group. The links can be found in the alumni section of the CSU website.



Where has CSU been lately and where are we headed next?

■ **10-15-2017**
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
 CSU hosted a networking social and chapter event in San Antonio, Texas.

■ **10-17-2017**
DALLAS/FT. WORTH, TEXAS
 CSU hosted a networking social and chapter event in Dallas, Texas.

■ **10-28-2017**
FAIRHOPE, ALABAMA
 CSU volunteered and attended the American Heart Association's Baldwin County Heart Walk in Fairhope, Alabama.

■ **11-4-2017**
HOUSTON, TEXAS
 Alumnus Cory Menor organized an alumni veteran social at Saltgrass Steak House in Houston, Texas.

■ **12-2-2017**
MOBILE, ALABAMA
 Alumna Gamel Hawthorne organized the second annual Gulf Coast Christmas party in Mobile, Alabama. The event included a Salvation Army Angel Tree donation drive.

■ **Dec. 2017**
GULF COAST CHAPTER
 The Gulf Coast Alumni Chapter helped support alumnae Angela Hoyt and Gamel Hawthorne at the Mobile, Alabama Salvation Army.

■ **1-19-2018**
DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA
 CSU hosted a networking luncheon in conjunction with the Fire Rescue East Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida.

■ **1-19-2018**
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA
 CSU hosted a networking social in Jacksonville, Florida. In attendance were faculty members Mark Friske and Billy Bullock.

■ **1-20-2018**
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA
 CSU attended the Third Annual Color Me Fed 'Race Against Hunger' 5k Run/Walk in Jacksonville, Florida. More than \$500 was donated to the cause by CSU and CSU alumni.

■ **1-27-2018**
BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI
 CSU volunteers attended the Casino Bridge Run

at the Golden Nugget in Biloxi, Mississippi.

■ **2-11-2018**
STONE MOUNTAIN, GEORGIA
 CSU hosted a networking social in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Among attendees was Jim Shaw, who is a student, alumni, ambassador and faculty member. He shared his CSU story and helped others explore changing career fields. Chapter members Vince Harris, LaDina Williams, Octavia Zackery and Dorothy Williams shared their community involvement.

■ **2-22-2108**
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA
 CSU hosted a networking social in conjunction with the EMS Today conference in Charlotte, North Carolina.



Keep an eye on our events page to see when we might be headed to your area!
ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni/Events

Newest CSU Alumni Chapter **JACKSONVILLE**

To join the Jacksonville Alumni Chapter Facebook group, please visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni/Alumni-Chapters

We are excited to unveil the newest Alumni Chapter for 2018... Jacksonville, Florida! Whether you are interested in networking with fellow Knights at alumni events or using your alumni status to make a difference in your local community, getting involved is an excellent way to continue your Knighthood even after graduation.

To join the Jacksonville Alumni Chapter Facebook group, please visit the Chapters webpage in the Alumni section of the CSU website.

ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni/Alumni-Chapters If you have any questions, please contact CSU-Alumni@ColumbiaSouthern.edu.

Upcoming Chapter and Community Events



April 21, 2018
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Join us for **Creek to Bay Cleanup and luncheon**. During the cleanup, more than 6,500 volunteers gather to participate at more than 100 sites around the San Diego area.

April 22, 2018
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

CSU will host a **networking social** in conjunction with the **2018 DEAC conference** and the **Los Angeles Alumni Chapter**. During the social, CSU President Robert Mayes will briefly honor the university's 2018 DEAC outstanding graduate and famous alumni winners, Dan Hughes and Howard "Skip" Elliott.

June 2018
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

CSU will host a **networking social** in conjunction with the **American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) national conference**. All students and alumni in the area are welcome to attend.

June 6, 2018
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The **CSU Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) chapter** and the **Chicago Alumni Chapter** will host a networking social in conjunction with the SHRM conference.

July 2018
COLUMBUS, OHIO

CSU alumnus Jimmy Dean is organizing a **networking luncheon for the Columbus Alumni Chapter**. More details will be shared in the Columbus Chapter Facebook group.

August 2018
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

A **networking social** is being planned in conjunction with the **Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association conference**. Details will be shared on the CSU Events page.

October 18-19, 2018
OPEN HOUSE AND COMMENCEMENT

CSU will once again host **graduation festivities** in and around Orange Beach, Alabama. Open House will take place on the CSU campus and Commencement will be held at the Foley Events Center. Visit our Commencement page for more details.

November 2018
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

(Tentative)
Stay tuned to our events page for more information about a possible chapter event and networking social in Jacksonville.

December 2018
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

The Gulf Coast Alumni Chapter will host their third annual Christmas party. More information will be shared on the Gulf Coast Chapter Facebook group.



Activate your Alumni Membership today and connect with fellow alumni at the CSU Events near you.

Staying Positive

in a Sometimes Negative World

“See the positive side, the potential, and make an effort.” —*Dalai Lama*

WRITTEN BY: AMANDA MANJONE

How can we stay positive when it sometimes feels like the world is against us? Many of our CSU students and alumni are aware of how crazy and hectic life can get at times. Between trying to balance work, family and school, it can feel like we have no control over our lives at times. This feeling of loss of control can sometimes cause us a great amount of stress. What can be even worse is feeling as if your life is full of negatives. The same things that can bring us joy and happiness, such as family and work, can also bring us sadness and a sinking feeling in our gut. It could be outside factors such as loss of a loved one, divorce, loss of employment or a demotion, or even your children struggling in school. It could also be internal problems such as health issues, feeling unfit and unhealthy, or having trouble sleeping.

What can we do when we find ourselves in this situation? Although it's difficult to control everything, what we can do is focus on the things we can change. We can take those negatives and turn them into positives.

First, take time to list out all of the things you are currently unhappy with. Write them down and identify things that you can have an impact on. For example, if you are unemployed or underemployed, make a specific plan to do something every day to change that. Make an appointment with Career Services

and read books that can help lead to growth. No matter how much you are doing, you can always improve by at least one percent!

If you are feeling negative about your health and fitness, start eating better and implementing an exercise program immediately. You do not need to wait for a Monday or after a holiday to begin to improve your health or the way you are treating your body. Make the decision and do it!

Once you begin to work on things you can change, you will be able to focus on the positives rather than the negatives. You will feel better and feel more in control of your life. Instead of viewing tasks, such as school work, as a chore, you may begin to see it as a vehicle to reach your goal of self-improvement. Negativity in our lives can be a huge drain

on our energy and happiness. It is up to each of us to control what we can and surround ourselves with positive people, focus on things we are grateful for and remember that no one is perfect. Don't be too hard on yourself. Every event we experience is part of our story and, in the end, will make us stronger, more resilient and more compassionate towards others. The great news is, every day we have a choice to be either negative or positive. Hopefully we can make the choice to see the light in every situation and continue to grow and flourish into the people we were destined to be.

Although it's difficult to control everything, what we can do is focus on the things we can change. We can take those negatives and turn them into positives.



Bridging the Gap

*Dan Hughes Steps
Up To Safety*

WRITTEN BY: LIBBY REILLY

In a remote village in Rio Grande, Panama, approximately 200 people live and work together, primarily as rice farmers. There are no local amenities or businesses and the community shares one vehicle when they need to travel to places like government offices and hospitals. They live among snakes and tarantulas, using handmade machetes as hand tools. Each day, they cross a river and walk half a mile to get to the bus stop, which will take them to the nearest city. In times of heavy rain and strong current, crossing the river is nearly impossible.

CSU student Dan Hughes began his career at Parsons, a technology-driven engineering services firm, in 2001 as a safety manager and quickly worked his way up to division safety manager. In 2017, when the company began the application process for the team of employees they would be taking to the country of Panama to sponsor a bridge-building project, Dan became interested. He has worked in emergency response and safety throughout his career and has always been interested in humanitarian work. He traveled to Haiti for earthquake rescue work in 2010 and “tries to wedge a way into humanitarian efforts whenever they present themselves.” The bridge-building project in Panama was a partnership between Parsons, Bridges to Prosperity and the Rio Grande community. Dan was one of the 11 Parsons employees selected for the project. The team was made up of a construction manager, engineers, environmentalists, logistics and support professionals, and safety professionals. The team had 10 days to build a 47-meter footbridge. Little did they know how much it would change the lives of the citizens of Rio Grande.

“It was a pretty diverse group of people and it was the perfect team,” said Dan. “Some of us had worked on similar projects before, but this was the first time most of us had worked with hand tools in a long time. It was good to get back to our roots in that way.”

Working long days in the community and meeting the people of Rio Grande was “awesome and emotionally charged at times.” When the bridge was completed, the community held a huge celebration. Dan said seeing some of the oldest people of the community and the

Continued on next page >>

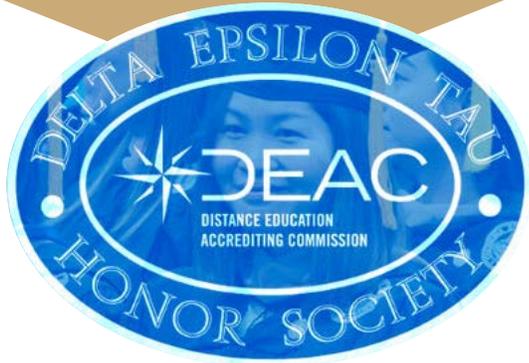


“CSU gave me the opportunity to finish my education and they took into consideration my life experience.”

Honor Society

Inductees

The CSU chapter of Delta Epsilon Tau (DET) is an international honor society that recognizes the extraordinary high academic achievements and leadership of CSU graduates.



In order to join DET, Knights must have earned a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degree with a minimum of 3.8 GPA, as well as submit a professional essay.

CSU is proud to announce the most recent DET inductees, which includes graduates from October 2016 to October 2017.

CSU extends its congratulations to the following graduates for their outstanding work and efforts!

Marcus Dabney
Monica Vannoy
Chin Keomanila
Lindsey Darnell

Selena Wallace
Thomas Aurnhammer
Charles Johnson
Jeffery Roberson



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Bridging the Gap: Dan Hughes Steps up to Safety continued.

youngest walking across the bridge for the first time together was a “moving parallel” he won’t soon forget.

“If you have any inkling to help people, just step up. It is a completely different perspective coming from the U.S. where we have all our basic needs at our fingertips then going into a place like Rio Grande, miles away from anything that even resembles an established community,” said Dan. “They get by well and lead healthy, happy lives without nearly as much material wealth as we have.”

Dan began studying at CSU in 2011 when he was juggling a hectic work schedule, travel and family life.

“CSU gave me the opportunity to finish my education and they took into consideration my life experience,” he said.

Finishing his degree was always a “bucket list item” for Dan, both professionally and personally, and he checked it off with pride at the age of 62. He graduated with a bachelor’s in occupational safety and health and is now working towards his master’s degree.

Between finishing his degrees, earning professional achievements and participating in humanitarian work, Dan has achieved a lot and has no plans of slowing down. His advice?

“Don’t stand still. If you stand still for too long, life will pass you by,” he said. “When rare opportunities come along, you take them and know it’s for a good reason.”



Mai Trang Thanh

Appointed President of Honeywell Thailand

CSU graduates are making strides all across the globe. Mai Trang Thanh, a graduate of CSU's Vietnam program, was recently appointed president of Honeywell Thailand. This new step in her career expands her previous role as president of Honeywell Indochina including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Thanh received her master's in business administration from CSU in 2010. She has been making huge improvements to the oil and gas industry during the last 20 years, serving in both the private and public sectors.

Her new role as president of Honeywell Thailand will bring her to Bangkok where she will focus on enhancing operation management and business and growth strategies. Thanh served as the first president of Honeywell Vietnam in 2011 and has been working to improve the company and grow her personal mark since.

In an interview with Thai PR, Thanh said, "It's an honor to take on this assignment as president of Honeywell Indochina as a whole, with Thailand added to the list. I am very excited and look forward to bringing my experience and passion to contribute to Honeywell's success in what is the largest and most dynamic market in the Indochina region. I want to ensure that we can contribute to building Thailand towards a smarter, safer and more sustainable country."

Honeywell is a Fortune 100 company with branches all over the world. They produce commercial and consumer products, engineering services and aerospace systems.

Thanh's dedication to her career, reputation and success are making her known in her industry. We could not be more proud to have her as a member of the CSU family.

To learn more about CSU Vietnam or the MBA program, visit our website.

Sources: Thai PR Honeywell Newsroom Honeywell Thailand



“My education at CSU definitely provided the foundation that helped propel me to the top of the enlisted structure in the military, the top 1%.”

Knight Pens Book on **Military Leadership**

Daryl Hogan is a first sergeant in the US Air Force, currently living in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

After completing his bachelor's degree in fire science and his master's in organizational leadership from CSU, Daryl says, "My education at CSU definitely provided the foundation that helped propel me to the top of the enlisted structure in the military, the top 1%."

This forward motion with his education and his career gave him a unique outlet and opportunity to share with others. He authored the book, "It's More Than a Job: Life and Leadership through the Eyes of a First Sergeant" last year and is already working on another. We sat down with Daryl to talk about

his military experience and how that, coupled with his degrees, gave him the desire to add "author" to his already impressive resume.

CSU: *Tell us about your time and career in the military.*

What made you want to enlist and how has it shaped you as a person and a leader?

Daryl Hogan: I grew up in the Watts and Lynwood sections of Los Angeles, California in pretty rough neighborhoods, but I had the support of a very loving and academically-driven family. At a young age, I learned that my maternal grandfather had served in the Army and I had the distinct pleasure of seeing the festivities as my cousin, a sergeant major in the Marine Corps, returned from Operation Desert Storm.

Wearing a military uniform, being part of an elite team that defended our nation and walking in the footsteps of American legends undoubtedly intrigued my teenage mind. I was a student-athlete, lettering in both track & field and football, and I had plans to attend a nearby community college in an effort to pursue my athletic dreams, with little knowledge of what I would do beyond that point. Luckily, a friend of mine introduced me to an Air Force recruiter at a college-career fair our senior year in high school. Once I saw the opportunities that the Air Force offered, including the ability to leave my current environment, pursue a college education, work in a meaningful career field and travel the world, I was hooked.

Simply put, the Air Force took a boy from Los Angeles whose only concern was himself and developed that boy into a respectable man and selfless leader of America's sons and daughters in uniform. That development, of course, began

Knight Pens Book on Military Leadership continued.

in 1995 during boot camp under the supervision of an outstanding military training instructor and was followed by a career that I had never previously dreamed of pursuing-- firefighting. One of the core tenets of fire and emergency services is selflessness. Another tenet is teamwork. Couple those with the U.S. Air Force core values of "Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do," and I had found my calling. Through countless fire protection certifications, deliberate training, professional military education courses, emergency responses, multiple deployments, outstanding mentors and a structured career path, I excelled from a firefighter apprentice to a deputy fire chief in fifteen years. I also had the pleasure of serving four years as a fire instructor alongside some of the best men and women in our profession at the Louis F. Garland Department of Defense Fire Academy in San Angelo, Texas.

Due to organizational changes in the Air Force, I eventually found myself at an impasse where I needed to make a decision about my future. After much thought, prayer and conversations with those closest to me, I decided to capitalize on the leadership skillsets that I had obtained in fire protection to continue my Air Force career as a first sergeant. This proved to be one of the best decisions that I have made in my life. As a first sergeant, I have been able to serve as part of a leadership executive team, or commander's key advisors, while tending to the health, morale, welfare and operational readiness of the airmen that I supervise. It puts me on the frontlines of mentoring service members to tackle and overcome issues that would otherwise degrade their ability to accomplish the Air Force mission. In the process, and by the grace of God, I was promoted to chief master sergeant and I currently serve as the command first sergeant for Air Force Space Command. My current position allows me to mentor and mold other first sergeants across the globe.

CSU: *How did being in the military influence your decision to come to CSU? Were the flexibility and resources helpful?*

DH: Being in the Air Force means being in the presence of, and working side by side, highly educated service members. We have to be the best trained and the best educated to do what we do for our country. As a staff sergeant, I realized that if I wanted to go and be a fire instructor I needed to take my education to the next level. So, I initially enrolled in a community college while I was stationed overseas and subsequently enrolled in a university when I returned stateside. But being a father, husband, service member and student was really hard to manage with the course schedule that was available with the other university. I heard about CSU through a few fire instructors whom I really admired. I did quite a bit of research and eventually transferred to Columbia Southern University, which proved to be one of the other best decisions I've made in my life. CSU provided the flexibility, curriculum and resources that allowed me to better manage my personal and professional lives while also gaining invaluable knowledge in the area of fire science that helped me to truly excel as an instructor. Thanks to the education that I received at CSU while working on my bachelor's degree, I excelled from teaching basic firefighting principles to being an instructor supervisor in the fire academy's advanced hazardous materials/weapons of mass destruction course. I even garnered the professional confidence and academic background that resulted in being selected as the non-commissioned officer of the year for the Air Force base where I was assigned.

While completing my bachelor's degree in fire science, my study habits improved and I was eventually selected for promotion to master sergeant. That promotion carried with it another overseas assignment and to my benefit,

CSU came with me! While stationed in Greenland and then Washington State, I was able to pursue and complete my master's degree in organizational leadership. My CSU education proved to be invaluable to my professional career and provided a foundation that has allowed me to thrive as a senior enlisted leader in the Air Force. What I learned through my organizational leadership courses has formed the pillars for my service as a first sergeant, which include empathy, accountability, perseverance and excellence. Because of Columbia Southern University and its phenomenal staff, I am a college graduate and the first in my family to obtain a master's degree.

CSU: *Tell us about your book, "It's More Than a Job." What was your writing process and what are your goals and aspirations for it now?*

DH: I've wanted to be an author ever since taking a creative writing class in high school. When I became a first sergeant and began to experience the true essence of what it means to be a mentor, I knew that I would be able to positively touch the lives of countless people if I shared some of my successes and failures in written form. First sergeants are among the most selfless leaders in the Air Force and their hours are never set in stone. Simply put, we are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. When there is an emergency at one o'clock in the morning, a fatality or an Airman in need of assistance while five hundred miles away from home, it is the first sergeant who gets the call and immediately begins to take action to resolve or respond to the situation. Likewise, when a service member is promoted, graduates from a professional military education course or is receiving a decoration for heroism, the first sergeant is first in line to offer congratulations. It is a highly rewarding, but highly stressful, leadership position and there are just not many books to help young first sergeants navigate the

first years of their tours, so I wrote one. “It’s More Than a Job: Life and Leadership through the Eyes of a First Sergeant” takes the reader on a journey through a few of the highs and lows that I’ve experienced as a first sergeant. It’s a rare look at a seldom talked about position in the Air Force. With each story, I give the reader a behind-the-scenes look at an event that occurred, followed by how the event impacted my family and personal life, as well as my leadership perspective on the topic. First sergeants typically serve on a leadership team with a chief master sergeant and a commander who together form a “triad” that directs the efforts of an organization or squadron. That triad very often comes from different professional backgrounds. Because of that, my primary goal with this book is to provide information that will strengthen the effectiveness of those leadership teams across the Air Force enterprise while providing a clear understanding of the sacrifices that are made by first sergeants.

The book was released in November of 2017 and has received a very warm and positive reception. Because of that, I’m currently working on a follow-up volume, as well as two more books that will walk readers through my leadership philosophy and how I journeyed from a young airman with no stripes to a chief master sergeant in a headquarters leadership position.

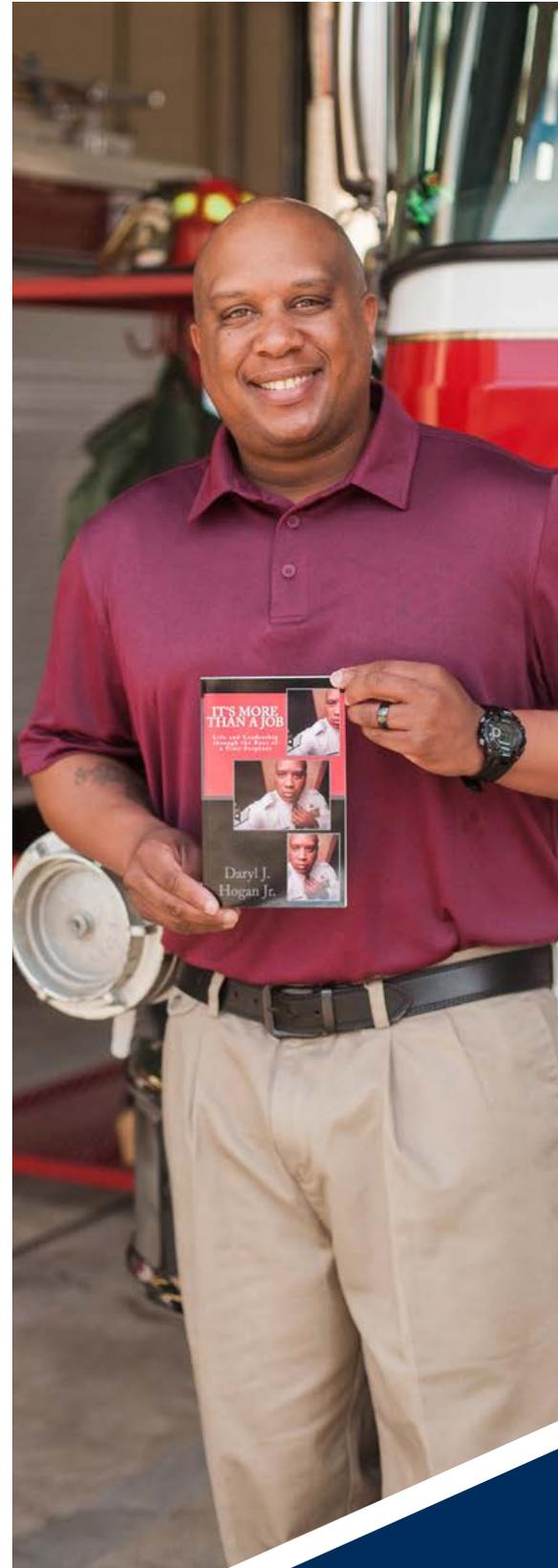
CSU: *What would a civilian gain from reading your book? A fellow member of the military?*

DH: It’s often said that while military members serve, their families sacrifice. That is never truer than with first sergeants. While fluctuating and unexpected work hours are just part of the job for us, it sometimes means an excessive amount of time away from our families. This book is a great read to help the spouses and children of first sergeants understand why their loved one may be away so much.

It’s also a great way for civilians who may be unaffiliated with the military to get an understanding of what so many of our senior enlisted leaders endure in an effort to take care of and develop America’s sons and daughters. Most military-related books are understandably about war and conflict. This book is about the human element that we encounter on a daily basis. It’s about relationships between a leader and his or her airmen. It’s about heartache and happiness.

CSU: *What else do you want your Knight family to know about you? What are your future plans?*

DH: My future plans are to continue to utilize my CSU education and Air Force background to mentor, develop and train the next generation of American leaders, whether that is in the military or in my local community. I also plan to author many more books in the near future in an effort to pass on nuggets of wisdom to those who are currently preparing to take my place. My biggest hobbies are reading, motorcycle riding, weight-training and writing. I’m a member of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association and my local Prince Hall Lodge, which both allow me to stay active in helping others, improving my community and doing my little part to make the world a better place to live. It goes without saying that I wouldn’t be in the position that I’m in if it weren’t for the love of Christ, the support of my family and the dedication of military leaders who paved the way for me.



What Does Your Cover Letter Say About You?



WRITTEN BY: LIBBY REILLY

If your resume is the conversation, then your cover letter is your handshake. A lot can be communicated by a handshake, right? You look into the person's eyes, assess their grip and begin forming an opinion on who you think that person is. The same is true of your cover letter. Whenever applying for a job, the thing people most often fret over is the resume. It should be perfect and tailored to the job to which you are applying, yes, but it is only a piece of your application

puzzle. In order to really give a sense of who you are and the value you will add to the department or company you wish to work for, your cover letter needs to be thorough and specific.

TIP: *Your cover letter is your sales pitch. It can say the things your resume can't.*

Your resume is a great overview representation of your career experience that is pertinent to the job to which you are applying. It highlights what you've done for past employers; your cover letter fills in the gaps and is your way of telling your potential employer what you can do for them. It is your chance to personally address your hiring manager and give a great first impression.

When writing a cover letter, answer the six W's

- **What** position are you applying to?
- **Where** did you hear of the job opportunity?
- **Who** are you (what is your experience and education)?
- **Why** are you interested in this position and/or company?
- **Why** should you be considered?
- **Where** can you be contacted?

Cover Letter Do's

- ✓ Tailor your cover letter for each job to which you are applying. Do your research and address it to the hiring manager, if possible.
- ✓ Use specific examples of "wins" in your career that would translate into the job you wish to have.
- ✓ Ensure your cover letter is well written and free from error. Use the same formatting, font and high quality paper as your resume.
- ✓ Keep it on one page.

TIP: If you are looking for the best examples from your career to highlight in your cover letter, browse the job description that you are applying to and pull out keywords and skills. These can be a great jumping-off-point for ensuring that the skills you are highlighting are those desired by your potential employer.

Cover Letter Don'ts

- ✗ Don't simply regurgitate what is already on your resume. Use examples and measurable data of things you have accomplished that the hiring manager would find beneficial and impressive.
- ✗ Don't talk numbers. Salary discussions should come later in the hiring process.

If you would like more information on creating a great cover letter, or any other career-related assistance, contact CSU Career Services. The dedicated career development counselors are available to students and alumni for resume review, mock interviews, job search strategies and more.

CareerServices@ColumbiaSouthern.edu | 877.297.6192

 Columbia Southern University
Career Services

 Columbia Southern University
Career Center

Knight Ambassador Program Take Your CSU Pride to the Next Level

You've completed your degree, are accomplishing wonderful things in your career and are full of CSU pride! You may be asking yourself, "What do I do with this experience and school pride now?"

Become a Knight Ambassador!

The CSU Knight Ambassador program is made up of CSU's most passionate students and alumni. Ambassadors want to share their CSU story with others and help them as they chart the path of education and beyond.

Meet one Knight Ambassador, James. A big believer in helping others better themselves, Capt. James Kutz constantly encourages his firefighters to advance their careers through education. James serves as captain of the Allentown Fire Department in Pennsylvania and is also a volunteer fire chief for the Woodlawn Fire Department. He is currently earning his



B.S. in fire administration and looks forward to pursuing his master's degree with CSU in the near future.

James said, "After starting CSU, I noticed many benefits finally finishing my degree. The flexibility of Columbia Southern

University makes going back to school as an adult learner easy with little hurdles.

I have personally worked to get my fire department on board with a learning partnership, as well as the volunteer fire department where I belong. Being a leader in these organizations, I constantly encourage my personnel to pursue their education and continue to better themselves. I also encourage those around me of the benefits of Columbia Southern and urge them to look into it further.

I am proud to be a part of the CSU family and gladly help by telling others my story."

So, what does a Knight Ambassador really do?

Knight Ambassadors represent Columbia Southern University in their communities and online by sharing their positive experiences with their friends, family and coworkers. Depending on your level of commitment, you might:

- » Attend networking events and conferences on behalf of CSU
- » Share your experience with future students
- » Appear in CSU ads, brochures, etc.
- » Serve as a guest contributor to the Communicator and Alumni Magazine

- » Extend tuition discounts by establishing Learning Partnerships
- » Promote the university in your community or workplace
- » Engage in social media conversations and sharing CSU information

Ambassadors share their individual story and experience and in exchange, are able to make invaluable connections, receive service recognition, and even earn free swag.

To be eligible for the Knight Ambassador program, one must have earned a minimum of 12 credit hours with CSU, be in good academic and financial standing, and have activated their membership to the Alumni Association (if already graduated).

The Knight Ambassador program will renew after one year. Ambassadors meet via Adobe Connect on the first Wednesday of every month. If the Knight Ambassador program could be the right fit for you, fill out this short request form.



Ambassador Luncheon: Back Row (from L to R) : Lloyd Wallis, Cpt. James Kutz, GeeGee Garrison, Joshua Parris; Front Row: Angela Dilling, Tabitha Spangler, David Greelish

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