



ASU student continues family legacy of service, juggling three different calls of duty

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Grant Navakuku serves in the National Guard, ROTC and Next Generation Service Corps

Arizona State University junior Grant Navakuku joined the Arizona Army National Guard to fulfill a family legacy of service but discovered it offered wonderful benefits — a chance to enhance his education and a pathway to further his career.

The education major is looking to land a job in postsecondary administration when he graduates next year. He keeps busy between his studies, his service with the National Guard and the ROTC and as a member of ASU's Public Service Academy as a Next Generation Service Corps member.

"My schedule is pretty hectic but you have to get it done somehow," said Navakuku, a 22-year-old Glendale native. "I wouldn't want my college experience any other way."

ASU Now spoke to Navakuku about his college experience before ASU, his military service and what he hopes to accomplish in the future.

Question: Before attending ASU, where did you go to college? What are the best and the worst aspects of your college career so far?

Answer: I attended Mesa Community College for two years before transferring to Arizona State University, and my time at MCC was great. I applied to MCC while attending basic combat training and advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri because I knew that school was a priority for me after my military training was done. Transitioning from Army training life to regular college life could have been difficult, but luckily MCC made it very smooth.

My first semester as a freshman I worked a full-time job and was a full-time student — this was the worst aspect of my college career because I was a little overwhelmed. I recall waking up at 5 a.m. so that I could make breakfast/lunch and get ready for my workday that started at 6:50 a.m. After work ended at 3 p.m., I took classes at MCC from 4 to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday. I repeated this routine until the end of the semester and ended up on the President's list. This accomplishment allowed me to see that succeeding in college was an attainable reality, no matter what the circumstances.

Q: What was your motivation for joining the Arizona Army National Guard and what have the last three years been like for you?

A: I enlisted in the Army for six years on Sept. 14, 2015. At that time, I joined the **Arizona Army National Guard** (<https://state.nationalguard.com/arizona>) because I did not know what path I wanted to pursue in life. Before MCC, I attended the University of Arizona and voluntarily dropped out prior to the completion of my first semester. Because of this I really needed to find something that would occupy my time. At that moment I didn't want to go back to school, and my current part-time job wasn't leading me anywhere, so the National Guard seemed to be the answer. Members of my family, such as my grandfather and uncle, had also been members of the military, so my enlistment also made me feel like I was carrying on a family legacy.

From my point of enlistment to present day, my time in service has been nothing short of eventful. In the Army, my leadership has always told me that to be successful you have to follow three rules: show up at the right place, at the right time and in the right uniform. I've adhered to this advice and so far, it has allowed me to become who I am today. I have been able to attend various training events, specialty schools and even represent the Arizona National Guard as a whole by being a member of the Arizona National Guard marathon team.

Q: What's your duty in the National Guard?

A: The National Guard's primary duty is to serve both community and country. The Guard responds to domestic emergencies, overseas combat missions, counterdrug efforts, reconstruction missions and more. Any state governor or the president of the United States can call on the Guard in a moment's notice, yet Guard soldiers' primary area of operation is their home state.

In the National Guard I previously held the job classification of 31B, which translates to a title of military police. The duty of a military police officer in the National Guard includes protecting the lives and property on Army installations by enforcing military laws and regulations. Now, as a cadet in the **ASU Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps** (<https://militaryscience.clas.asu.edu/>) program, my primary duty is to complete school and to develop myself as a leader of character who will provide selfless service to the nation.

Q: Do you intend to come back to the Guard as an officer or will you go active duty, and in what career field?

A: With my enrollment into the ASU ROTC program, I have committed to serving as an officer in the National Guard upon graduation from ASU. My service as an officer in the National Guard will allow me to pursue a master's degree in learning sciences.

I hope to serve in the Adjutant General's Corps as my first choice of branch in the Army. I will serve at all organization levels of the Army where they plan, develop and operate the Army's personnel management support systems, which is a vital responsibility in both peace and war. In the future, I hope to work in the Education Offices for the National Guard so that I may help soldiers use their educational benefits in a manner that both helps them pursue their interests and that uses the benefits to its full potential.

Q: You're also in the Public Service Academy's (<https://psa.asu.edu/>) Next Generation Service Corps (<https://psa.asu.edu/next-generation-service-corps>). Why did you decide to take that route?

A: I did not find the application for NGSC in the traditional manner that most members may have found theirs. I was actually forwarded an email by my supervisor. It said, "Hi Grant, please have a look at this program. I think you would be great candidate for it." From that email, I was intrigued so I looked into the program background, saw that their mission statement ran parallel to the path I was taking and decided to apply. After my application submission, I was interviewed then selected to be a member of the upcoming Next Generation Service Corps cohort. To answer the question directly, I chose the NGSC route along with ROTC because both of these program develop leaders through their curriculum. ROTC produces leaders for the military sector and NGSC produces leaders for the civilian sector, with that, there was no way I could let both opportunities pass me by.

Being a member of NGSC as well as a cadet in ROTC does put me in a unique situation. I have to wear three hats to school every day. I represent ASU as a student, the ROTC program and the U.S. Army as a cadet and the Next Generation Service Corps as an upcoming tri-sector leader. In regards to balancing all three obligations, being a student while participating in ROTC and NGSC, it requires forward planning, but my involvement does not hinder my potential for success in any program. The only difficulty I have is juggling my attendance to required events of the NGSC and the ROTC program, but like I said, that is easily accomplished by forward planning. What is great about both programs is that they are very

understanding about my service obligations to both. The director of NGSC is a prior Army officer and a prior cadet in ROTC, so, from his prior experience, he understands the obligations that I must fulfill for ROTC.

Q: What are your future goals?

A: After completion of **Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College** (<https://education.asu.edu/>) 4+1 program, receiving a bachelor's degree in educational studies and a master's degree in learning sciences by spring 2021, I hope to find a career back in postsecondary education. More specifically I hope to become a program director of a department such as **ASU's American Indian Student Support Services** (<https://aisss.asu.edu/>). This career would allow me to facilitate resources, not limited to Native Americans, that help students stay in school. Having a nonlinear educational career myself, my goal is to make every student's college experience as enjoyable and as stress-free as possible. I believe that this career would help me make this goal a reality.

Top photo: Education studies undergraduate Grant Navakuku poses for a portrait at the Tempe Fine Arts Center on Oct. 30, 2018. Navakuku is part of the Public Service Academy, ASU Army ROTC and the Arizona National Guard. Photo by Deanna Dent/ASU Now

*In celebration of Veterans Day, Arizona State University proudly honors veterans and active members of the military through **Salute to Service** (<https://veterans.asu.edu/salute-service>). Your support helps veterans succeed. Text ASUVets to 41444 to donate to the Veterans Education Fund or visit veterans.asu.edu (<https://veterans.asu.edu/>) to learn how you can honor a veteran.*

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