

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VITAL
VETERANS INTEGRATION TO ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

STUDENT VETERAN SERVICES

My name is Kahlil Eilo. I transitioned out of the Navy in 2019 where I was then accepted to my dream school. I knew the transition was going to be more difficult as immediately going from the military to a collegiate setting is a daunting culture shock and life change. Luckily, VITAL was there to help me with this transition, giving me the confidence and resources to connect with other veterans and like minded individuals and navigate the VA system.

The tail end of my first year was also the rise of the COVID-19 outbreak. With the support and confidence I gained from VITAL, I was able to handle school work while also help with COVID-19 efforts throughout the whole month of April 2020. To the right is me and my Marine classmate, Rachel Ballew, taking a moment to pose for a picture with the New York Presbyterian/Ryan F. Larkin Field Hospital bell which is at Columbia University's Baker Athletic Complex. It is the bell that patients rang after successfully fighting COVID-19 and discharging from the field hospital. It also the bell that we rang when we closed down field hospital operations.

Veteran's Integration to Academic Leadership gave me the confidence and support to transition from the military into student life while also actively fighting a pandemic. Without it, my first year at Columbia would have been immensely difficult. For that, I am forever in debted to the program.

For more information about VITAL or to learn how to connect to other student veterans, please contact Dr. Yvette Branson at Yvette.Branson@va.gov

