***1) What does it mean to you to be the Banner Bearer at commencement?***

Having the opportunity to be selected as the Banner Bearer at commencement would be a profound honor. To me, it means standing at the front not just as a symbol of academic achievement, but as a representative of resilience, lifelong learning, and second chances. As someone who returned to higher education after a long gap, I hope my presence will offer encouragement to those who are unsure of their place in higher education — especially nontraditional students who wonder if it’s too late to begin again.

***2) What unique characteristics do you bring in representing the College of Arts & Sciences?***

As a nontraditional student with a background in the U.S. Army and corrections, I bring a perspective forged by structure, service, and a deep sense of responsibility. My path has been anything but traditional, and I believe that makes me a fitting representative of the College of Arts & Sciences — a place where diverse experiences and viewpoints are not only welcomed but celebrated. My journey reflects discipline, empathy, and a commitment to justice — values that have shaped both my studies and my contributions to the university community.

***3) Did you overcome any challenges or adversity to get to where you are now? If so, tell us about them!***

When I first enrolled in college in 2011, I lacked the maturity and motivation to succeed. I approached higher education with the same casual attitude I had in high school, and it cost me dearly — I left with a severely damaged GPA and little to show for my efforts. I enlisted in the U.S. Army, and a decade later, I returned to college as a full-time corrections officer and father. To my surprise, I was still on academic probation from my early failures. I retook many of those courses while working full time and found that motivation had been the missing ingredient. I poured myself into my studies and quickly began to thrive — even while navigating a complex custody battle for my daughter, homelessness, and the demands of a job that has been anything but understanding of my educational challenges. Now, as I approach graduation with a 4.0 GPA, I am honored and blessed to carry not only the lessons of perseverance but a renewed belief in the power of education to reshape a life.