



THE "Before there is a Warfighter, there is a trainer" GRIFFON

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Army experiences position former officer for future successes

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Among her achievements are the following. She was the first woman selected as scout helicopter commander in her unit at Fort Drum. As her brigade commander's logistical and budget officer, she dealt with contracts, handled multimillion dollar deals, and did accounting. In Afghanistan for five months in 2003, she managed logistics, helping supply the battlefields. And as part of her logistical work, she subsequently prepared a brigade for deployment to Iraq.

After 11 years of service, this former Army officer decided to re-invent herself as a civilian. She has started on a path that bears many resemblances to her military life and that will enable her to build on the skills her military career helped her develop.

"In the Army, I met great people, had interesting experiences, and went through exciting adventures," she said. "I wanted to do something to continue the opportunities and rewards I had had in the military. For some time, I've had a serious interest in starting a business and think it will challenge me in a similar way."

Her first step is to complete a master's degree, even though her Army experience had already led to six-figure job offers.

"The kind of work I was doing paralleled private sector jobs that net people six figures," she said. "But rather than going right into business, I decided to get an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) from Florida International University."

It was a convenient choice since she and her family live in Miami, where her husband, also a former scout helicopter pilot and now a rescue pilot, is based.

Even the application process was difficult. In addition to her resume, she had to write essays and undergo an interview.

"I wanted a program in which I could learn from my fellow classmates and their intensity," Courtney said. "I knew that if it was highly competitive to get in, it meant I would be with quality people."

The program also requires eight years of management experience.

"My Army experience – which I wouldn't trade for the world – helped me get in," she said.

Once accepted, her graduate experience began with an intensive four-day team-building retreat at which the group of 28 – who will remain together throughout the program – got to know each other.

"I learned how my classmates think," she said. "There was great bonding and an element of trust. It was an excellent

way to start the program."

"Erica is an incredible addition to the group," said Sarah Perez, director of the Executive MBA at the University. "Her leadership skills are outstanding."

Though she has much to offer based on her knowledge of contracts, legalities, and making presentations, as well as her leadership, management, and accounting talents, Courtney also knows she has much to learn.

"Corporate America is new to me," she said. "I know very little about how it works. I know only a little about marketing, and though I

know accounting, I don't know much about math."

She credits a classmate with helping her improve her math skills.

"He's a GE engineer who was a physics tutor," she said. "The way he worked with me is an example of how we succeed as part of team, helping each other through our different strengths."

"This kind of diversity and team interaction is exactly what the program is all about," Perez said. "We look for candidates whose experience complements the others in the group. Erica brings a very different perspective from that of people who have come up through the business world."

For more information visit
www.fiu.edu.



Erica Courtney, former scout helicopter commander, in full battle gear.