

Valley Veteran *Beats* Breast Cancer, Homelessness TO EARN DEGREE



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BY SUSAN HAWKSWORTH

ARMY VETERAN Iantha Hutchinson — a breast cancer survivor — was living in a homeless shelter in Fresno as a result of financial hardships caused by medical treatment. An online community college student at the time, she learned about the Veterans Education Program at Fresno State and was encouraged to participate by Dr. Daniel Bernard.

THE PROGRAM GIVES VETERANS ACCESS TO RESOURCES AT FRESNO STATE AND CONNECTS THEM TO SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE CENTRAL VALLEY.

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Because of Hutchinson’s homelessness, Fresno State’s Division of Continuing and Global Education raised funds to house her in the campus dorms and to provide a meal plan while she completed the program.

For many Valley veterans, returning to civilian life can be a challenge emotionally, mentally and sometimes financially. And for Hutchinson, it was further complicated by a life-threatening health condition.

After many years of struggle and frustration in school, Hutchinson was diagnosed with dyscalculia, a condition sometimes known as math dyslexia in which it is difficult to comprehend arithmetic.

“Math was the most difficult of the subjects for me. But, because I was in a small class with Dr. Lance Burger [associate professor of mathematics], I was able to get insight into how my mind processed mathematical equations,” Hutchinson said.

“What a light bulb moment that was for me. I could now move forward with a personal understanding of what, for me, had been an impediment to my academic success. Most of all, I gained confidence.”

The support and encouragement of her Fresno State professors —Burger, Dr. James Mullooly, Dr. Gary Rice and Dr. Tim Skeen — renewed her hope and desire to pursue a degree in anthropology.

When she finished the Veterans Education Program, Bernard worked to gain her re-admission to California State University, Northridge. Soon thereafter, Hutchinson relocated to reconnect with family in the area, and graduated from Cal State Northridge with a bachelor’s degree in anthropology, proudly accessorizing her commencement attire with a Fresno State stole.

By successfully completing cohort-based classes focused on coursework necessary for admittance into the University, student veterans can transition to matriculated status. And while the Veterans Education Program was designed to offer veterans a parallel admission route into Fresno State; in Hutchinson’s case, the best pathway to graduation was returning to Cal State Northridge, where Hutchinson had previously attended. ☺

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