



# Alumni Spotlight

## Simmie Strausbaugh '13

**Simmie Strausbaugh '13** earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology from Millersville University and his experience made a transformative impact on his life. As a student at Millersville, Strausbaugh encountered compassionate, caring professors who challenged him academically while providing support and encouragement. Several faculty members who were exceptionally supportive were Dr. Justin García, Dr. Onek Adyanga, and Dr. Marlene Arnold, his academic advisor. According to Strausbaugh, it was these University faculty members who reflect "the very fabric of what Millersville is."



As a non-traditional student from Red Lion, York County, who commuted to class at Millersville University, Strausbaugh experienced opportunities for reflection while traveling and spending time on campus. "My experience was very unique and personal for me. It was an incredible adjustment, for one. Because I'm driving 40 minutes, leaving my kids at daycare, driving to class alone... A lot of reflection to and from Millersville... It was a real spiritual, intimate relationship with the University, and it was so quiet and it was so peaceful, and I could go to the Conestoga River and read, or I could go to the Sugar Bowl in the parking lot and read, and it was quiet."

Prior to attending Millersville University, Strausbaugh served nine years of active duty in the Air Force during the Gulf War era, during which time he completed multiple tours to the Middle East. After returning from military service, Strausbaugh eagerly enrolled in Millersville University and discovered a passion for anthropology. Strausbaugh recalls, "I was going to be in education and after having a class or two with Justin García, I just switched completely and went to anthropology. I wanted a deeper understanding of how I got here – how we got here to where we are. It helped me put it into perspective politically, socially, historically."

The compassion of the faculty at Millersville made a tremendous impact on enhancing Strausbaugh's time at the 'Ville. He recalls attending a class taught by Dr. Onek Adyanga, and the encouragement that Dr. Adyanga demonstrated in motivating him to produce his very best academic work. Strausbaugh's academic advisor, Dr. Marlene Arnold, played an extraordinary role in contributing to his academic achievements. "She was like the most patient individual with me. And no matter what I asked her, she always used the same tone, the same care. It really lessened my anxiety... She is an incredible human being. Lots of love and respect for her as a person."



Graduating from Millersville University was a momentous occasion for Strausbaugh: "my single greatest accomplishment at Millersville University was graduating. The journey and the amount of time and work that it took for me to do that was basically 19 years. The thought of graduating from college consumed me for 19 years. I remember filling out my graduation application in the spring of 2013... and I got emotional. I'm like, wow, I'm graduating!"

Strausbaugh feels that graduating from Millersville University surpasses any of his other major life experiences. "I was a sergeant in the Air Force, and I've been to pretty much every Middle Eastern country you can think of, but none of that, nothing that I've ever done in life is going to ever be more valuable and more fulfilling to my life than my degree from Millersville."

Currently, Strausbaugh works in administration for the federal government. He attributes his success to the beneficial lessons that he received at Millersville University, which he applies in daily life. "You never know what people are going through... You have to have compassion... Make them forget what's happening – even if it's just for three seconds – you're making a difference to that person." This perspective was inspired by his experiences at Millersville, he explains. "Sometimes you really can't put things into words, but I do know that I have taken and exercised a lot of my experience there in everyday life. And a lot of that had to do with the people."

