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Georgia Southern Eagle Battalion Commander to continue soaring after graduation

May 11, 2020



Mattie Cantrall said climbing a volcano in Africa is just one of several experiences she's had during her time at Georgia Southern that has prepared her for a career in the Army.

Mattie Cantrall has been soaring over obstacles for the past four years at Georgia Southern, but after graduating this spring with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Logistics, the Eagle Battalion Commander will take to the air again. This time in U.S. Army Air Assault School in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Graduation for Cantrall also means she will assume the second lieutenant rank and start her commission as an officer in the U.S. Army Transportation Corps. She'll undergo 16 weeks of training in Virginia before she heads to Fort Campbell, where she will become a cargo specialist and support combat arms as a member of the brigade support battalion.

Cantrall, a Parker Business Scholar whose major was logistics and intermodal transportation with a minor in military science, said her academic experience, as well as her time with ROTC, have prepared her for the next step in her career.

"The Parker College of Business academic program has pushed me further than I thought I could be pushed academically," she said. "I have learned how to compartmentalize information and comprehend, not just memorize and brain dump following an exam. ROTC on the other hand has pushed me past my limits in every aspect possible: physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically. I grew as a person."

Cantrall's experience at Georgia Southern went beyond the classroom and ROTC. As a cadet, she had the opportunity to travel the world, including a trip to Cabo Verde, Africa, where she hiked two volcanoes, rebuilt a local school, trained with the military and swam in beautiful waters. She said these experiences will not only help her professionally, but also personally to motivate her throughout her career.



Cantrall poses with a child during her trip to Africa.

“The climb was brutal at some points with rocks slipping beneath our feet and our legs cramping up,” Cantrall said. “The view at the top was breathtaking, looking 10,000 feet down at the ocean beneath you. The most incredible part was going down. As I move forward in my career, I can tell people about the pain and the struggle of going up the mountain, or I can tell them about the beautiful view at the top and the enjoyment and weightlessness of going down.”

Cantrall has also made some wonderful memories in Statesboro. As a part of color guard, she carried the nation's colors in Paulson Stadium before football games and represented the University during Georgia Southern Day at the Capitol in Atlanta.

The highest honor Cantrall received during her time as an Eagle, however, came in Kentucky at advanced camp, where she earned a Recondo Badge. Around 6,000 cadets go to the camp each year, where they must pass a series of tests to complete training. The tests include tactical combat casualty care, various firearm tests, land navigation, a timed 6-mile weighted run and the Army Physical Fitness Test. Cantrall

passed all her tests on the first try, while also hitting a higher standard on all of them. She is the first female cadet to earn Recondo since it was reinstated two years ago.

“This Recondo is for every female that did not think they could accomplish something,” Cantrall said. “I give all the credit to two groups of people: my platoon and all the females in my regiment. We studied together while sitting out in the middle of the woods, we paced each other on the 6-mile ruck march, and we extended a hand every time we started to feel beat down.”

With all of her accomplishments, Cantrall's favorite memory at Georgia Southern may be surprising to some.

“My fondest memory was in the fall of 2019 when the ROTC intramural softball team won the championship game,” she said. “There was no greater pride than to see the entire sideline packed with fellow cadets cheering on their teammates and battling back and forth until the final bat. That energy and comradery gave the energy in Paulson a run for its money.”

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