EDU
STUDENT

TAKING HIS SHOT

Navy veteran launches a business to help finance his post-military education at the University of Southern Mississippi.

CODY ABADIE, 26, loved what he did in the Navy. The Mississippi native fixed and maintained small arms and crew-served weapons, and taught other sailors how to use them. Assigned to the USS John C. Stennis, he served on the carrier’s defense team and on the security force when in port.

Now Abadie is using his love of firearms to help finance his bachelor’s degree in anthropology at the University of Southern Mississippi. Although he’s using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it doesn’t cover all of his expenses. So he started his own business, Diamondback Ordnance, which trains civilians how to safely operate different types of firearms. “We certify them through the NRA as well as certifying them for the enhanced concealed carry permit for the state of Mississippi,” Abadie says.

We picked Abadie’s brain about his transition from the Navy to a college campus, and his experiences as a student veteran. •
WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO SEPARATE?
Abadie: I was motivated to attend college and earn a degree from my favorite institution, the University of Southern Mississippi.

WHEN DID YOU BEGIN PREPARING FOR YOUR TRANSITION?
Abadie: I started preparing a year before departing the Navy. I spent time developing academic achievement goals, researching a university that best fit my ambitions and charting a course into the future.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH SCHOOL TO ATTEND?
Abadie: I did my research online, as well as read G.I. Jobs and sought advice from fellow veterans.

DOES THE POST-9/11 GI BILL COVER ALL OF YOUR EXPENSES?
Abadie: No it does not. I received a couple of scholarships. I’m also part of the VA work-study, and I started up my own business that I operate on the weekends for a little extra spending money.

WERE THERE ANY SURPRISES IN USING YOUR GI BILL?
Abadie: Yes, in order to receive full benefits, you must maintain a full-time schedule of 12 hours for the months you are attending. If you are taking a first eight-week class, your BAH will drop if you do not have another class to maintain 12 hours for the second eight weeks of class.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO MAJOR IN ANTHROPOLOGY?
Abadie: It is a discipline and career field that truly captured my imagination and interest. Besides that, I enjoy working outdoors rather than in an office.

WHAT IS YOUR CAREER PLAN/GOAL ONCE YOU ARE ARMED WITH YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE?
Abadie: I would like to serve as a cultural resource management archaeologist employed with the U.S. Forest Service or preferably at a battlefield park in the United States.

DO YOU PLAN TO ATTEND GRADUATE SCHOOL?
Abadie: Yes. I plan to pursue an advanced degree in archaeology at the University of Southern Mississippi.

DID YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTY ADJUSTING TO CAMPUS CULTURE?
Abadie: Yes I did. It was overwhelming at first, but I adapted and moved on with it. I also became a member of the Student Veterans of America on campus and they helped make the transition a little easier. I was also assisted by the staff at our Center for Military Veterans, Service Members and Families who were constantly available to assist me and all of our military students.
WHAT WAS IT LIKE ATTENDING CLASSES WITH YOUNGER CIVILIAN STUDENTS FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL?

ABADIE: I felt that I had an edge over them because of my military experience. I also blended into the younger civilian student crowd well because I look young for my age. Unless I told someone, they all thought I was an average student just like them.

ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH THE CAMPUS SVA?

ABADIE: Yes, I was the vice president last year. I am graduating this year, so I felt it best that someone else held the position so they could serve out a full term because I couldn’t. I am still an active member of the SVA.

ARE MANY OF YOUR FRIENDS ON CAMPUS FELLOW VETERANS?

ABADIE: Yes. I have a mixture of veteran and civilian friends in school. I find it really easy to meet and make new friends in school if you share similar interests. Most of my friends are either veterans or they are in the anthropology or history department.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS, DIAMONDBACK ORDNANCE.

ABADIE: I started it in April 2015. I honestly love teaching others how to shoot and I get bored on weekends and found it best to earn money doing what I love. I normally invest about 20 hours a week in business affairs.

I just hired two Army veterans to help me teach classes. I only employ those with military experience. It is my goal to have one of the only completely veteran-operated marksmanship academies in the state. I also hope we can start up our own gun range one day. We are all about giving back to the community as well so we donate $5 from every student we teach to a local veteran’s charity.

LOOKING BACK, WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR TRANSITION?

ABADIE: Not knowing what to expect out of college life.

IF YOU COULD DO IT OVER, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

ABADIE: I wouldn’t worry so much about college life. The skills I learned in the military allowed me to prosper in a university campus environment. My time as a sailor allowed me to mature and gain confidence in my ability to achieve any mission so presented.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENTS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING USING THEIR GI BILL?

ABADIE: I highly suggest they do it. I also suggest they choose a Military Friendly School like the University of Southern Mississippi, where people truly care about who you are, what you accomplished as a veteran and how they can help you achieve even greater success.

If you have a goal, go for it. It may seem difficult at first, but once things start in motion, it becomes really easy after you take the initiative.