

**Coding Key – Interview with Martin**

This transcript is coded using the following refined open codes:

- Family / Personal Motivation
- Career Planning / Transition
- Education Journey
- Military Background
- Community
- Mental / Physical Health

## Interview with Martin

**Martin:** Hey! Good morning!

**Mark:** How are you?

**Martin:** Good. Sorry again, man. I got called into the meeting, and I completely forgot everything when I'm in meetings. I also didn't have my phone to alert me when the meeting was supposed to start.

**Mark:** No worries, no worries. I understand. My name is Mark Anthony Brennan. I'm a doctoral student in the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching. I'm exploring veteran student experiences with CMAS here at UTSA. I have a little blurb that I must read quickly. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. Today, I'm working on a project focused on supporting veteran and military-affiliated students here at UTSA. This interview aims to understand your experience better using services from the Center for Military-Affiliated Students and your academic journey. Your feedback will help us shape future programming and training for faculty and staff. There's no right or wrong answer. Please share whatever you feel comfortable with, and you can skip any questions or stop anytime. Do I have your permission to continue with this interview?

**Martin:** Yes.

**Mark:** Awesome. Can you tell me a bit about your military background and what led you to pursue higher education at UTSA?

**Martin:** Yeah. So I entered the military after graduation in 2001. I kind of know what transpired. I blew my knee out, lost my baseball scholarship, and had no backup plan, so I said, "Well, I guess I'm going to the military." So that's kind of where that went.

*Themes: Military Background*

I ended up getting hurt while in Afghanistan, and I was medically retired in 2015. I had no intention of working or doing anything else again after that.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition, Military Background*

My oldest son graduated in 2021, and I was trying to motivate him. So I attempted to encourage him, saying, "Well, I'll go to school with you. Let's go." We both signed up, but he ultimately chose a different path.

*Themes: Education Journey, Family / Personal Motivation*

But at that point, I had already started. So now I had to finish because that's just internal. I can't just not finish something. So, yeah, here we are. A couple of years later, you know, I'm a senior. I'll graduate in December. Actually, it helped me a lot with my memory. I had a pretty bad TBI, which made it difficult for me to remember things unless they were in my calendar as reminders.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

You can almost guarantee I wouldn't remember conversations. So schools actually helped, you know, rectify those deficiencies.

*Themes: Education Journey*

End of spring, I said. You know. Obviously, you know what an internship would be like.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

I was a paralegal, and I'm doing cybersecurity now.

*Themes: Military Background*

So, I wanted to make sure that I would enjoy it. You know, I didn't even realize that I would be going back to work. I was just going because, you know, I get paid to go to school.

*Themes: Education Journey*

So, why not? You give me this free money. So, I interned at RBFCU and realized I had been missing that without knowing it. In October, USAA offered me a full-time position in IT, specifically IT risk and audit testing.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

It's like being a paralegal investigating matters but getting paid for it—talk about hitting the jackpot!

*Themes: Military Background*

That's what I'm doing now, and I'm still a full-time student. This semester is the first where I have a job, so I only took nine credit hours.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

I was worried about how it would go because during my internship over the summer, I was already adjusting to my classes by October. I had found a rhythm then, so I wasn't too concerned. I just wanted to ensure I could manage everything. It's been going great, and next semester, I'll finish my last twelve credit hours. After that, I'll probably take a semester off before starting my graduate degree.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Okay. Now, you said, you graduated in 2001. Just a follow-up to that. Where are you from?

**Martin:** Yeah, Rockport, Rockport, Texas.

**Mark:** So you're originally from Texas. And which branch of service?

**Martin:** Army.

*Themes: Military Background*

**Mark:** You were a paralegal in the army?

**Martin:** I was.

Yeah, I worked as a paralegal for most of the time, especially towards the end.

*Themes: Military Background*

I realized that I was going to get med boarded. I sort of figured that was going to happen since my back being blown out. And then my PTSD was worsening, which made me feel that it was coming, so I made an effort to reclassify to 25 Bravo!

*Themes: Education Journey, Mental / Physical Health*

Because you know, automations and that kind of stuff is where the money is. You know, I'm not going to make money as a paralegal.

*Themes: Military Background*

I'll get 50- 60k at most, you know, but there's no life in that. So I wanted to plan ahead and think about what could set me up. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, I had a TBI. I was the honor grad. I could score hundreds on all my tests, but as soon as we started something new, I couldn't remember what the hell we had just done.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

After a while, you know, I took over as a battalion S-6, and I didn't know what the hell to do. I was like, I don't know what's going on here. At that point, I finally realized and accepted that I needed to get out. So I talked to my battalion surgeon, and this was the first time we ever spoke. He said, Okay, this is what we're going to do: we're going to med board you. But I said, Hold on! This is the first time I've ever talked to you! He goes. Your medical records were screaming that you need to be med boarded, but you would never let it go and fought it. So when you're ready, seize the opportunity. I was like, Well, shit. Okay. So that's kind of where that went.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health, Military Background*

**Mark:** What was your transition from military service to college life?

**Martin:** Well, there was a 9-year gap, and so when I got out of the military, I was chunking deuces like it. It was. I was in Sergeant Major's faces, cussing them out because they talked to me wrong; it was pretty bad, so I stayed away from everything.

*Themes: Military Background*

**Martin:** I went there for all intents and purposes. A recluse didn't really leave the house. I gently started getting out. I became a den leader with the Cub Scouts and then a cub master. So, I'd get out, and I realized that helping the kids kind of helped me, too.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

That was my transition back into the normal people world.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

When we got here, it was probably about a year after we arrived in San Antonio before I took the plunge for school. It was a little difficult. You know, a 20-year gap of not doing math takes its toll on you. I took a college business math class, and I was like, "Dude, I remember FOIL, that's about it." I found it funny; they ask, "What's PEMDAS?" I don't know what the hell PEMDAS is. So, I was with the tutors during that first semester a lot. I just needed help with that one class; the other class I could handle. You know, I took English, which was writing, and I did well in writing. But with the math stuff, I'd probably say I was with tutors at least 8 to 10 hours a week, in addition to my full class load. I spent a lot of time there, to the point where they all knew my name. So, that was pretty rough, especially with the break. But I've been successful with all my upper-level classes; I'm maintaining a 4.0 GPA there, even though I have B's in a lot of my core classes because it had been so long since I studied them. Texas history that's ingrained in our heads. I didn't study at all for that and ended up with a 104 in the class.

*Themes: Education Journey*

The kids were like, "How the hell do you do this?" I was like, "Dude, it was a different ball game when I was a kid.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

Texas history is drilled into you like Nazi Germany." I just naturally remembered that stuff from sixth grade. You know, it's like you don't study.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** All the history of Texas was a bit of a shocker for me, coming from another state.

**Martin:** Oh, yeah. I don't think any other core classes really gave me a problem. It was just the math, and I had taken Precal in high school, and you know I only finished my math as a junior, so add one year from how long it's been since I've done math, and you know. Who knows what would have happened if I had taken that math placement test? I probably would have taken seven types of remedial math before I could even take college algebra. So just that part was a learning curve for getting back to studying. I've never been a big proponent of studying, even in high school. I have natural intelligence that allows me to pass, and I've taken advantage of that in every way, shape, and form, so with college. To me, college is not difficult.

*Themes: Education Journey*

And I say that because our life experiences make this seem like nothing. I talked to some of these kids and stuff, and I'll tell them, you know, I really admire you all for doing this full time at your age while managing a full-time job to pay for things, you know. That's commendable.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition, Family / Personal Motivation*

I could never have done that, you know. Looking at it from here, at 42 with a wife and 4 kids, I recognize all the distractions that prevent me from doing that.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

But I see the challenges. At my age, I can only imagine the pressure a 19-year-old feels, navigating life on his own, trying to resist the temptation to have fun with friends because he has to study.

*Themes: Education Journey*

For me, it's easier to come home and engage in this process. It's more straightforward for me, with my experience and my full-time job in the military; we've been trained to absorb a lot of this information easily. and you learn how to listen.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition, Military Background*

You learn by listening to the teacher. You discover that you don't have to study much. That's kind of where I've been. Now I have a 3.67; I mean, that's good enough for me, considering I haven't been in school for two decades. But these kids are really on it, and I make sure to tell them every chance I get when we have a conversation like this. Usually, it starts at the beginning of the year. They think I'm the professor, and I'm like, no, I'm just a student, man.

*Themes: Education Journey*

And then we start having those conversations like dude hats off to y'all man. 100 full-time jobs going full-time student, like I never would have been able to. I would have failed. The hell outta here.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

**Mark:** To confirm, are you still working on your undergrad?

**Martin:** Yeah, yeah. I'll graduate in December.

**Mark:** Were there any good or bad surprises when you 1st started here at UTSA?

**Martin:** You know, actually, yeah, the first semester I started in the summer, which was probably shock number one: understanding the pace of a mini-mester. They're not, you know, they're 10 weeks; they're shorter. I guess a mini-mester would be considered an eight-week or a five-week course. But yes, I took a 10-week class, and it was a core class. The instructor basically sent us a welcome email saying, "I know you're just taking this class because you have to." Yeah, and just like, la la. It was like, dude, I'm sorry you chose your profession. I mean, don't take that out on me. He taught the class as if he had a chip on his shoulder; all his lectures were just pictures of him traveling around the world. "I'm flying a plane here. are these types of clouds. I'm traveling around here. Oh, here's this kind of rock." You know, that's really all it was. The tests and everything seemed designed as if we were that profession, and it was just really weird. So that was my first, like, what the heck is going on here experience. And then, of course, this was during COVID time. So not only was it summer, but it was COVID too, so you're at home.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** So you started during COVID?

**Martin:** Yes. And so, yeah, I'm all over the place like, what the hell's going on here? And so the next semester is. When they started opening up the school so that fall.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Martin:** And that's when I started talking to some of the other students.

*Themes: Community*

And that's where, like, Hey, dude, you need to get rate Myprofessor I'm like, what are you talking about? Of course, I don't know anything about them. They'll yeah. They had, you know. You can find reviews and stuff of the professors to find out who you like. and I have gone on there.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Anything else? Have you had any other good or bad experiences?

**Martin:** Yeah, I got involved in some organizations that really helped, you know, as a vet. You feel like an outsider, and they have SVA there on campus, and I got really into SVA. At the time, we only had about five members, and I made a big push. I was the recruiting chair, and I made a big push, and we increased it to about 80-something.

*Themes: Community*

**Mark:** Yeah. But you know, that's a shame if you think about it, 80 members out of 1,600 students.

**Martin:** The problem is, you couldn't get them [members] to do anything either. So even when, yeah, we signed up 80 people. And you know they all paid 20 bucks or whatever, but then you can't get them. Do anything like dude. Let's go out and go have drinks. We'll have a drink a as an organization, because we're not affiliated with the school, and then we couldn't even get them to do that. Like, the whole purpose is ourselves. Yeah, shoot at the range or something, you know, like. But yeah, it was one of those things, and then it kind of went sideways. I notice there's a generational gap even inside the veteran community. You can tell who is a 1-termer versus who's done more than one term. Despite looks, you know you're older. Okay, so he might be, you know, more than one term. He's young; he might be. He just did his four and got out. You can tell the difference because most of the one-termers wear that veteran badge like it's a badge of honor, and gimme gimme gimme 'cause I'm a vet. The older guys, if you've done more than one, generally say, like, leave me alone. I don't want to talk to anybody. I just want to keep to myself. And so that became a huge issue inside the organization. So I said I'm not here for this crap, and I just went ahead and left it. It's been, you know, scooting along and struggling since then. From my understanding, it's still live. I've talked to, you know, Mike Logan, and he said it's still live. They kind of merged the CMASs, or maybe not the CMASs. But what's her name? The other organization that got initiated inside the MAC; they merged MAC and SVA together. Now it's just SVA, but I mean, other than that, you know, it's tough as an older guy because you can't do the things that the younger

ones can do to build those relationships. And then even as an older guy, if you could, well, I'm talking to a 20-year-old.

*Themes: Community*

You know, like the 20-year-olds are going to get in at the same time I do, unless he's some genius and moves up quickly, or he has somebody. You know, if his daddy runs the company, he's going to slip in as VP, you know. Am I really going to need a 20-year-old know-it-all? It's kind of a, you know, a catch-22 and a struggle on our end.

*Themes: Career Planning/Transition*

**Mark:** So, how did you 1st hear about CMAS?

**Martin:** Yeah. So let's see. it would have had to have been the 1st full semester. So I would say the fall of 21, I was unaware that I know exactly what it is. I got a ticket. I got a ticket, that's what it was. I got a ticket for parking in the wrong spot, and I was pissed off because there wasn't an I said I had a handicap placard, and there was only like four handicap spots, and I didn't know where I could and couldn't park, because, you know, this is 1st semester. And so I parked in one right next to the handicap one with my, you know, parking pass in my handicap placard, and they gave me a ticket and I was pissed. So I went. I said. There's got to be a veteran office. And so that's how I found CMASs, I said. Hey, I got this damn ticket man. They ain't no freaking, parking spots. How am I supposed to park Yada Yada Yada? And so that's kind of how I found CMASs. And then I figured out what they did and how they helped, and you know I've leveraged them as needed. So it wasn't a free parking spot; I parked in an employee parking area with my handicap placard next to a handicap spot because all the others were taken. I acknowledge that I parked incorrectly. It's just frustrating that there weren't more handicap spots; that's really all it was.

*Themes: Community*

**Mark:** They're sprinkled around the spots, and you just got to get lucky.

**Martin:** Yeah, I now know all my spots. I have a routine: I go around campus here, and I know where to jump to now. But you know, that first semester, I didn't know any better. I mean, they ended up waiving the ticket, the pops. They waived the ticket and stuff, so I haven't done it since. But yeah, that's how I found CMAS, and you know, I've been a huge proponent of the vet programs they're promoting. I've done everything I can to help. If I couldn't assist him, I pushed him to CMAS; you know, there is a plethora of information. Last semester, I actually worked in CMAS.

*Themes: Community*

Mike suckered me because I owed him. He hooked me up and helped me out with a professor who was doing shady crap, and he went up to the Dean level. That professor ended up getting thrashed because he was doing things he wasn't supposed to do. It was a summer class, and it was supposed to be a Tuesday-Thursday class, but he said, 'No, I'm gonna make it Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday in person; and if you don't come, okay, I can't do anything, but I'm teaching testable stuff on Monday,

Wednesdays, and Fridays also.' So you're missing three of the five days now, and the class is only on Tuesday and Thursday, so I told them, you know, like I said, you can't do that. It's like here's what the school says.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Yeah, no, I am sorry.

**Martin:** Here's the situation: I have another class during those times. What the hell! And so it went back and forth, back and forth, you know, and it got to the point where I was getting so ticked off that I said screw it. I asked for Mike's help, and that's how we pushed it up, which went up a couple of levels and reached the Dean. The Dean reprimanded them, saying, "You cannot do that. They gave me a withdrawal so that it wouldn't be on my record." They allowed me to swoop in a little late on another 5-week class for that same course in the second half of the summer, and of course, I got an A+ in it. So I was like, see what happens whenever I can see and hear everything. So it was that kind of situation.

*Themes: Education Journey*

I told Mike I owed him one, and finally, he called, saying he needed my help with all the time cards for the student workers. He said, "You're not gonna work up front. I just want you to run the student workers, alright?" So that's what I did. You know I did a semester, and then I got the job at USAA. I said, "Hey, I know you. But I got a big job." Over he goes. "Yeah, go, man." So he still keeps me on the payroll, so I have an open contract in case they ever need me to do anything. I don't work, but I have an allocated number of hours that I can work, where the VA will pay, and he's just keeping it open every semester until I'm, you know, gone essentially. That way, if he ever needs me, he can call me, and I can get reimbursed for it.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

**Mark:** Awesome. What services or support have you used through CMAS

**Martin:** Through CMAS. I don't know if I've used any services through them that I go to. I go to their events periodically. I mean, more so before the job. When they hosted events, like the one from the Wounded Warrior Project, where they had, I think, a resume event, I went to that. What other ones? There have been a few I can't think of off the top of my head. I've also engaged with communities like that.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

Yeah, I've also taught a class for them. Mike's doing a four-part leadership summit, and I taught the first one of those. He said he's probably going to want me to do another one. So, you know, I'm involved in both sides of things. I give my leadership perspective, and the intent and goal behind that is to provide staff, faculty, and other interested students with a leadership experience through a military mindset. This way, they can see how we handle things and how we accomplish tasks. Then we can have an open discussion about how things differ and help each other grow on both ends.

*Themes: Community*

**Mark:** Awesome. How has CMAS impacted your experience at UTSA?

**Martin:** I'd say both positive and negative. Early on, there were some issues, and it was just butting heads—stay out of my lane type thing. This is student business, and that's when I was an SVA. So if I hadn't been an SVA, that never would have happened.

Finally, I left the organization, which calmed things down. Then I finally said, screw it, and let things go. Let bygones be bygones, and I approached everything with a clean slate. I mean, it's been completely positive since then. Even when it was tense, I still engaged with them, and the interaction with my needs never suffered. So, even with that friction, it was isolated to this; it never carried over to anything else.

*Themes: Community*

**Mark:** Is there a particular moment or an event from CMAS that has stood out to you?

**Martin:** We got a lot of information. That's another event. It wasn't a hiring fair, but USAA was there. Well, they didn't really stay; they came, but it was kind of sprinkly. So the guy stayed for about 2 minutes and then left. However, DAV was there.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

**Mark:** Is that the fair they put on, like in the spring?

**Martin:** Yes, it's towards the back, with all the different people. You get all kinds of information like the women veteran people, the red, white, and whatever people, all, all the different resources and stuff

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

**Mark:** I'm gonna just switch gears a little bit to academic and campus life. Have you faced any challenges in the classroom related to your veteran identity or background?

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Martin:** Like being targeted or negatively impacted. Because I'm a vet

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Martin:** I wouldn't say directly. I wouldn't even say indirectly. I'm aware of what I say. Let's put it this way: I'm cognizant of it, and you can tell which way certain professors lean. And so it wasn't anything that they put on me. It was. It was something that I would put on myself so that there was no issues, because, you know, most vets are very, very firm in their beliefs. Most vets have no problem saying what we want to say, and I've caught myself a couple of times getting into it, you know, and and you know how the whole ad is. You know, college is a cesspool of mimicking others ideas a lot of the times. And you know, the groupthink stuff. And so you'd start getting after. And you know very quickly I'd be the only one with this side of it, and you have a whole class against you, I'm like, I don't care. Let's go. I am very good at debating, and when I have an opinion on something, I'm usually very familiar with what we're talking about.

*Themes: Education Journey*

It wasn't only because this person told me; for instance, I remember one conversation regarding the entire Israel and Hamas-Palestine issue.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

They were like, "Oh, Palestine, Palestine, Palestine." I'm like, look! I'm not going to take sides one way or the other. But let me tell you something: these guys have been fighting for millennia. Do you think anything you're going to do right now will solve this? Oh, I'm walking around with a Palestine flag. What's that going to do? Nothing? Oh, I'm gay from Palestine. Okay, go over there, watch them kill you because you're gay. You know, it's like, what are you all thinking about that kind of stuff? Oh, I'm offended. You're offended by the truth. I mean, it's like, come on. I have to calm down because I'll get into it. I have no problem standing toe to toe with anybody, so I've caught myself a few times, especially in politics class.

*Themes: Education Journey*

You know, I might even say something and engage, because that's what they want. They want the engagement; they want to talk. A couple of people have counterpoints, and I just won't prove them wrong. I said, okay, I expressed my thoughts, and while you might say something, I could tell you that you're wrong. I could explain why you're wrong, but I just let you have it. Whatever, it's fine. So that's kind of how I calm myself. But, you know, like I said, I wouldn't say directly, like a teacher, saying, "Oh, he's a vet, you know," is negative. If anything, it'd be more of a positive. You know, sometimes if I need it, I get it. I'm also SDS, so they have to give me certain leniencies.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

Anyway, if I'm late, I have to get time and a half for all my quizzes and tests, you know. They have to consider giving me at least 3 days on an assignment or whatever, and most I've never had a teacher not comply. But you know, I've also tried not to take advantage of it. Now, I will tell that usually upfront in the first of the classes.

*Themes: Education Journey*

Hey, sir? My name is Martin. I'm SDS. These are my things that I get. The only thing I'm going to ask of you is for guaranteed time and a half for tests or quizzes because it usually takes me multiple times to read the question to understand what's being asked. Beyond that, I've rarely used the late work submission option, and I think I've only used it twice in my entire college experience. I started, and one of those times was because I was going to the American League Championship game, and my teacher was an Air Force captain who'd gotten out. I said, "Look, ma'am. I know I'm not supposed to use it for this, but I'm going to Aoc. Can I have late days?" And so she ended up allowing it late for everybody. So it wasn't really just me, but that was one of the two. The other time, I truly had an issue. I was having some bad times, and I asked for a few days, and he gave me a week, and you know, that was that. But I usually try not to abuse it.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

**Mark:** What could professors do to be more supportive of veteran students?

**Martin:** I don't know if you know this, but I hope you might be able to help me with this. When professors have college rosters, do all of our pictures show up?

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Generally, yes. If a student has had their photo taken, it should show up on the roster. But, I do not think we are identified as 'Veteran' students.

**Martin:** Right? No. And that's fine. And it kind of gets to that point. Because if you're older, okay, maybe he's just coming back to school, or maybe they're a vet. You know what I'm saying

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Right.

**Martin:** But this may not be vet-specific, at least not for a 19-year-old. Specific professors look at those pictures to see who they're talking to. I've been talked down to quite a bit, and then I have to incorporate. Hey? I'm 40 freaking years old, Guy; you know I'm not a 19-year-old kid. When I tell you this, I'm speaking as someone who has college-age kids, and you know that kind of communication has to happen, you know. I don't want to put people in their place, you know, because I obviously say yes, sir, yes, ma'am, even if they're younger. I've had professors younger than me. So yes, sir, yes, Manning, you know, because you're in a position of authority. I will respect that. But I'm not a kid you can talk down to as if I were a college professor and you know, a high school junior. You're not going to talk down to me, and I'll be quicker in a heartbeat, because at the end of the day, do I need this? No.

*Themes: Education Journey*

That'd be a big one, to at least identify a picture and the age bracket you're talking to regarding veteran specifics. I don't really know. In my experiences, I haven't had any negative issues being a veteran; nobody has treated me poorly, unlike the stereotype of the Vietnam baby killer. So, beyond knowing the age of the person you're discussing, I really have no complaints about the professors.

*Themes: Education Journey, Family / Personal Motivation*

**Mark:** I'm glad. Have you taken any classes where you felt especially included or seen as a veteran?

**Martin:** My American politics class!

*Themes: Education Journey*

I think that has to do with... Oh, you know what? There are two things, I think, that that particular class had a lot to do with. One is politics. The professor was a retired O-5 in the

Navy, and he was a Navy intel guy. So, a lot of the topics were right up that alley, and I'd be able to talk, and we'd be able to, you know, talk on the same level.

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** That was Poll 1013, right?

**Martin:** Yes, I believe that's the course name. Yeah. And so, you know, we'd be able to associate different things with different aspects. The kids would actually listen and think, "Oh, that's kind of cool," you know, like, "I wouldn't have thought of it that way." So, we were able to have that kind of discussion. There was another one; I can't remember what class it was, but there was one that didn't necessarily focus on veteran-type topics. It was one where the professor asked me to take the lead in the class and help people out. I just can't remember which class it was. I remember him saying, "Hey, you got a lot of leadership experience, like, try to help them out if you could." And yeah, no problem. So, I kind of guided the crew. I guess you can say, "Hey, we need to do this kind of stuff," you know, like, kind of like teaching, but without teaching. But I just can't remember which class it was.

*Themes: Education Journey*

As I mentioned, it wasn't related to politics at all. While politics can somewhat connect to veteran issues, this particular instance did not. It was simply because I was a veteran and could manage the kids effectively.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

**Mark:** Okay! So, I have six questions left, and the following three questions are on mental health. They're totally optional; you don't have to answer them. But have you experienced PTSD or moral injury during your academic journey?

**Martin:** Like when you say, was an incident that gave it to me, or a trigger from my previous?

**Mark:** Triggered during your previous

**Martin:** So at the beginning, it was kind of rough with so many people. You know, you're not used to those 200-person auditoriums. And I'm a heavier dude, so sitting in those small desks was already uncomfortable. It was a learning curve. You've got all these people around you, and you're doing the whole looking around thing. One of my SDS preferences is being able to pick where I sit, and that's mine, too.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

Most professors let us do that, so I usually sit in the back row, not necessarily because nobody's behind me, but because the back row usually has tables with chairs.

*Themes: Education Journey*

It's more comfortable. If I'm comfortable sitting down, it allows everything else to ease off. But if I'm already uncomfortable and agitated with everybody around me, it doesn't

help. However, I've gotten fairly used to it and have come a long way in these last four years regarding those kinds of symptoms. I'm okay now. The transition was just early on; I went from cussing out Sergeant Majors to not doing anything and being nowhere for nine years.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health, Military Background*

Suddenly, you're in college with a bunch of kids, and they ask when something's due, and you just want to say, "look at the fucking syllabus."

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** What helped you manage those challenges while attending college?

**Martin:** Yeah. I think it would be more about focusing my attention on it. I stared at my computer and tried to zone everything out, you know.

**Mark:** Did SDS help accommodation-wise?

**Martin:** Yes, the accommodations definitely help. Oh, yeah, definitely. And you know, even knowing that I have the ability to turn things in late reduces that kind of pressure. Yeah, I mean it. It went okay. And the time and a half was a hundred percent a saving grace, because there are quite a few tests that I wouldn't have finished just because, you know, I'm having to reread questions. And you know, even with the PTSD and the TBI, my brain tends to wander, and I have ADHD on top of everything else, you know. So my brain would wander, and I would try to get back to it, and you find yourself rereading the question again, and you have to reread the answers again. You know, it just goes back and forth. So that was definitely a blessing. I would definitely not be where I am in my academic career right now, and definitely not with the GPA, if I didn't have you know that SDS accommodation with tests and quizzes

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

**Mark:** What do you wish more people on campus understood about PTSD or moral injury?

**Martin:** It's not a crutch or stigma. And you know, there are different kinds of PTSD, or different levels. Personally, I'm rated a hundred percent just for PTSD. I mean, I think you can tell just by talking to me right here that I'm not gonna kill you, you know? And there's that stigma. But at the same time, they need to understand that there are consequences to your actions, and that's something that society has gotten away from with the invention of social media. Everybody's so used to saying whatever the hell they want, and then you get that one vet who's right there, and he says something, and guess what? You're on the ground crying because he clocked you, and you know that that's PTSD, right?

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

There's like, hey, this is not social media; this is in-person.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

And if you challenge me, you're going to find that challenge right back. At the same time, vets are usually very nice, and they're often willing to help; no matter what, they'll give you the shirt off their back. PTSD does not change that. All PTSD does is make me snap at you if you talk shit, you know. Really, I mean, that's what it boils down to. Don't run your mouth, and there ain't nothing. We'll get along great.

*Themes: Mental / Physical Health*

**Mark:** What advice would you give new veteran students coming to UTSA for their 1st semester?

**Martin:** Definitely get involved in organizations. I think over the years, I've participated in maybe 6 or 7 of them, and I'm still connected to some, even if I'm not an active participant.

*Themes: Community*

It's mainly due to my age and having kids to pick up from school or take to football games or whatever, so I can't do everything.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

But I am still associated with them. For new students, especially younger ones without family, getting involved in organizations related to your degree plan as quickly as possible is important.

*Themes: Community, Family / Personal Motivation*

Doing this will help you make friends and connect with like-minded people, and it will aid in your transition since you'll usually have freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors there who have taken these classes and can help you. So that's a huge opportunity.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition, Education Journey*

Another recommendation would be to get a daily planner. What I do is gather all my syllabi for the classes I'm taking and plan out my tasks by day for each class for the entire semester. Before the first day of class, I already know what homework I'm doing on Monday, what I'm doing on Tuesday, and I have my tests noted. This way, I can block out my schedule accordingly. That really helped me immensely because I was able to remember things and not miss assignments as a result. Then, I just make a little square next to each task and check it off when I complete it, which gives me a sense of accomplishment. For instance, if it's Wednesday and I see I only have one assignment due for Friday, I can decide to get it done now. So, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday off. Hell, yeah! That would probably be the second suggestion I have.

*Themes: Education Journey*

The third point would be to contact CMAS and find points of contact for others who can help you obtain every debt-related benefit available.

*Themes: Community*

There are certain aspects, like student loans, for example. Most veterans don't take out student loans, and many don't apply for the Pell Grant, which is essentially free money, you know? It's just that when my colleges pay for tuition, who cares?

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Yeah, no, there's a ton of other scholarships. If you could design one thing to help veteran students succeed, what would it be?

**Martin:** I could design something. I don't know if I'd actually design anything; I probably should have done this while I was working there. However, I would likely enhance the CMAS website.

*Themes: Community*

Instead of having this introductory welcome meeting for vets, he could have an all-encompassing tab listing every possible benefit available to veterans. They do offer some benefits, such as free passes to the parks in Texas, but there are little nuances that people often don't know about. For instance, I'm a tech guy, and there's a program called Vets and Tech that covers training for certifications like Security Plus; they even pay for vouchers. They provide various opportunities, including funding for your PMP or CISSP certifications, as well as boot camps. You know?

*Themes: Education Journey*

**Mark:** Super expensive.

**Martin:** Well, yeah, so that's one of those things that, you know, could be huge. And then there's the resume workshop, you know.

**Mark:** What role should veteran voices play in shaping UTSA programs and policies?

**Martin:** I don't know if we should have any specific role. I have a different view of veterans than many do. I don't believe we deserve anything. We took a job we don't deserve. I don't think I deserve any special treatment; I dislike DEI. I want to get a job based on my abilities, not because of my race, not because of my gender, not because of my sexual orientation, and not because I'm a veteran.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

To me, that's a handout, and I'm more than a handout. While I know this kind of drifts away from the CMAS organization, that's Mike's responsibility, not mine.

*Themes: Community*

My job shouldn't require me to voice my opinion as a separate kind of person.

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition, Family / Personal Motivation*

I hate when people segregate themselves, you know, like you have. You know, I'm Mexican. I'm a first-generation American, and I don't go to, you know, the Hispanic-only room. Should there be a black-only room? No? Well, I feel comfortable there. Why?

Why does that make you feel comfortable? Why does segregating yourself create a sense of comfort? And in that same sense, being a veteran is just a category. Do we have a veterans' room? Sure, we have a veterans' room, and who usually uses it? Other kids who aren't veterans, you know, and I don't mind, you know.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

Some do, some don't. But that's just my perspective. You know, I see the whole thing. I don't know, just people looking for special treatment. I get into it all the time with people, with other vets, you know. I don't care, like, what? Why do you deserve more? Because you chose to do this job?

*Themes: Career Planning / Transition*

Yeah, did we defend the country? Okay. But we chose to defend the country. We're not Israel, where you're mandated, you know, four years in service; we choose to do it.

*Themes: Military Background*

And so, I don't know. It's just me that you're probably not gonna get an answer on that one. You know we're kind of looking for, but that's just my view, and I know it's usually not the popular view amongst our community.

*Themes: Community*

But that's how I look at things, and it stems from wanting to earn my own stuff. I don't want to be given it for any specific reason.

*Themes: Family / Personal Motivation*

**Mark:** Thank you, I appreciate it. Well, that was all the questions that I had. I really appreciate your time. Any other concluding thoughts before

**Martin:** Go, army, be navy.

*Themes: Military Background*

**Mark:** Cool. Well, I appreciate it, **Martin**. Have a great rest of your Friday.

**Martin:** Hey? You, too, man! Take it easy.

**Mark:** Thanks. Appreciate it.

**Martin:** Bye.