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Professor Deployed to Iraq

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A University of Dayton political science professor is trading in the classroom for the battlefield.

Grant Neeley, director of the University's master of public administration program, leaves Friday, May 21, to begin training and preparation for a one-year deployment to Iraq.

Neeley is a public affairs officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve but will serve with the Army as an individual augmentee for U.S. Forces-Iraq. Working out of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, his duties will include media outreach and strategic communication.

In addition to assisting reporters and media outlets in covering military activities in Iraq and gaining access to the troops, he will help foster communication between key leaders in Iraq and the U.S. government.

"This is a great opportunity for me to put into practice what I teach in the classroom," Neely said. "It will be a learning experience that I'll be able to share with my students about how to work with the media, how to tell the government's story through the media so the citizens know what's going on."

Neeley previously served as an infantry sergeant in the Army National Guard from 1986-92. He joined the Navy Reserve as an officer in 2002 following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

"After 9/11, I felt like I wanted to serve my country and offer the skills I had as a professor in public administration," Neeley said. "I had a good idea at the time I would probably be called into active duty, but I hadn't envisioned we'd be involved in two different conflicts for so long. But when you agree to serve, you do that knowing that you can be mobilized, even if you're a reservist and a professor."

Neeley will first spend four weeks training in the U.S. with the Navy and Army. He will then fly to Kuwait and eventually Iraq where he will spend 350 days on active duty. He expects to return to the University to resume teaching for the 2011 fall semester.

"We certainly are going to miss Grant's presence this year and admire his service to the country," said Jason Pierce, chair of the political science department. "We wish him well in the months ahead and look forward to welcoming him home to UD. I know he'll return with all sorts of insights and stories that will enrich his classes."

Pierce appointed associate professor Nancy Miller as interim director of the MPA program and has distributed Neeley's teaching responsibilities among the department's faculty.

"The University has been great from the minute I learned about the mobilization, from my colleagues in the political science department to the dean's office to the provost's office," Neeley said. "And most importantly, they have been concerned about my family."

Neeley joined the University of Dayton faculty in 2005 and lives in Oakwood with his wife and daughter.

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