

# The Gazette

## Upper Iowa helps soldiers continue education

By Diane Heldt

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Despite serving one year in Korea and nearing the finish line on his second tour of duty in Iraq, Army Sgt. Isaac Hayman has made progress on his bachelor's degree in business administration.

The 29-year-old California native has taken classes through Upper Iowa University for about four years — both in person at his Army base in Kansas and later via online and independent study modes — during his time in the Army, which he joined in 2005.

“I’ve been able to get so much college done being out of the country,” Hayman said last week via telephone from Iraq. “It’s my peace of mind.”

Students who continue higher education while serving in the military are a growing market for many colleges and universities, made possible by the flexible night and weekend schedules of distance and online learning.

Upper Iowa, with its main campus in Fayette, has a substantial online and distance-learning population. The school also has learning centers at three Army bases in Kansas and Louisiana and will soon open a fourth in Oklahoma. Of the school's nearly 6,600 total enrollment, officials say about one-sixth are from the military, either on military bases here or abroad, or serving overseas.

The school is happy to have the strong connection, said Bill Duffy, senior vice president of academic extension. And often it's not just the soldiers who are served by the educational offerings, but also their families stationed with them at bases, he said.

“The type of programs we offer are very flexible and can adapt to whatever their situation is,” Duffy said. “We understand they're serving the country and we're very sensitive to that.”

Hayman knew when he went to Iraq that taking the normal online classes might not mesh with his schedule running missions. So he signed up to take a class via a six-month independent study method, which can be completed at the student's pace. His post is at Joint Base Balad, about three hours north of Baghdad. He is scheduled to come home in about 10 days.

Studying and doing class work was his sanctuary, he said.

“It is the quiet time of the day,” he said. “The point of my day when I’m actually involved with something that I know is getting me ready for bigger and better things.”

Hayman’s parents moved to a farm outside of Des Moines a few years ago. When he returns from Iraq, he will spend a few months finishing his Army service in Kansas. He plans to take Upper Iowa courses there, then transfer to the university’s Des Moines campus.

“I’m already registered as a student there,” he said.