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AFLCMC-Hanscom captain selected for PhD program

By Mark Wyatt, 66th Air Base Group Public Affairs / Published September 21, 2016



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Capt. Samuel Jones, chief of the advanced capabilities section in the Special Programs Division, is one of three Air Force captains who will pursue a fully funded doctorate degree at one of more than 20 top-tier universities in September 2017. (U.S. Air Force photo)

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HANSCOM AIR FORCE BASE, Mass. --

A Command, Control, Communications, Intelligence and Networks system engineer here will take part in the 2017 Chief of Staff of the Air Force Captains Prestigious PhD Program.

Capt. Samuel Jones, chief of the advanced capabilities section in the Special Programs Division, is one of three Air Force captains who will pursue a fully funded doctorate degree at one of more than 20 top-tier universities in September 2017. Three other captains were selected as alternates.

“My parents instilled a great sense of learning, so this is obviously a great opportunity to continue that,” said Jones, who is a prior enlisted (staff sergeant) airborne cryptologic language analyst.

Jones’s education journey began when he returned from a two-year mission overseas with his church.

“After being overseas, I went to Mesa Community College in Arizona and earned an associate’s degree in manufacturing semiconductor,” he said. “While enlisted, I completed a Community College of the Air Force degrees in communications application technology and a degree from the Defense Language Institute in Mandarin.”

He commissioned in 2010 after completing his bachelor’s degree in software engineering at Colorado Technical University. Jones earned his master’s degree from Troy University in International Relations.

Jones will now choose from nine different degree options, including: Asia Pacific Studies, history, political science, international relations, economics, philosophy, international business relations, international security studies and political systems and theories.

While still mulling his options, he is leaning toward international relations or international business relations as possible degree options. Jones, who intends to apply to six to eight schools, has until early 2017 to apply to at least one of the schools.

“Ever since I first lived overseas, I’ve been very interested in foreign cultures and languages,” he said. “I don’t think you can truly learn a culture unless you speak the language, because there are nuances that you miss if you don’t understand either.”

That interest is what led him to complete his master’s degree in international relations.

“I wanted a better understanding of foreign culture and foreign methods of government and other things,” he said. “I think

"I wanted a better understanding of foreign cultures and foreign methods of governance and other things," he said. "I think one of the biggest challenges for the Air Force – for the entire military – is working with foreign governments. I really hope to make a positive impact for the Air Force and for our nation when finished."

Jones, who also applied last year to the program, appreciates his selection this year.

"This program will prepare me to be a better critical thinker," he said. "I'll be able to hone my researching skills and improve my communication skills, which will set me up for success wherever the Air Force decides to put me after."

Jones follows Capt. Jason Rathje, one of last year's captains selected for the program, who was also from the Special Programs Division at Hanscom. Rathje is in his first year at Stanford University.

To participate, applicants must be an active duty captain with less than nine years of total active commissioned service time as of August 2017. They must also have completed their bachelor's and master's degree and earned a grade point average required by their preferred school.

"Captain Jones is an exceptional officer recruited for his combination of operational background flying RJs [RC-135 Rivet Joint] and as a linguist and an impressive background in acquisition engineering," said Lt. Col. Richard C. Howard, Kill Chain Integration Branch chief. "He speaks three languages and has the type A attitude, almost limitless bandwidth, precision and thoroughness that the Kill Chain Integration Branch requires of its company grade officers."

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