

Anchored in Engineering

Veteran pursues major and two minors

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What was meant to be a quick stop at a recruiter's office so a friend could drop something off led to an eight-year career in the Navy for Charity Reed '21. And that led to tuition assistance from the military to pursue her degree at UNH.

Reed had tried college before, after high school and prior to enlisting, but ended up dropping out. Now she is neck-deep in coursework that will earn her a Bachelor of Science in [electrical engineering](#) and minors in [mechanical engineering](#) and [computer science](#).

“My best friend joined the Navy to pay for college. When I went with her to the recruiter’s office, they asked me if I’d ever considered joining; I hadn’t,” Reed says. “I was working what was basically a minimum wage job and knew I didn’t want to keep doing that, but I didn’t know what I wanted to do. Then they started talking about nuclear propulsion.”

The New Hampshire resident had always been good at science and math. Really good. After attending boot camp in Chicago, she spent the next year and a half in Charleston, South Carolina, learning how to work on nuclear reactors. “They put a lot of effort into their training,” Reed says.

When she finished the schooling, Reed became a junior nuclear staff instructor, teaching others how to operate nuclear reactors, and remained in Charleston for another two and a half years, going back and forth to Norfolk, Virginia, to help in the refueling and overhaul of a nuclear-powered ship, which involves shutting the reactor down and starting it up again after the fuel has been replaced. Reed was one of two people on her crew qualified to conduct the training on performing the electronics maintenance.

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After the Navy, Reed planned on taking a year off before starting college. Then she got bored. So, in February 2018, three months after she ended her military career, she started an internship at UNH’s [InterOperability Laboratory \(IOL\)](#).

“The IOL is the best kept secret — it’s the most amazing opportunity,” Reed says. “I don’t know why everyone isn’t applying to work there. You could be a theater major and they’ll train you. If you said, ‘I want to learn X’ they’ll let you.”

Reed had been accepted to UNH and was to start taking classes that fall. In addition to attending school full time, she would also continue working at the IOL. So she decided to take the summer off and backpack through Europe for two and a half months. She set out with four changes of clothes and her backpack.

“I had been in foreign cities with the Navy, but this was so different,” Reed says. “I planned how I was going to get to Europe and how I was going to leave but everything in between just happened.”

She came home the weekend before classes began. This semester she’s taking six courses and working part time at the IOL. The tuition funding from her military service will cover her through getting her master’s degree. Reed also received \$5,900 from the [George F. and Lina C. Fisher Scholarship](#).

“I really credit the ECE (electrical and computer engineering department) for helping me get that, and I’m so appreciative,” Reed says. “Everyone has been so supportive — my

parents, the military, the IOL staff, the MVS ([Military and Veterans Services](#)) office. I'm very grateful. I certainly have not made it here on my own."

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