

« Of the roughly 1.1 million American men and women in uniform, some 70,000 serve in Special Operations. They are an elite group in terms of education and experience, yet when a spine injury forced Musselman out of the Navy after three years of SEAL training, he found there was no formalized transition process. “There wasn’t even an organized alumni community like the Naval Academy [has],” says Musselman.

Eight years later, that is no longer the case. Founded at UC San Diego’s Rady School of Management in 2014, The Honor Foundation is a three-month executive education program found on three campuses as well as virtually.

“Transitioning is a very stressful process,” explains John Goodsen, Director of Products for Chesapeake Technology International in San Diego. Goodsen completed The Honor Foundation program in 2016 after ten years in the Navy providing electronic battlefield support for SEAL teams. “It can be very hard to translate the value of skillsets developed inside the service.”

Nevertheless, Goodsen knows well the value for those who do recognize the correlation, an understanding corroborated by Joe Lara, veteran Master Chief for Naval Special Warfare and the foundation’s VP of Programs and Curriculum. “People join the military to be part of something bigger than themselves,” says Lara. “The military uses the term ‘effective team’ a lot, but what that really means is you’re there for the person on your left and right.”

“These people are incredibly adept at solving problems,” adds the foundation’s VP of People, Tori Campbell. “But even more, they do it with a calmness and confidence that empowers the people around them.”

Musselman recalls a memory from when The Honor Foundation began eight years ago. “Here was a Master Chief — actually a Command Master Chief four times — with 26 years of service. Everyone knew him. He served in SEAL Team Six for over a decade, had six Bronze Stars with combat valor, and a Silver Star. He also had an MBA and spoke French and Farsi,” says Musselman. “The previous day I had been at his retirement ceremony where he was a pillar of confidence with a breastplate full of medals. Twenty-four hours later he was sitting across from me saying, ‘What’s next?’ I could see the tears welling in his eyes.”

Musselman says he became obsessed with the idea of improving the transition for the Special Forces community, and with tremendous help from the Rady School, the Navy SEAL Foundation, and others, his vision became a reality — giving rise to his current project, the Honor for Life Foundation, a \$100,000,000 endowment to support The Honor Foundation in perpetuity. 619.916.6421, [honor.org](http://honor.org) BILL ABRAMS

