

Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way



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Christian Recording Artist Pursues Career as Military Doctor

One of 15 graduates of the Uniformed Services University Enlisted-to-Physician program

Bethesda, Md. – Former contemporary Christian singer-songwriter Paden Smith once sought to heal others with his music and lyrics. On May 16, 2018, Smith, now a Navy linguist, will continue his selfless journey of healing others as he takes the next steps on his path to become a military physician. Smith will graduate from a two-year medical degree preparatory program and will begin studies later this summer at the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine – “America’s Medical School” – at the Uniformed Services University (USU).

Smith said he fell in love with country and gospel music when he was very young. He grew up listening to both genres and said he always felt like contemporary Christian music was a blend of the two, with the uplifting messages of gospel music and the storytelling of country. His music career started in high school when he began writing his own songs.

“Christian music just felt natural to my taste in music and my upbringing. Plus, I knew that I wanted my music to be a tool for good and I felt that Christian music was a great way to make a positive and lasting impact on listeners,” Smith said.

In college, he started working with friends on an album and eventually decided to make the leap to recording his own music. He collaborated with friends to co-write many of the tracks on his debut Christian/gospel album, *Just Breathe*. Drawing on his own personal experiences, he said, he tailored his lyrics in hopes that others would find this music to be as uplifting and therapeutic as it had been for him.

Following the album’s successful release, he went on to film a military tribute music video, inspired by the military town he calls home – Cheyenne, Wyoming. Not only did he grow up surrounded by patriotic culture, he also looked up to several family members who served in the Armed Forces. While producing the tribute video, he worked closely with service members and surviving family members. He was so impressed by their level of sacrifice – this sparked his own interest in serving his country. Soon after, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy.

Smith spent his first eight years on active duty serving as a Chinese linguist, but all the while, he had bigger dreams of one day becoming a doctor. In 2015, Smith learned about a physician pathway program for military service members, USU’s Enlisted to Medical Degree Preparatory Program, or

EMDP2. The 24-month program is a partnership with the U.S. armed forces and George Mason University-Prince William Campus (GMU-PWC) that allows highly qualified enlisted service members to remain on active duty while completing pre-med coursework at GMU-PWC that makes them competitive for application to medical school. Students are required to apply for medical school at USU, but they may also apply to other accredited U.S. medical schools through the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship Program. Nearly 70 students – including military combat medics/corpsman, musicians, intelligence analysts, infantry soldiers and others -- have been accepted into the EMDP2 program since its inception.

Smith will graduate from the EMDP2 program this week along with 14 other enlisted members from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. He will fall back on his musical abilities as he kicks off the festivities by singing the National Anthem in front of what may be his largest audience yet – an arena filled with thousands of students, faculty, staff and family members at GMU’s graduation ceremony.

Immediately following the ceremony, Smith, and his fellow EMDP2 classmates will once again pledge to serve and defend their country as they are commissioned as ensigns or second lieutenants in their respective Service branches, rising in rank, pay and responsibility in one fell swoop.

“Whether through music or medicine, I have always wanted to help heal others and I feel that this next chapter in my life will allow me to achieve that goal,” Smith said. “EMDP2 has given me the incredible opportunity to transition from my career as a Navy linguist to a career in the Navy Medical Corps, for which I will always be grateful. I am looking forward to the academic, personal, and military experiences unique to Uniformed Services University.”

While he’s still a long way from deciding what medical field he will specialize in, Smith is never far away from his music. Over the last two years in the EMDP2 program, he said he has turned to music as an outlet, singing and playing the piano to relieve stress, and he will continue to turn to music throughout his upcoming years in medical school.

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About USU

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, acute trauma care, and advanced practice nursing and dentistry. For more information, visit www.usuhs.edu.