Public Service Academy director seeks to build cross-sector leaders

June 19, 2015

Brett Hunt has a noble vision.

He wants people to have a greater appreciation for public service.

“I think it is really important for our country that we support those that choose to serve, whether that be in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps or in their tribes, schools or churches, in the same way that we support military service members,” said Hunt, who is the founding executive director for ASU’s newly formed Public Service Academy in the College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

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“It is not a question of which job is harder or more of a sacrifice but rather the fact that they have chosen to serve something much larger than themselves. Whether it's in the government, private, non-profit or military sectors, everyone has the potential to positively impact our communities through service. Because, when people do make that decision, they are making us stronger as a nation.”

Hunt will lead the first undergraduate program in the nation to integrate cross-sector and civilian-military experiences to develop collaborative leaders of character. The academy, which starts its first cohort in August, will enroll 100 aspiring leaders from around the world each fall. Hunt expects big things from these students.

“The traditional track in the past for most college students has been to study, graduate and get a job,” Hunt said. “This generation seems more focused on moving the needle on social good rather than making a ton of money and being secure in their jobs. That gives me hope for the world and particularly the tough social, cultural and economic challenges we face.”

The program has two tracks: Reserve Officer Training Corps, the existing university-based program to commission officers into the U.S. Armed Forces, and the Next Generation Service Corps, a new program for service-oriented students from all majors to become civilian service leaders.

Hunt has had both feet in the military and public service sector throughout his career. After graduating the University of Colorado in 2002 with a degree in geography, he served four years as a captain in the U.S. Army, completing a tour in Kuwait and Iraq. Following his military career, Hunt served as a Foreign Service officer for the U.S. Department of State in Washington D.C. and as vice consul in Guadalajara from 2006 to 2008. He has also served as a consultant, most recently with Strategies 360, and has been active as a campaign adviser on issues relating to agriculture, veterans and immigration.

“Brett is an ideal leader for the Public Service Academy,” said Jonathan Koppell, dean of the College of Public Service and Community Solutions, which will host the academy. “His experience bridges the public, private and military sectors and exemplifies the kind of leaders we hope the academy produces.”

The four-year Next Generation Service Corps experience includes a set of seven leadership courses taken throughout a student’s university career, as well as a series of summer internships in nonprofit, government and private organizations. The program offers annual retreats, service opportunities and shared experiences with
ROTC cadets.

Academy graduates entering public service will be encouraged to join organizations such as AmeriCorps, Teach for America, Vista, Peace Corps and 21st Century Conservation Corps.

“Our graduates will come out of the academy armed with leadership and cross-sector skills and be able to navigate all of the different hierarchies," Hunt said. “Make no mistake about it, we're looking at nothing short of changing the world.”

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