

UW-Stout: Veteran wants to give back, seeking online psychology degree in new program

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Menomonie, Wis. – Veteran Jessica Bellomy worked as a computer support specialist in information technology at a company near her home in Argonne in northeastern Wisconsin. When the company closed in 2019, she had a decision to make – find another job or go back to school.

Bellomy chose school. She enrolled in an alcohol and drug addiction counseling program at a local two-year college, taking an introductory course and Abnormal Psychology.

“Psychology was always on the back burner for me since high school,” she said. “After those courses, my interest in psychology perked again. I also decided not to limit myself to one type of counseling. I want to obtain a degree in psychology, so I have many career pathways to choose from.”

In spring 2020, Bellomy applied for the online psychology program at UW-Green Bay. She was also communicating with UW-Stout, but at the time it only had an [on-campus program](#).

Bellomy needed an online program because of the distance she lives from both campuses and because she’s a stay-at-home mother of two. She has a new part-time job filling invoices and shipping orders for a local company and can work from home as she cares for her family, while her husband works overtime.

"Then UW-Stout gave me good news. In fall 2020 their psychology program was going online. I applied immediately and was accepted. So, I had a decision to make. Stout, or Green Bay?" she said.

Bellomy is part of the first cohort in UW-Stout's [online psychology program](#), which started in September. She chose UW-Stout because it offers an [online master's in rehabilitation counseling](#), which she plans to earn after her bachelor's. She wants to work as a rehabilitation counselor for Veterans of America.

"I was in the Army National Guard for six years. To me, it's a way of giving back. I receive so much help in my life as a veteran; I want to do the same for others. I would like to help veterans with their physical and emotional disabilities and help them manage and overcome their disabilities," Bellomy said.

"This makes me wish I could skip my bachelor's and go straight to my master's. I am impatient," she joked.

Starting off in psychology online

Bellomy enrolled in three courses her first semester last fall. Relying on her internet, which wasn't working properly at home, the first semester was rough. She fell behind in one class and had to drop it.

But Bellomy enjoyed her Psychology Seminar, an eight-week course where she could plan out her courses and prepare for future semesters. She also started her portfolio and was impressed with how much she could add already.

Bellomy appreciates interacting with her instructors and how responsive they are. "I ask questions, and they are answered," she said.

Her favorite parts of the program are Canvas and Redshelf, the software she uses to access courses and textbooks. "Canvas is so easy to navigate, and with Redshelf most of my textbooks are right at my fingertips. The cost is worked into my tuition," Bellomy said.

To others thinking of getting their online psychology degree, Bellomy said, "Don't stop at just your bachelor's degree. Keep moving up. If you want to work in a specific field, go for that master's or even your doctorate.

"It will be tough, but don't be quick to give up. Given the pandemic, social

distancing and quarantines, a huge toll is being taken on mental health. Many adults, children and veterans need the help now more than ever.”

Programs and services for veterans

Bellomy found the university’s [Veteran Services](#) to be very helpful in making sure she had the correct form filed to receive tuition funding through the GI Bill.

She has a mentor through the [Veteran Mentorship Program](#), a peer-to-peer online program designed for student veterans. Any student can sign up for a mentor, and mentorships are open to all returning students.

“My mentor checks in every two weeks via phone calls to see how everything is going. Based on this experience so far, I would highly recommend Stout to other veterans,” Bellomy said.

UW-Stout is a [Military Times 2019 Best for Vets College](#). [Veteran Services](#) supports veterans, military service members and their families with academic and career goals. Students may be eligible to receive veteran or military [education benefits](#) and [earn credit](#) toward their degree through military experience or training.

UW-Stout is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes.