

Military student valedictorians excel in Hawaii public schools

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“Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue, and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true” from “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” describes the accomplishments of four military student valedictorians whose fathers are assigned to units at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

Corey Snider, Samantha Peterson and Jessica Womack graduated from Radford High School (HS), and Kayla Heard graduated from Campbell High School. Despite the many moves, changing of schools, and adjusting to new cultures/environments, they all excelled and had some advice to offer to newly arriving military students.

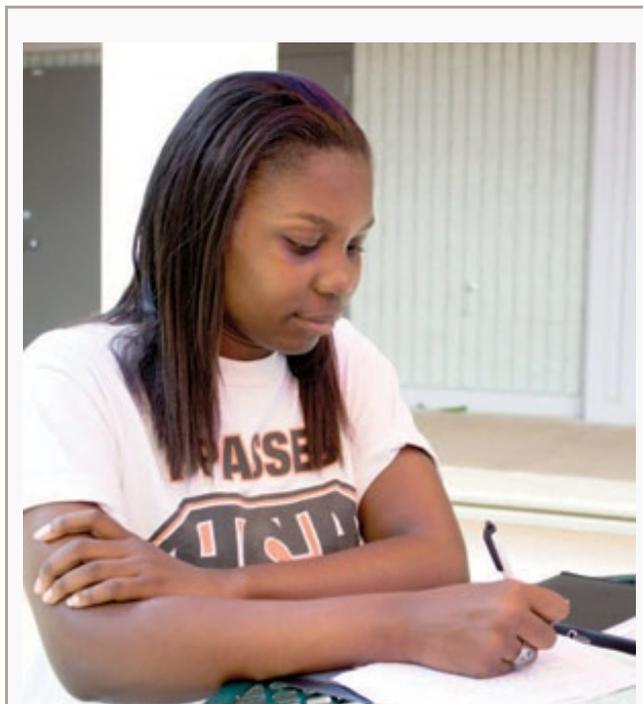
Snider moved to Hawaii in the eighth grade school year and has attended schools in Washington State, Japan, Virginia and Hawaii.

“My main concern prior to coming to Hawaii was the education rigor—that it would be less than Virginia. However, I found that Radford has a lot of opportunities to succeed. I was able to take a lot of advance placement (AP) classes and participate in sports at Radford,” Snider said.

He will attend Tufts University in Massachusetts to major in civil engineering and eventually he would like to become an architect. “Make friends, pursue opportunities, and follow what you are passionate about,” Snider advised.

Heard attended Campbell High School for all four years. She came to Hawaii from New Jersey and had heard that the schools in Hawaii weren't good. She said she found the opposite to be true.

“Coming in, it was a culture shock. Everything was so different coming from the mainland. But I really fell in love with this place, the people and the culture,” Heard noted.



Kayla Heard is a 2014 valedictorian at Campbell High School. Photos courtesy of Radford High School



(Left to right) Corey Snider, Samantha Womack and Samantha Peterson are 2014 valedictorians at Radford High School.

"I was able to take many AP classes, and I will be attending Vanderbilt University and double major in neuroscience and psychology. I want to eventually go to medical school to be a psychiatrist."

She offered advice to fellow students. "Seek out the many opportunities. If you don't like Spam, you'll learn to like it," she said.

Unlike Snider and Heard, Peterson transitioned to Radford in the second quarter of her 10th grade year.

"Prior to coming here, I was worried about the level I would be challenged at in school. But I found that I was challenged at Radford, able to take AP courses and really enjoying it," Peterson said.

"Take every opportunity offered, like sports and AP classes. It will be huge challenge but worth it," she said. After graduation, Peterson plans to get a job and attend Brigham Young University Hawaii.

Womack moved to Hawaii prior to starting her senior year after three years at the same Florida high school. She was also attending her 10th school since kindergarten. She and her parents discussed attending private school in Hawaii but decided to stick with Radford.

Looking back, Womack remembered, "It (Radford) wasn't anything like I expected. It's been a unique experience and one of the most diverse schools I've ever been at. I was president of the student transition program at my last school in Florida and found that Radford's transition program is by far the most developed transition program I've ever experienced."

She has been accepted at Duke and Clemson Universities and is waiting to hear from Emory University. Womack offered the following advice to newly arriving military students: "Don't change your goals. Anything is possible no matter where you are."

Four military students—all with different yet similar education and life experiences in Hawaii—they are valedictorians for the class of 2014.