

**\*\*ARTICLE EXCERPT ONLY-- FULL ARTICLE AT ABOVE LINK \*\***

## Class of 2012

*Each spring, our colleges and universities graduate thousands of students with real-world skills. Meet six of this year's outstanding grads.*

Author: Staff

Photographer: Barbara Banks

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Christian McGowan, Everglades University, Aviation Management

**Christian McGowan, 29, joined the Army** after high school and became an Avionics Systems Technician, inspecting and repairing aircraft and radar equipment. A career in aviation had been a lifelong dream: "I've never wanted to do anything else," he says.

After eight years in the military, he developed an interest in the management side of aviation. He was happy to discover that Everglades University in Sarasota offers a degree in this specialty. The aviation management program was established in 2000 and graduates between 40 and 50 students every year. "The teachers have a lot of aviation experience," says McGowan, "and you get one-on-one time so they can really work with you."

Even though he had to put school on pause for an unexpected deployment to Iraq in 2008, McGowan earned Dean's List honors eight times and is graduating this month with a 3.8 GPA. Before graduation, he landed a local job with the Federal Aviation Administration as a management and program analyst, and he still spends free time helping younger students network to find jobs in aviation.

McGowan hopes to eventually be promoted to an aviation inspector—which would allow him to inspect airports and equipment around the country while staying based in Sarasota, where his wife is an immigration paralegal. “That’s my ultimate goal,” he says. “That could be the rest of my career right there.”—*Beau Denton*

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