

# STEM SPOTLIGHT

## Caleb Johnson

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Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering – University of Memphis

**Q: How did you select your college major?**

**A:** I was always interested in mathematics, science, and problem solving.

**Q: What was the biggest influence in your selection of major/career?**

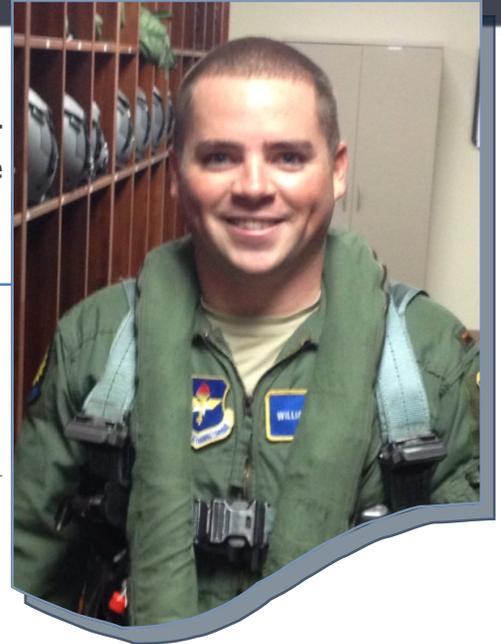
**A:** My father was an engineer, so I naturally gravitated toward a STEM major. I also wanted to serve my country in the military.

However, when I entered college, I was very uncertain about what exactly I wanted to do, and maybe even a little

frightened of declaring a major. I spent my freshman year taking generic classes and finally determined that civil engineering (CE) was the right fit for me, but that wasn't enough. I wanted to do something truly unique.

I began looking into the Air Force ROTC program, which allows for students to receive military training while in college. I started thinking a career in military aviation would be an awesome opportunity, so I joined. Because the military is always looking for experts in the fields of math, science, technology, etc., my STEM major helped me receive several Air Force scholarships.

The ROTC program allowed me to work toward my CE degree while receiving the leadership training necessary to become an officer in the Air Force.



**Q:** If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

**A:** I would have challenged myself by selecting as many advanced math and science classes as possible.

**Q:** What is your favorite aspect of your job?

**A:** My job provides an incredible amount of satisfaction, for many reasons. My career is challenging and continues to push me towards achievements I never would have dreamed of during my K-12 years. However, my absolute favorite aspect is the sense of self-fulfillment I receive by working with those who are serving our country. There is a camaraderie that develops throughout the military that turns coworkers into brothers and sisters, and I think that is a special quality that not many other careers offer.

**Q:** How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

**A:** As the world's most dominant and mobile air power, we are able to have tremendous worldwide impacts. By establishing air supremacy in a conflict area, we support a variety of operations such as direct engagement, reconnaissance/surveillance, combat search and rescue, air refueling, and cargo transport. However, our impacts are not only applicable to wartime scenarios. We are often the first on the scene following natural disasters, providing relief in forms like immediate rescue or food drops for those affected.

**Q:** What's the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your career?

**A:** Being able to hop in a jet every day makes for an exciting workweek. As a Combat Systems Officer, I act as mission commander on the aircraft by running navigation and weapons employment systems. So although I am a



relatively young member of the aircrew, I am in a position of great responsibility, which is a very unique opportunity.

**Q:** What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

**A:** No day is the same. Every day, every flight presents a unique set of challenges. Rarely do I go into work knowing exactly what I will do that day.

**Q:** What advice would you like to share with K-12 students who are considering your profession?

**A:** I would urge students to push themselves as much as possible in their academic studies. Set goals, both short and long term, and work your hardest to achieve them. I remember having teachers stress the importance of setting goals when I was younger, but I don't think I ever truly realized what that meant. Sit down and think about what it is you want to do in life, and make a list of the step-by-step accomplishments you'll need to get there. Just remember, the harder you work in your early years, the easier you will have it later on in life.