



## **Wayne Townsend**

**Major: Journalism**

**Minor: Film and TV Studies**

This journey began with a simple question 30 years ago: “Why don’t you go back to school?” My supervisor asked it, my platoon sergeant asked it, but it did not resonate until my mom asked it. What I told myself was: “I have a job, two jobs. No, two careers. Employment with the City of New York and the Department of the Army. Both with a pension, health benefits, and I get to drive cars with lights and sirens, and jeeps through the mud. I’m good.” But after 21 years with the NYPD and 25 years in the Army, I wanted a new challenge. I lost my parents and felt that a great way to honor my mom was to finally go to college. When I entered Lehman, I felt the skills I learned and honed by successfully navigating those institutions would make me better prepared for the challenges of life as a university student than when I was 18, and I was right.

Regimentation and flexibility may be mutually exclusive but are also mainstays of the careers I had chosen. After registering and completing the first week of classes, I let out a sigh of relief. College life would require me to face a little adversity, but minus the bullets flying overhead. This is going to be cake, I thought. I loved my journalism classes, loved learning about changing news formats, and all the different disciplines of reporting the news. Then came my final semester and the capstone—the Honors Program. To fulfill the requirement of being a full-time student, I needed electives. My advisor suggested something outside of my comfort zone, so I chose Acting I and II. Everything seemed fine until the professor handed out the syllabus.

There is an old expression that goes, “It’s all Greek to me.” Well, the syllabus was in Martian, because what I was reading could not have originated on planet Earth. The word “withdrawal” pounded repeatedly in my head. I thought there was no way I would be able to keep up with the academic requirement to remain

an honors student. Fear coursed through my veins. The last time I felt fear like that was when the training wheels were removed from my bike. Lost in a haze and faced with the fear of failure, I thought of quitting. Lo and behold, there they were, students younger than my children understanding the work, willing to share, and helping an old dog learn new tricks. And there was a professor reaching deep into my core, exposing emotional muscle I had spent my entire adult life suppressing due to the constraints of my chosen professions. I live by the mantra, “be better tomorrow than you are today; be better today than you were yesterday.” And here I was, unable to rely on the tools that had gotten me this far. I thought I was well-rounded but I was forced to expose myself to myself. Achieving that level of vulnerability and self-discovery is a credit to the college experience, and to the faculty of all the departments here at Lehman. This is simply one of the life lessons college is supposed to teach us. This is what was great about my time here. I am so proud to be an alumnus of Lehman College.