

Jared S. Lyon

Jared Lyon was 19 years old when he shipped out to Navy boot camp at Great Lakes, Illinois. He was still in basic training when the world changed on September 11, 2001, and by the time he became a sailor, the peacetime Navy he had joined was gone. Jared went on to serve as a submariner and diver, deploying in the opening years of a war that would define his generation.

What came after the uniform shaped him just as much. Like many veterans of the post-9/11 era, Jared came home to a civilian world that did not always know how to read him. He started over in night classes at a Florida community college while working full-time during the day, then used the GI Bill to become the first in his family to earn a four-year degree, graduating from Florida State University. He kept going, earning a Master of Public Administration from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, where he is now a Ph.D. student researching how America invests in the development of its own people.

His working life kept returning to a common question: how institutions recognize and develop the people inside them. He managed Florida operations for Major League Baseball's Washington Nationals, running a spring-training and player-development complex on Florida's Space Coast, then joined Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, where he led the national Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans across a consortium of universities serving post-9/11 veterans and military families. In 2011, while still a student at FSU, he was named National Student Veteran of the Year by the organization he would lead four years later.

In 2015, Lyon was named Acting CEO of Student Veterans of America (SVA), the nation's leading organization representing veterans in higher education. He inherited an organization carrying more than \$2 million in debt against \$43,000 in operating liquidity. The SVA Board of Directors confirmed him as permanent President and CEO the following year, after a nationwide executive search led by Korn Ferry. Over the next decade, he built SVA into a debt-free national network with an \$8.5 million budget and \$7 million in net assets. Under his leadership, the organization grew from roughly 400 campus chapters to more than 1,600 across all 50 states and overseas locations.

Under Lyon's leadership, SVA became a national voice for student veterans and a proof point for a larger argument: that America routinely overlooks talent in people whose lives do not fit traditional institutional timelines. People shaped by military service, work, family, interrupted education, and the long way through college are too often treated as exceptions to be accommodated rather than assets to be developed. Veterans, Lyon argues, are not the edge case. They are the proof of concept.

As SVA's chief executive, Lyon led the relationships behind more than \$68 million raised and helped drive passage of the Forever GI Bill, which passed both chambers of Congress unanimously and remains the largest expansion of veterans' education benefits since the original Post-9/11 GI Bill. He regularly testified before the U.S. House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, and advised the Secretary of Veterans Affairs across four presidential administrations on veterans' education, military-to-civilian transition, and workforce development. He co-authored the National Veteran Education Success Tracker, a landmark study of nearly one million student veteran academic records and one of the most comprehensive analyses of Post-9/11 GI Bill outcomes.

Lyon now carries that work forward through writing, public speaking, doctoral research, and teaching. He serves in advisory roles with the George W. Bush Institute, the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation, and Florida State University. He is a Presidential Leadership Scholar and a TEDx speaker whose talk is featured on TED.com.

He lives in Tampa, Florida, with his wife, their two children, and their two dogs.