

alumni comes back to give back

VALENTINES FROM A VET

▶ yeji bang, designer
▶ chandni amin, writer

▶ “I recalled at the time when I graduated a sense of relief and having said something to the effect of ‘I’m never coming back here.’ It sounds funny now.”

Mr. Bryan Tolar, an alumni of the class of 1984, was surprised when he found himself at his alma mater again, around 20 years after his own graduation, attending an on-campus event called Valentines for Vets.

The twist? He was one of the guests.

“When [Mr. McLeod] described the event to me, I was excited, not [only] to talk about my own experiences, but to also engage with some of the older veterans from other campaigns,” Tolar said. “Perry did describe it as ‘speed dating with veterans’ for the students, so I got the picture quickly of what it would be like.”

As someone who had served in places like Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Tolar brought a new voice to the event and was

able to see the students’ interest in his stories firsthand.

“A different perspective other than what they have heard or read always seems to bring a sense of curiosity and excitement,” Tolar said. “That, along with students getting a first-hand view of other cultures and societies, seems to stand out in my mind as [an event] highlight year after year.”

Having been a student once himself, Tolar was happy being able to share his experiences with newer generations at his old high school. However, as much as he enjoyed it, he also understood that one day he would have to pass his role on to someone else who would learn to like it as much as he did.

“I hoped I brought enough stories to satisfy them all,” Tolar said. “When I lose their interest or [attention], [then it] will be time to let another veteran sit in my seat.”▶