

Second annual ceremony honors veterans

Chancellor Gene Block recognizes UCLA service alumni and ROTC on Friday at Wilson Plaza

By [Carolyn McGough](#)

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Bruin veterans, Reserve Officers' Training Corps members and active military officials gathered in Wilson Plaza on Friday morning for a Veterans Day ceremony that included two F-16 fighter jets flying over UCLA.

Chancellor Gene Block addressed audience members and students on their way to class in front of the Student Activity Center.

Block said he was there to recognize "UCLA men and women who have been engaged in military service and students in the ROTC."

He welcomed the veterans at the ceremony, thanking them for their service, and signed a statement of support for the Guard and Reserve.

Block's address was part of the second annual UCLA ceremony to observe Veterans Day, which is Nov. 11.

The first ceremony was held last year and included the dedication of a plaque to honor Bruins who have been killed while serving, according to a university statement.

The plaque is located near the entrance of the Student Activities Center in Wilson Plaza.

Brig. Gen. Megan Tatu, a UCLA graduate, spoke at the ceremony from the front of the center's steps.

Timothy Miller, chief of the UCLA hospital division of plastic and reconstructive surgery, and UCLA graduate Capt. Jamila Hammad also spoke.

Hammad, who graduated in 2004 and is a C-17A pilot, said after the ceremony that "it was incredible to be able to be back here today. I always think about how I love UCLA and how much it has shaped my life."

She spoke of two friends and fellow Bruins who were killed while serving and reminded listeners that she has never been in the Air Force during a time of peace, though she and her fellow service members work to ensure American safety.

Chris Ashcraft, a third-year philosophy student, was also in attendance.

Ashcraft, a cadet captain in the ROTC, said, "It's great to be recognized for your service, even if you haven't served yet. It's something that you will do."

The ceremony included recognition of retired Marine Staff Sgt. Octavio Sanchez and Marine Gunnery Sgt. Blaine Scott.

Sanchez and Scott were injured while serving in Iraq and are now patients of the Operation Mend program at the UCLA Medical Center. The program provides facial reconstructive surgery to injured soldiers.

Scott, who served in Iraq's Anbar province, received facial surgery Thursday because a 2006 explosion in Iraq damaged his nose.

Scott was at the ceremony less than 24 hours after Miller operated on his nose, participating in a "forehead flap procedure" to rebuild his face, Miller said.

Scott, who is still an active member of the military, said he made the decision to attend the ceremony so soon after his operation because he enjoys seeing veterans come together and gain recognition for their work.

After the address, the Veterans Resource Office, a recently opened office in the Center for Women and Men, hosted an open house.

Anthony Allman, one of the founders of the office and a former UCLA student, said it was opened in the hopes of providing a place for veterans to gain support and guidance while transitioning back from service to schooling.



DAILY BRUIN

Photography

Sgt. Blaine Scott, who was injured in the Anbar province of Iraq, and Octavio Sanchez, a retired staff sergeant of the Marine Corps who was injured in Ramadi, Iraq, attended the veterans ceremony on Friday. Scott attended the ceremony less than 24 hours after receiving reconstructive surgery by Operation Mend physicians.

Photo by Samantha Cook