Tucker Mathis

A Veteran's South Plains College Journey

by Adán Rubio, Public Relations Specialist at South Plains College



Honor, courage, and commitment are core values Tucker Mathis continues to carry with him several years after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. These pillars not only provided a foundation as a Marine but also opened many doors during his time as a student at South Plains College.

Corporal Charles Tucker Mathis of Powder Springs, Georgia, served in the Global War on Terror from 2011-19 and earned a National Defense Service Medal. Beyond the military, "honor" reminds him to be honest and lead with integrity, "commitment" emphasizes that everything in life is earned, and "courage" provides perspective in times of discomfort and inexperience. While at SPC, these tenets helped Tucker thrive, graduate with an Associate of Science in agriculture in Spring 2026, and earn the institution's 2026 Thomas Spencer Sr. Award for Outstanding Achievement.

"South Plains College is a great environment for every walk of life," he said. "People like me have seen the world from a different perspective. That perspective is also just as valuable as going straight from high school to college."

Ever since he was a boy, Tucker wanted to serve his country and achieve milestones that not many people can reach. The Marines offered a physical, mental, and spiritual challenge that the McEachern High School graduate sought to overcome, and with it came significant growth. After his honorable discharge, he continued to remember the Marine Corps' values.

Tucker later worked in hospitality as a sommelier at Paces & Vine in Atlanta. During his time in the industry, he desired to reach higher positions and needed a strong foundation.

"College was definitely at the back of my mind," he said, regarding his mindset during and after the Marine Corps.

Tucker's parents, Chuck and Dr. Paige Mathis, encouraged him to consider West Texas as the place to start his higher education. He moved to the area hoping to pursue hospitality at Texas Tech University but later learned SPC would prepare him for life at a larger institution.

"I definitely miss the everyday academic and social environment that South Plains College offered me," Tucker said. "The students, my professors, the staff and administration, and that tight-knit community."

Regarding his value of "commitment," Tucker said to himself a little over three years ago that he would get a college degree no matter the cost.

"A little over 10 years ago, I thought I wasn't going to be successful in college, but I turned that

around," he said. "I said, 'I'm going to get my associate degree, I'm going to finish that part of my life that I didn't complete, and I'm going to see it through and be successful at it.'"

Tucker, a Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society member, always strives to do right by everyone and showcase his value of "honor." He got involved in the campus community and was appointed student body parliamentarian of the Student Government Association (SGA) in the spring of 2024. His dedication to the student body prepared him for his roles as vice president and president of SGA and as parliamentarian (2024-25) and president (2025-26) of the Texas Junior College SGA Region I.

Tucker's service to the SPC community as SGA president and a writing tutor connected him with many students. Alongside his peers, he developed meaningful relationships with faculty and staff. Christina Bearden-White, associate professor of history, and Student Life Coordinator Jamison Joiner are SPC employees and veterans who offered unique perspectives about life after the military and guided Tucker at the College.

In addition to laying the groundwork for a successful journey in higher education, SPC shifted Tucker's focus to agriculture, tapping into his love for viticulture (the study of grape-growing). He will attend Texas Tech University to pursue a bachelor's degree in agricultural education with a leadership concentration and a minor in legal studies. After completing his undergraduate studies, he is considering getting a master's degree in environmental science and attending law school someday.

For people, especially non-traditional students who are hesitant about pursuing higher education, Tucker encourages them to make that leap. He said his value of "courage" helped him during his move to West Texas.

"I needed a better footing and a better environment to get my feet wet," Tucker said. "South Plains College was one of those entities that afforded me that footing and a start in college."

