Herndon: Career starts at USDA

David A. Herndon was recently hired as a compliance investigator with the Risk Management Agency at the Regional U.S. Department of Agriculture office in Davis. Working at USDA is a goal Herndon has been working hard to reach since long before he graduated from SDSU Imperial Valley.

In fact, diligence and hard work seem to be a recurring theme in Herndon’s life. When he graduated in 2019, he had a 4.0 grade-point average and was honored as the Public Administration Outstanding Student Graduate of the Year for both SDSU’s School of Public Affairs and SDSU-Imperial Valley’s Division of Professional Studies, having demonstrated student excellence, maintaining academic success, involvement in extracurricular activities, community service, leadership, research endeavors and supporting fellow students.

He also earned Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society and summa cum laude recognitions. And, he won a competitive USDA internship that started after his graduation.

Yet his path to academic excellence was far from traditional. A native of Detroit, Mich., Herndon was a corporal in the Marines prior to moving to the Imperial Valley and enrolling in Imperial Valley College as a Business Administration major.

He changed his major to Public Administration when he enrolled at SDSU IV. In an interview prior to graduation, Herndon said he realized Public Administration was a better fit for his goal, which, he said, “is to help change people's lives for the better.”

In a recent email to the campus, Herndon wrote about the dedication it took to get the job he wanted with USDA.

“It all started in my junior year wanting that internship ... then securing the internship with RD (USDA Rural Development) followed by volunteering before being offered the temp position,” his email stated.

He also stated he applied twice for positions with USDA unsuccessfully.

“I got very discouraged and almost gave up,” he wrote. “But nope, I tried harder because that is where I want to start my career.”

He added, “Success is never to give up and keep fighting for what you want. I made it a goal that I had to smash.”