



2024

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

## DR. MARY S. BELL '92



**“My actions are driven by my genuine care for people and unwavering commitment to our nation’s defense.”**

—Dr. Mary S. Bell '92

**D**r. Mary S. Bell '92 is dean of The Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences at Dakota State University.

An NMSU Crimson Scholar and Army ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate, she earned her B.A. in international business from the College of Business. “I always knew I would be an Aggie—it never occurred to me to go elsewhere. Between my parents and siblings, we have seven degrees from NMSU.”

Mary grew up in Las Cruces, graduating from Las Cruces High School before attending a German high school, where she was introduced to military life through the presence of U.S. forces stationed there. Her father suggested she consider

a military career, a suggestion later echoed by an NMSU business professor. Mary calls this “the single most important piece of career advice I received.” Inspired, Mary “walked into Young Hall to ask questions and ended up becoming an Army ROTC cadet.”

An accomplished musician, she played in the NMSU symphonic winds, jazz band, and a saxophone quartet, and credits Dr. William Clark with teaching her the importance of always performing your best. Although she did not major in music, “Dr. Clark believed in me. He respected my choices and was always one of my biggest supporters during college and throughout my career.”

When approaching graduation, ROTC cadets prioritize the branches in which they’d like to serve, and Mary chose the extremely competitive, male-dominated aviation branch as her first choice. She was fully eligible based on her physical and academic fitness, her ranking in the NMSU ROTC battalion, and her performance at Advanced Camp. “I was so excited when I found out I would get to become an Army aviator. I didn’t hesitate to make the seven-year commitment that goes with the profession.”

During her 20-year military career, from which she retired as a lieutenant colonel, her missions included flying the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in support of Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti, the C-12 Huron and EO-5B/C Airborne Reconnaissance Low (ARL) for Operations Palmetto Ghost and Palmetto Shield in Central and South America, and the ARL as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She also served as an Open Skies Treaty Mission Commander, negotiating with diplomats to ensure compliance with treaties on weapons of mass destruction.

Mary also has an M.A. in international relations from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas, and a Ph.D. in international studies from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Before becoming a dean, her 13 years in academia included serving as an assistant professor at the Air Force Academy and a professor and field of study chair for the Joint Advanced Warfighting School within the Joint Forces Staff College of National Defense University, at which she also held several other college-level positions.

Her advice to students? “Do something about which you are passionate. If you are passionate, hardworking, and kind, you will create a fulfilling life for yourself and those around you.” ▲