



## **2025 Outstanding Young Alumni Award Mr. Roman Vitanza, Class of 2017**

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The Outstanding Young Alumni Award recognizes a Winthrop alumna/us age 35 or younger whose service to Winthrop, service to the community and professional achievements have reflected positively on all alumni and the university.

Mr. Roman Vitanza, Class of 2017, is being honored with the 2025 Outstanding Young Alumni Award for his accomplishments in public service, communications and national leadership that reflect the values and enduring legacy of Winthrop University.

Mr. Vitanza earned a Bachelor of Science in Digital Information Design with a focus on digital mass media from Winthrop University in 2017. During his time on campus, he held several leadership roles, serving as secretary/treasurer and webmaster for Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, vice president and president of the Association of Computing Machinery, and as a resident assistant in Roddey Hall. He also contributed as webmaster for *The Johnsonian* and *Roddey McMillan Record*, served on the Council of Student Leaders, was involved in the Resident Students' Association, was a three-year teaching assistant for the College of Business and Technology, helped coordinate the 2015 First in the South Democratic Candidate Forum and was one of Winthrop's Voter Ambassadors with the John C. West Forum in 2016. He also provided support to the Winthrop University Model United Nations program and assisted incoming students with the process for new student social media groups.

Following graduation, he deployed as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Republic of Georgia, where he taught English and promoted cross-cultural understanding. After returning to the U.S., he began his aviation career at American Airlines, where he worked in airline operations, coordinating both domestic and international flights worldwide. Today, he serves on the contract compliance team with the Allied Pilots Association, which is the largest independent airline union and certified collective bargaining agent for the 16,000 professional pilots who fly for American Airlines.

Mr. Vitanza has earned national recognition for his service and professional leadership. His honors include the Civil Air Patrol's Col. Robert V. "Bud" Payton National Public Affairs Officer of the Year, the Major Howell Balsem Public Affairs Exceptional Achievement Award, The Gill Rob Wilson Award, and several prestigious Texas awards including Colonel DeCamp Ground Team of the Year and Colonel Edwin W. Lewis, Jr. Incident Commander of the Year. Nationally, he was awarded the President's Call to Service Lifetime Achievement Award and the MLK Jr. Drum Major for Service Award from AmeriCorps.



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He has also been commissioned as an Honorary Admiral in the Texas Navy and a member of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels for his contributions to the COVID-19 pandemic response.

With a wide array of emergency services certifications, including credentials from the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Services, and multiple federal training academies, he was one of the Civil Air Patrol's youngest certified incident commanders and an all-hazards operations leader.

Mr. Vitanza is also deeply committed to community outreach, particularly in promoting STEM and aviation education among youth. He actively supports programs that introduce students to the fundamentals of flight, aerospace science and emergency services through hands-on activities, mentorship and educational events. Through partnerships with organizations such as the Fort Worth Aviation Museum, Experimental Aircraft Association, and local STEM academies, he helps provide immersive learning experiences that foster curiosity and expand opportunities, particularly for students from underserved communities. His outreach efforts aim to inspire the next generation of innovators and public servants in aviation and beyond.

Mr. Vitanza currently serves as the Director of Public Affairs for the Civil Air Patrol's Southwest Region, coordinating communications across six states. He commands a squadron of up to 130 members in the Fort Worth area and has led responses that resulted in over 200 confirmed distressed and non-distressed rescues. As a national public affairs officer and brand manager, he has supported operations with NASA, the U.S. Air Force, and significant national events, including the Fort Worth Alliance Airshow, two U.S. Air Force Super Bowl support missions, 4 Falcon Virgo exercises with the North American Aerospace Defense Command and the COVID-19 pandemic response in Texas.

In addition to these roles, he volunteers with Team Rubicon, TEXSAR (Texas Search and Rescue), the Shriners Hospital, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and the Fort Worth Aviation Museum. He provides brand and licensing expertise for Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia on their national staff. He also actively participates in numerous professional and fraternal organizations, including the Air Force Public Affairs Association, International Association of Emergency Managers and several Masonic and Shriners bodies in Texas and South Carolina.

From 2019-2025, Mr. Vitanza dedicated thousands of volunteer service hours to supporting his local community through emergency response, youth mentorship and educational outreach programs.



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As a Civil Air Patrol commander, search and rescue technician, and public affairs officer, he played a pivotal role in organizing and leading operations that directly impacted over 200 young people, providing them with leadership training, career mentorship, and life-saving emergency preparedness education. His commitment extended beyond uniformed service, as he partnered with local schools, nonprofits, and civic groups to ensure that the next generation was equipped with the skills, confidence and support needed to thrive.

As a dedicated Winthrop alumnus, he frequently returns to campus as a mentor and has served as a panelist during Mass Communication Week, helping prepare the next generation of Winthrop leaders.

Mr. Vitanza lives in Arlington, Texas, with his wife, Aubrey, and their long-haired German Shepherd, Bowser.