

Honoring the Fallen: the University of Missouri's Partnership with DPAA in the Search for America's Missing Heroes

26 May 2025 – As the nation observes Memorial Day, it pauses to remember and honor the service members who made the ultimate sacrifice for the country. For the University of Missouri (Mizzou), it is also a moment to recognize the responsibility and privilege of supporting the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) sacred mission to account for Americans still missing from past conflicts and bring answers to the families of the fallen.

Through its partnership with DPAA, the University of Missouri supports meaningful, real-world research in areas like history. A postdoctoral DPAA Partner Research Fellow is embedded at the university, spending their time digging into old maps, records, and reports to lay the research foundation that supports a wide range of DPAA operations, from initial case development to field mission planning.

Dr. Chris Deutsch, a DPAA research fellow at Mizzou's Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy, focuses on operational losses—air, sea, and land—from World War II in the Pacific. His work supports the agency's efforts to manage its database and ensure accurate records for those losses.

For the past year and a half, the University of Missouri has contributed to foundational, Geographic Information System (GIS), and case-specific research related to casualties in the WWII Pacific Theater, including the Battle for Iwo Jima. These efforts not only advance the university's academic mission but also contribute to the profound national commitment to honoring those who never returned home.

To raise awareness of DPAA's mission, Mizzou has profiled its DPAA Fellows for Veterans' Day and has worked with the university's Center for the Humanities Veterans Program. These initiatives highlight the vital role academic research plays in supporting DPAA's efforts.

"It is a privilege to work with DPAA on behalf of the servicepeople, and their families, who have sacrificed so much. This work is important not only to the University of Missouri, but also to the United States itself," said Professor Jay Sexton, who is Director of Mizzou's Kinder Institute.

As the nation reflects on Memorial Day, the University of Missouri proudly reaffirms its commitment to this important work. Through continued collaboration and historical inquiry, the university remains dedicated to ensuring that no hero is forgotten and every family receives the answers they deserve.

Learn more about DPAA and its mission at www.dpaa.mil.