

While planning for a Servicemembers United lobbying weekend in DC, Campus Progress, a policy institute affiliated with the Center for American Progress, helped Sara acquire accommodation. The center's aid inspired Sara to provide an interview for Campus Progress before arriving in DC. Isaacson predicted her interview would achieve the same prominence as her previous interviews. However, her story gained nationwide prominence.

"I think it's because \$80,000 makes a good headline."

"It was surreal how it got so big so fast," Sara explained about the explosion in coverage her story received over the weekend.

Lieutenant Dan Choi, an Iraq War veteran discharged under DADT, attended the lobbying weekend, "Choi is someone whom I respect greatly." He stunned Sara by already knowing her story during their first meeting. Nevertheless, Isaacson expressed concern toward the attention her story received, "I suddenly became the face of appeal for DADT, but I didn't consider myself to be that. I was only a cadet, not an actual soldier. It wasn't my career yet."

For six solid weeks, the media sought after Sara. The Rachel Maddow Show interviewed her, and while she declined to respond to The O'Reilly Factor "about two days later, they decided to talk about me anyway."

During times of relentless bullying, Sara tries "to stay positive and be glad that some people never had to question their sexuality." However, when it was too much, Sara would tap her local pillars of support. "I've been blown away by the support here at UNC."

Sara lists Renee Kashawlic, Terri Phoenix, and Dean Melinda Manning as her strongest supporters at UNC. Renee Kashawlic, Community Director of Kenan Community, "has been an incredibly influential person in my life." Terri Phoenix, director of UNC's LGBTQ Center, "helped me connect with different people and organizations throughout campus. She was always there to listen." Melinda Manning, Assistant Dean of Students, "has been really invaluable, due to her power as an administrator. She has been there in meetings with me to give me an equal footing."

Outside of UNC, Sara credits Jeff Sheng, an LGBTQ activist and photographer, and Anthony Bustos, a servicemember discharged under DADT, as bastions of support. "Jeff Sheng gave me a voice." Isaacson did a photo shoot for Sheng titled "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which portrays servicemembers affected by DADT in full military garb, yet with hauntingly obscured faces

as a way to protect their identity. Isaacson's shoot offered her the opportunity to express her feelings and to connect with someone steeped in LGBTQ activism.

Sheng also photographed Anthony Bustos and when ABC news featured Sheng's work, Bustos decided to out himself during the program. "He is someone that really understands what living under DADT is. This guy really knows the military experience of serving under DADT." Bustos and Sara share a perspective of the military that helped them solidify a bond that continues through today, "We texted each other... about any updates on repealing DADT," regarding the most recent attempt to repeal DADT, which ultimately stalled in Congress.

Since her summer media frenzy, Sara has been trying to finish up at UNC in order to graduate at the end of 2011. "I still need one more class for my Chem degree!"

Isaacson withdrew from school in April due to the events surrounding her discharge, "and I withdrew from the most recent semester to make sure that I was both emotionally and financially set to graduate from UNC in 2011."

On her future, Isaacson still wants to serve in the military, "If DADT is repealed, I would join the Air Defense Artillery. I want to prove myself." If DADT is not repealed, "I would like to do something with a social-justice focus, like work for non-profits such as Servicemembers United." ■

