

Lt. Matthew Vanderschuere completed most of his course work for his MPA deep underground.

“I’m the guy who would turn the key to end the world if need be,” he said without even a hint of irony in his voice.

Since there’s been no need to end the world, his 24-hour shifts in the underground bunker provided plenty of time to work on his masters degree.

Vanderschuere, who graduated with his MPA from the School of Public Affairs on May 17, is stationed at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He is a 2006 graduate of the Air Force Academy and he is assigned to monitor up to 50 intercontinental ballistic missiles.

“It’s a unique job,” said the 26-year-old. “Sitting on alert under ground, it’s kind of quiet.”

It’s his responsibility to make sure the security of the nuclear missiles is in place and that all systems are ready to respond. He’s what they call a “missileer.”

Critical as the job is, Vanderschuere said those night shifts tend to be very dull, “so it’s conducive to working on a graduate program. It gives you something good to do with the time.”

He completed most of his coursework online and did his capstone on how to improve regulation, motivation and the organization of the missile program in which he works. Professor Malcolm Goggin was his advisor.

“The unit is trying to adapt to a new culture,” said Vanderschuere. “My capstone was on bridging the gap between the orders coming from leaders at the Pentagon and implementation at the base level.” Several of the ideas presented in his capstone are being reviewed by his supervisors for implementation.

Vanderschuere said he chose the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado Denver because it is highly ranked, convenient to his job and because the online program gave him tremendous flexibility.

Vanderschuere’s wife, Kate, teaches high school English in Cheyenne. He will continue to serve in the Air Force for at least two more years, but eventually they hope to return home to New Jersey where he will use the skills developed in the MPA program to expand his career opportunities.