

PEAY CHAIRS

Peay Chairs recognize faculty for their transformational influence on VMI's academic program and the lives of cadets. Over time, chairs funded by the Peay Endowment will ensure VMI's ability to attract, retain and reward a faculty renowned for its teaching excellence, intellectual rigor, mentorship and academic relevance. Peay Chairs will recognize teaching and research faculty whose accomplishments in the domains of teaching, cadet development, scholarship and citizenship are of the highest order and whose influence on the lives of cadets is profound and lifelong. Peay chairs will also recognize and reward academic department heads who have distinguished themselves by their wise stewardship and evolution of the academic program for which they are responsible.

The purpose is to attract, retain and reward a faculty renowned for its teaching excellence, intellectual rigor, mentorship and academic relevance. Peay Chairs will recognize and reward:

- Teaching and research faculty whose accomplishments in the domains of teaching, cadet development, scholarship and citizenship are of the highest order and whose influence on the lives of cadets is profound and lifelong.
- Academic department heads who have distinguished themselves by their wise stewardship and evolution of the academic program for which they are responsible.

The successful teaching and research candidate for a Peay Chair must be judged to be exceptionally accomplished in the first (teaching proficiency) of the four criteria listed below. In addition, the successful candidate must be judged to be exceptionally accomplished in at least one of the three other criteria and must not be deficient in any of them.

- Teaching proficiency.
- Professional citizenship, including effective membership and leadership on academic or administrative committees, in professional and learned societies, or on nationally recognized boards; community service that is clearly related to the faculty member's area of professional expertise; and an exemplary attitude, appearance and conduct in keeping with the mission of VMI.
- Scholarly engagement, including publications, research, consulting, or superior achievement in creative activities, resulting in distinguished scholarly stature within a field or fields of expertise.
- Cadet development, including attentive academic advising, work with cadet organizations, or other activities that demonstrate mentorship of cadets.

The successful teaching and research faculty member candidate who is a department head also must be judged to be exceptionally accomplished in the two additional criteria listed below.

- Wise stewardship and evolution of the academic program for which he or she is responsible.
- Leadership that ensures their academic program remains fully accredited, vital and relevant to cadets' post-VMI success.

PEAY ENDOWMENT CHAIRS

The General J.H. Binford Peay III '62 Endowment for Academic Excellence recognizes individuals – both alumni and friends – important to its history, who have served it and/or reflected great credit on VMI through their careers and service, by naming each chair for academic excellence it funds after one of them. The following members of the faculty are the first to be recognized with an award of these chairs.

The Jonathan Myrick Daniels '61 Chair for Academic Excellence

Colonel Ryan R. Holston, Ph.D., of the department of international studies and political science is an outstanding teacher who received the 2017 VMI Distinguished Teaching Award. A political theorist, Colonel Holston's scholarly areas of interest include hermeneutics, traditionalism in political discourse, rationalism and religion. His scholarship has appeared in some of the preeminent journals in his field. In recognition of his success as a scholar, he was honored with the Jackson-Hope Prize for Excellence in Published and Scholarly Work in 2015 and 2019.

Jonathan M. Daniels '61

In August 1965 while in Alabama aiding voter registration efforts, Jonathan M. Daniels '61 gave his life to protect that of a teenaged girl. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described Daniels' act as, "[o]ne of the most heroic Christian deeds of which I have heard in my entire ministry." In honor of Daniels' self-sacrifice, VMI established the Jonathan M. Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award in 1997 to recognize individuals who have made significant personal sacrifices to protect or improve the lives of others. A barracks archway and a courtyard also are dedicated to Daniels.

The Bruce C. Gottwald Sr. '54 Chair for Academic Excellence

A past recipient of the VMI Distinguished Teaching Award, Colonel Richard Rowe, Ph.D., of the biology department is regarded by cadets and his peers as a master teacher. During his 12 years as head of the biology department, he laid the groundwork for a renaissance within the department. He has made important contributions to VMI's academic life through his work on the academic board and as a member of the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee. An expert in ornithology, Colonel Rowe has published many articles with colleagues and cadet co-authors. In 1996 and 2017, he and his cadet researchers received the Wilbur S. Hinman Jr. '26 Research Award.

Bruce C. Gottwald Sr. '54

Since graduating from VMI in 1954, Bruce C. Gottwald Sr. '54 has provided extraordinary service to his alma mater. He was a member of the Institute's Board of Visitors – and served as its president from 1998 to 2001 – and served on the boards of the VMI Foundation and the VMI Keydet Club. He was a founding member and currently serves on the Jackson-Hope Fund Board and the Peay Endowment Cabinet, both special extensions of the Foundation. In recognition of his service and his dedicated support, he has received the Foundation's Distinguished Service Award, the Keydet Club's Spirit of VMI Award and the Institute's highest honor, the New Market Medal. Mr. Gottwald also is a nationally respected business and civic leader. His career with NewMarket Corporation, formerly Albemarle Paper Company and then Ethyl Corporation (Virginia), spans more than six decades. He is currently its chairman emeritus, having served as chief executive officer and chairman from its establishment in 2004 until 2014.

PEAY ENDOWMENT CHAIRS

The Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury Chair for Academic Excellence

Colonel Gregory Topsana, Ph.D., joined the VMI faculty in 2000, shortly after receiving his doctoral degree from Virginia Tech. Under his leadership, the astronomy curriculum was enhanced, course offerings added and the minor revitalized. His passion for astronomy in the classroom, in his scholarship and in the lab with cadets is boundless. He spends significant time with cadets, overseeing their lab work, research and field trips. His service on two important committees – Tenure and Promotion and Institute Honors – stand out. His peers' decision to elect him to serve two terms on the former committee testifies to their high regard for him. Year after year, as a teacher, scholar, mentor and professional citizen, Topsana has brought distinction to himself and the Institute.

Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury

Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury was a Virginia-born naval officer who conducted decades of pioneering research in the fields of navigation, hydrography, geography, meteorology and oceanography in the mid-19th century. His research and writings, which helped sailors shorten passages and aided the development of transoceanic telegraph cables, earned him widespread national and international acclaim and such titles as "The Scientist of the Seas" and "The Pathfinder of the Seas." Maury also commanded the U.S. Naval Observatory, advocated for the establishment of a federal naval academy, and conducted research in the field of naval mines. In 1868, he joined the Institute's faculty as a professor of physics. He served in that capacity until his death in 1873.

The Major General James M. Morgan Jr. '45 Chair for Academic Excellence

Colonel Troy Siemers, Ph.D., received his doctoral degree from the University of Virginia and joined the VMI faculty in 1999. As head of the applied math department, he led the curriculum transition from pure mathematics to applied math. His recent service to VMI has been exemplary, as demonstrated by his leadership in reaccreditation and the development of new course "Math that Matters." He has an excellent teaching record and is among cadet's favorite teachers in the math department. Siemers has a remarkable record of interdisciplinary research, having published with scholars from a wide range of disciplines, to include physics, psychology, chemistry, engineering, biology and economics and business. He is an active mentor to cadets, leading study abroad programs, taking cadets on field trips and promoting undergraduate research.

Major General James M. Morgan Jr. '45

Major General James M. Morgan Jr. '45 began his 38-year career of service to VMI as an instructor in the department of civil engineering in 1946. Ten years later, he was a full professor and head of the department. In 1965, Morgan became the dean of the faculty, serving in that position for 18 years. A widely published author, Morgan also was a citizen-soldier, retiring from the Army Reserve as a colonel in 1981. Major General Morgan exemplifies what VMI always has strived to produce: Graduates who are leaders in their chosen professions and dedicated to serving their country, their fellow citizens and the Institute.