



# **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Review: 30 Day Report**

**1 July 2021**

Prepared by the  
Superintendent  
Major General Cedric T. Wins

Approved by the  
VMI Board of Visitors  
Mr. Thomas R. Watjen, President

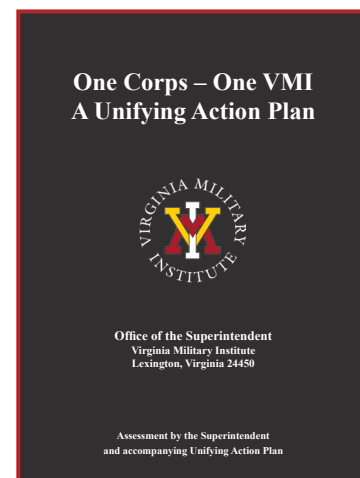
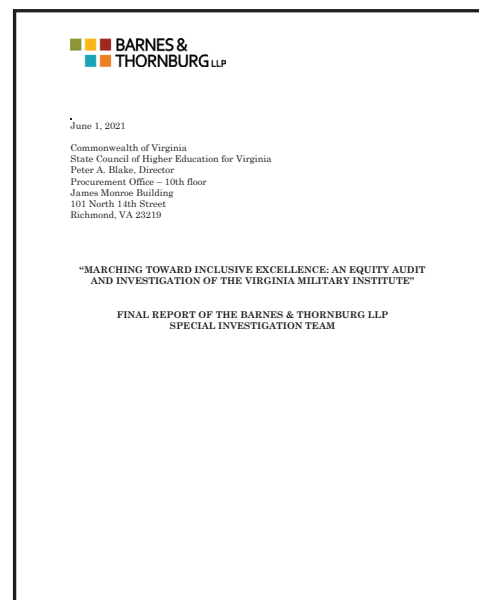


On 1 June 2021, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia released the final report of a state-ordered review of the Virginia Military Institute's culture, policies, procedures, and discipline with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. The review, by Indianapolis-based law firm, Barnes & Thornburg, was conducted over the course of six months and was based on interviews, focus groups, a survey, and a review of more than 100,000 pages of documents provided by VMI.

The VMI Board of Visitors met on 2 June 2021 to formally review the report. The Board of Visitors created a Recommendations Review Committee to review the recommendations with VMI's senior staff and report back to the full Board of Visitors before its next meeting in September 2021. The board also released a statement to the VMI community finding "that most of the recommendations contained in the report should be pursued and have instructed the administration to determine the feasibility of implementation."

In addition, Maj. Gen. Wins, VMI's superintendent, released his unifying action plan, One Corps – One VMI, which is designed to turn VMI's collective focus on the mission of educating and training leaders of character and citizen-soldiers. The plan focuses on the 21st Century where the culture and climate of VMI is such that any cadet, faculty, or staff member can have an inclusive VMI experience. Specifically, One Corps – One VMI focuses on five outcomes:

1. **Honor.** The VMI Honor Code must continue to be a way of life for each and every cadet and alumnus.
2. **Diversity and inclusion.** VMI must ensure that every cadet, regardless of race, gender, religion, or nationality, feels a part of the VMI legacy.
3. **The VMI brand.** The outward face of VMI should be built around young leaders of character who exemplify honor, civility, and service above self.
4. **Competing and winning.** VMI cadets must compete to win in the classroom, on the hill through their cadet life in barracks and on the field of competition.
5. **One VMI.** VMI's strength is in its diversity of experiences, thought, abilities, and backgrounds. No single cadet's challenge is greater than another's. It is through the reliance on their fellow cadets that the Corps succeeds.



The final report from the commonwealth made 42 recommendations for improvement in eight areas. Most of the commonwealth's recommendations already align with the outcomes, tasks, and objectives of the One Corps – One VMI unifying action plan. The superintendent tasked his senior staff with evaluating each recommendation and providing an update on requirements for implementation. VMI staff have completed their review of the recommendations and provided the following status updates.

Of these 42 recommendations, eight are substantially complete, 21 were in-progress or ongoing prior to the report's publication, and seven require further study or review. Six recommendations can only be implemented by outside organizations such as the General Assembly or the VMI Alumni Agencies (a separate and distinct legal entity).

## Recommendation 1: Maintaining Accountability

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status Report</b>
1(a)	VMI should create a comprehensive, unified, public strategic plan around DEI improvements with measurable goals.	VMI's One Virginia Plan is drafted and awaiting input from the new chief diversity officer who begins duty on July 9, 2021.
1(b)	Beginning in January 2022, and for a period of at least three years, VMI should submit quarterly reports to the Board of Visitor, to SCHEV, and to the General Assembly.	The BOV will volunteer to report quarterly to the governor, General Assembly, and State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. The VMI administration is working to develop a process and protocol.
1(c)	The General Assembly and the executive branch should appoint an independent committee or other entity to evaluate these reports.	Recommendation for General Assembly and administration.
1(d)	In constituting the Committee, the General Assembly and executive branch should prioritize diverse members.	Recommendation for General Assembly and administration.
1(e)	The Board of Visitors and administration of VMI should be required to take regular annual DEI training.	Recommendation will be implemented. Specific training TBD and coordinated through the chief diversity officer.

## Recommendation 2: Improve diversity in leadership and the Corps

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status Report</b>
2(a)	VMI should include in its plan a strategy with measurable goals to recruit, maintain, and promote minority and female administrators, faculty, and staff.	VMI Diversity Recruitment Plan was completed 30 April 2021. Training is underway for equity coordinators on full-time hiring panels. Formal onboarding / support programs for diverse new staff in development.
2(b)	VMI should establish and support a Faculty Senate and Faculty DEI Committee (or similar bodies) with a direct reporting line to MG Wins and the Board of Visitors.	Requires further study.
2(c)	VMI should monitor public statistical information on DEI metrics and initiatives from other military colleges and Virginia institutions of higher learning.	DEI dashboard developed and presented to the Board of Visitors. Chief diversity officer and Office of Assessment and Institutional Research to refine as appropriate.
2(d)	VMI should review the feasibility of establishing and funding scholarships and support for minority non-athlete cadet recruitment and retention.	VMI will try to understand industry best practices and work with the VMI Alumni Agencies and Virginia Attorney General's office to review the feasibility of using VMI or private funds to support minority cadet recruitment and retention.

## Recommendation 3: Monitor and adjust institutions and traditions

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status Report</b>
3(a)	VMI should perform a root cause analysis as to why minority cadets are drummed out at a disproportionate rate.	3(a) and 3(b) have been assigned to an ad hoc committee that will conduct a full review of the Honor Court Standard Operating Procedures and will also include examination of statistical data. Review begins 8 July and will last six weeks.
3(b)	VMI should analyze statistics on cases brought to the Honor Court and monitor and address any disproportionate impact on minority cadets.	See 3(a)
3(c)	VMI should clarify what constitutes an Honor Code violation and what penalty will be applied.	The Honor Code states, "A cadet will not lie, cheat steal, nor tolerate those who do." The elements of proof for charges, outlined in the Honor Court Standard Operating Procedures, are used to determine whether an Honor Code violation has occurred. The only penalty for an Honor Code violation is dismissal. Blue Book violations and other situations where laws may have been broken are handled by law enforcement and the commandant.
3(d)	VMI should examine data related to punishments to ensure that they are applied equitably.	The deputy commandant is currently conducting a complete review of the Blue Book. The cadet government advisor is reviewing the White Book. The reviews will be completed no later than Aug. 15.
3(e)	VMI should critically study the honor Court's "education" policy and assess whether and how this practice is consistent with VMI's "single sanction" policy.	The Honor Court Standard Operating Procedures review will examine the "education" policy. See item 3(a).
3(f)	VMI should consider non-unanimous verdicts, faculty on juries, and prohibiting juror strikes based on race or gender and track information on juries.	The Honor Court Standard Operating Procedures review will examine jury selection (to include juror strikes) and composition (race and gender). The review will also discuss the process of logging and tracking the composition of juries.
3(g)	VMI should permit cadets to have the assistance of legal counsel in an Honor Court proceeding.	The Honor Court Standard Operating Procedures review will examine the policy for outside counsel.
3(h)	VMI should provide training to all faculty defense advisors and cadets	The Superintendent's Representatives to the Honor Court, with guidance from

	who run the Honor Court including on implicit bias.	VMI’s counsel, will develop and education plan for faculty, staff, and cadets who serve as defense advocates.
3(i)	VMI should ensure that all incoming cadets, including athletic recruits, are provided with standardized, complete materials on what to expect before they matriculate.	Currently, most marketing material tries to portray the VMI experience as one that is physically and mentally demanding. Admissions Open House visits are designed to give prospective cadets a better understanding for the challenges that lie ahead should they choose VMI. The overall recruitment process for all cadets will be reviewed.
3(j)	VMI's Alumni Agencies should supplement their DEI plans to evaluate and implement DEI efforts undertaken by the alumni associations at peer schools.	The VMI Alumni Agencies are an independent 501(c)3 separate and distinct from the Virginia Military Institute.

**Recommendation 4: Temper associations between VMI and the Civil War and Confederacy**

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status Report</b>
4(a)	VMI should continue to reduce and replace the emphasis on traditions and iconography associated with the Civil War/Confederacy	Memorials and Commemorations Committee of the Board of Visitors continues its work to assess and determine a course of action for references to Confederate iconography on the VMI post.
4(b)	VMI should solicit input from current cadets and organizations (including the Promaji Club) when considering these actions.	The commandant’s office has eliminated associations between activities it sponsors and the Civil War and the Confederacy.
4(c)	VMI should ensure equitable practices around allowing cadets to associate with and participate in community events.	The deputy commandant is reviewing the permit submission and approval process to ensure that equitable practices exist.
4(d)	VMI and the Alumni Agencies should adopt and adhere to a policy on acceptance of funds.	The VMI Alumni Agencies are an independent 501(c)3 separate and distinct from the Virginia Military Institute.

**Recommendation 5: Actively address racist, sexist, and other unacceptable language and behavior**

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status Report</b>
5(a)	VMI should design and implement sensitivity and bystander training for cadets	Ongoing. VMI currently conducts STEP UP bystander intervention training for the 4 <sup>th</sup> class and advanced bystander intervention training for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> class. In concert with the chief diversity officer, the inspector general will research other

		professionally facilitated, cultural and bystander awareness training programs to supplement current programs.
5(b)	VMI should implement a social media policy	Mostly complete, needs further review. General Order 71 – Social Media Policy governs VMI and its employees’ use of social media and provides guidelines for what constitutes appropriate commenting on VMI-sanctioned channels. Chapter 30 of the Blue Book covers constitutionally-protected speech and addresses the use of social media to “harass, slander or demean” others. Additionally, Chapter 30 addresses the use of anonymous social media apps. Further, General Committee rules prohibit using social media to “bring harm to others or discredit the Institute.” Communications & Marketing will work to consolidate all policies into a single location as well as work to raise awareness of such policies.
5(c)	VMI should ensure a strong, vocal, unified, and public response to discriminatory, racist, or sexist acts.	Ongoing. The inspector general / Title IX coordinator will work with the new chief diversity officer who reports on 9 July to address a more public response to these incidents while also making sure to comply with all necessary confidentiality requirements. The inspector general / Title IX coordinator and chief diversity officer will work together with members of the Center for Leadership and Ethics to plan activities, conferences, and speakers offering deepening understanding and practical skill sets to promote and communicate inclusive, empathetic behavior and leadership.
5(d)	VMI should augment its efforts to combat and prevent sexual violence.	Ongoing. VMI recently hired a new inspector general/Title IX coordinator and has brought on two assistant inspector general/Title IX coordinators who will begin work in August 2021. As a result of these actions, the inspector general/Title IX Office is fully staffed. The inspector general is reviewing whether the office should be augmented with additional personnel. The inspector general is partnering with the Building Bridges service club, the Athletic Department, and the Cadet Counseling Center to coordinate activities in the fall



		to bring attention to dating/domestic/sexual violence awareness and prevention. In addition, the inspector general / Title IX coordinator will begin to coordinate with the new chief diversity officer on any new joint initiatives to prevent sexual violence.
5(e)	The General Assembly should consider amending Va. Code 23.1-808.	Recommendation for General Assembly.
5(f)	VMI should consider amending General Order 16's amnesty provision.	Needs further review.
5(g)	VMI should consider amending or removing, the channel for reporting Title IX sexual misconduct through the Cadet Equity Association.	Ongoing. Title IX violations do not and have never had to be reported thru the Cadet Equity Association. The Cadet Equity Association has worked as a "force multiplier" to assist the inspector general in becoming aware of possible incidents of sexual misconduct. The inspector general, in concert with the Cadet Equity Association, will continue to stress this relationship and correct perceptions during ongoing training for the Corps of Cadets and the VMI community. The inspector general will work closely with the Cadet Equity Association and Commandant's Office to examine reported conduct for potential Title IX violations.
5(h)	VMI should revise its door locking policy.	Policy allowing doors to be locked between taps and 6 a.m. was revised in January 2021.
5(i)	VMI should make LGBTQ issues a priority in its diversity efforts, and should make clear, and enforce, that homophobic conduct and language is unacceptable at VMI.	Ongoing. VMI senior leadership has expressed many times that homophobic conduct will not be tolerated. The inspector general and chief diversity officer will examine training content and scenarios for inclusivity and sensitivity in deliverables and will support the Commandant's Office and others in their efforts to reinforce this message during training for the Corps of Cadets and the VMI community.

Recommendation 6: Encourage reporting and transparency

	Recommendations	Status Report
6(a)	VMI leadership design a campaign to encourage reporting of misconduct	Ongoing. The inspector general is working with Communications & Marketing to redesign posters, cards, and

	beyond simply making mechanisms and opportunities available.	handouts to encourage reporting. The inspector general plans to conduct biennial focus groups with cadets and employees to explore barriers and concerns about reporting misconduct.
6(b)	Consistent with General Order 13, VMI should supplement its reporting procedures with a confidential, anonymous reporting system (to the extent permitted by law).	Completed. VMI currently utilizes dedicated, anonymized email and voicemail systems for confidential, anonymous reporting. The inspector general and chief diversity officer will research confidential, anonymous reporting systems used at other colleges and universities in Virginia to examine their methods, uses, and the benefits to their community.
6(c)	VMI should collect and publish detailed financial information from the Alumni Agencies on how funds are raised and spent.	The VMI Alumni Agencies are an independent 501(c)3 separate and distinct from the Virginia Military Institute.

Recommendation 7: Recognize and celebrate other cultures

	Recommendations	Status Report
7(a)	VMI should evaluate its policy on appropriate hair styles among members of the corps of cadets and consider adopting Army Regulation 670-1.	VMI will conduct a "quick step" approach in implementing AR 670-1 grooming standards into the VMI Blue Book. The Commandant staff will use the first semester to begin implementation and adjustment as appropriate with a second semester mandatory requirement to follow the newly implemented grooming standards.
7(b)	External committee for formal actions that VMI should take to honor diverse individuals or entities on post.	Ongoing. The inspector general will work with the new chief diversity officer and VMI leadership on the feasibility of an external committee to assist VMI in establishing new initiatives to honor diverse individuals on Post. This may begin as a partnership with other local entities to honor both historical contributions and current contributions of diverse, under-represented individuals and/or groups in our community.

Recommendation 8: Address tensions between athletes and non-athletes

	Recommendations	Status Report
8(a)	VMI should formally evaluate its status as a Division I Institution.	Needs further review.

8(b)	VMI should create a written, detailed, measurable plan to bridge the athlete/non-athlete divide.	The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics believes that 8-b and 8-c should be consolidated. It appears to be redundant to have a department authored plan and a collaboration with the Commandant (8-c) for a separate plan. VMI Athletic Department and the Commandant’s Office will develop a plan and measures for addressing 8(b) and 8(c).
8(c)	VMI should develop and implement measures to make the athlete and non-athlete experience more uniform, and to build mutual understanding.	See 8(b). Additionally, General Order 1 is being modified for the upcoming academic year. One result will likely be improved mutual understanding and uniform experiences between NCAA athletes and the rest of the Corps.
8(d)	VMI should increase opportunities for athlete/non-athlete interaction, such as through roommate assignments and the dyke system.	The cadet government advisor will lead focus groups during the first semester to review housing and dyke policies.
8(e)	VMI should establish uniform guidelines for the recruitment of athletes, requiring transparency and promotion of the VMI experience.	The Office of Admissions will coordinate with the commandant’s office and athletic department to provide expanded opportunities for athletic recruits to participate in admissions interviews, and direct meetings with faculty, commandant’s staff, and ROTC representatives. The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics already has strong recommended actions to the coaching staff on recruiting to illuminate the entirety of the VMI journey to prospective student-athletes. A more formal, written and documented approach can be undertaken with the understanding that each recruiting experience is unique. These developed recruiting guidelines would provide templates for which coaches would be able to provide prospective cadet athletes the VMI experience to the fullest extent possible.

### Additional Activities

On 16 June 2021, Maj. Gen. Wins held two separate meetings with 1.) Ms. Marge Connelly and Mr. Peter Blake from SCHEV, and 2.) Mr. Atif Qarni, Mrs. Fran Bradford from the Education Secretariat along with Dr. Janice Underwood, the commonwealth's chief diversity officer. These meetings outlined reporting structures and expectations going forward and outlined commitments to visit the Institute. Additional clarifications are expected in each of these areas in future meetings specifically in regard to the designated office(s) that will serve as the central point of contact with VMI.

Additional meetings have been held with leadership from the Rockbridge NAACP, Virginia State Conference NAACP, Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, and other policymakers. Maj. Gen. Wins has maintained routine and active communications with Governor Northam '81 outlining VMI's actions taken to date and projecting future considerations.

VMI's new chief diversity officer, Dr. Jamica N. Love, will begin her responsibilities on 9 July 2021. Recruitment for additional staff support of the chief diversity officer will begin immediately upon her arrival.

## ANNEX A: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

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In recent months during the course of the Equity Audit and Investigation VMI began several actions that have been undertaken including:

### **(A) Expanded Enrollment of Cadets of Color and Under-Represented Populations**

- Between 1992 and 2020, VMI has improved the enrollment of Cadets of color from 12.7% to 23.4% of each class.
- Total enrollment of Under-Represented Populations (“URP”) increased from 29% in 2014 to 35% in 2020.

### **(B) Recruitment and Improved Retention of Female Cadets**

- Between 2009 and 2018, VMI has improved its 6-year graduation rates for female Cadets from 65% to 79%.
- Female students make up approximately 12-15% of each incoming class, with a high of 17% in 2018.

### **(C) Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Academic Faculty and Coaching Staff**

- 34% of full-time, tenure track faculty members are female.
- 2 (out of 15) department heads are female, as of August 2021.
- 11% of full-time, tenure track faculty are persons of color.
- Between 2013 and 2020, VMI increased its Intercollegiate Athletics Department staffing from 4 to 11 women, and from 5 to 11 ethnic minorities.
- VMI’s ongoing initiatives to promote and increase diversity recruitment are detailed below.

### **(D) Chief Diversity Officer**

- VMI has announced the hiring of its first Chief Diversity Officer, reporting directly to the Superintendent.
- VMI conducted a national search, and the search committee included the various classifications of employees on Post as well as an external advisor, the Chief Diversity Officer from The Citadel.
- Start date is July 9, 2021.

### (E) Appointment of New VMI Superintendent

- Maj. Gen. (MG) Cedric Wins was confirmed as the 15th VMI Superintendent in April 2021, by a unanimous vote of the VMI BOV. MG Wins served as interim Superintendent effective November 2020.
- Prior to assuming the role of interim Superintendent, MG Wins spent 34 years as an officer in the U.S. Army. In his final command, MG Wins was the first Commanding General of the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command. He holds two master's degrees, one in management from the Florida Institute of Technology and one in national security and strategic studies from the National War College.
- During his time as a Cadet at VMI, MG Wins was a standout basketball player who finished his basketball career as one of the top five scorers in school history. In 1985, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in economics and business, and MG Wins commissioned into the Army as a field artillery officer.
- MG Wins spent much of the first three months of his tenure as VMI's interim Superintendent conducting an assessment of the culture, policies, and procedures currently in place.
- In spring 2021, MG Wins conducted at least 24 "listening sessions" with the VMI community (Cadets, faculty, staff, and alumni) on key issues, including race and gender relations, and gathered input on VMI's path forward. Themes during the staff sessions tended to focus on issues of compensation, career advancement, and working conditions. Faculty themes focused on pay, shared governance, and diversity hiring. Cadet themes centered on racism, sexism, treating all people with dignity and respect, the division between athletes and non-athletes, time management, and the importance of the honor code.
- MG Wins has identified five outcomes for the Institute moving forward:
  1. **Honor.** The VMI Honor Code must continue to be a way of life for each and every Cadet and alumnus.
  2. **Diversity and inclusion.** VMI must ensure that every Cadet, regardless of race, gender, religion, or nationality, feels a part of the VMI legacy.
  3. **The VMI brand.** The outward face of VMI should be built around young leaders of character who exemplify honor, civility, and service above self.
  4. **Competing and winning.** VMI Cadets must compete to win in the classroom, on the drill field, and on the field of competition.
  5. **One VMI.** VMI's strength is in its diversity of experiences, thought, abilities, and backgrounds. No single Cadet's challenge is greater than another's. It is through the reliance on their fellow Cadets that the Corps succeeds.

### **(F) Appointment of the First Female Regimental Commander**

- Cadet Kasey Meredith '22 has been named VMI's next Cadet First Captain and Regimental Commander, the highest-ranking position a Cadet can earn, for the 2021-2022 academic year. She is the 188th regimental commander and the first female in VMI's 182-year history to hold the position
- Cadet Meredith is an International Studies major, with a minor in Spanish, and she is a member of the Marine Corps ROTC program. Cadet Meredith plans to commission in the U.S. Marine Corps after graduation.
- As regimental commander, Meredith will be the military commander of the Corps of Cadets, responsible to the Commandant of Cadets for the training, appearance, discipline, health, welfare, and morale of the Corps.
- Cadet Meredith has taken on increasingly responsible leadership positions during her cadetship. She currently serves as the 1st Battalion Sergeant Major and has served as a Color Guard corporal, as well as a fire team leader in the Marine Corps ROTC Detachment.

### **(G) On Post Success by Cadets of Color and Female Cadets**

- Using a snapshot from the decade that preceded the promotion of Cadet Meredith, VMI is actively encouraging gender and racial diversity in Cadet leadership roles:
  - Regimental Executive Officers (2)
  - Battalion Commanders (4)
  - Battalion Executive Officers (2)
  - Regimental Staff Captains (18)
  - Company Commanders (19)
  - Honor Court Members (10)
  - Class Officers (4)
- In addition, between 2016 and 2020, the percentage of Institute awards earned by Cadets of color and female Cadets increased from 29% to 35% (of the total awards).

### **(H) Long-Term Benefits from VMI Diversity Conference**

- In 2013, VMI hosted a weekend long Diversity Conference, with several focus groups including the female, African American, and NCAA athlete Cadets.
- These focus groups provided tremendous feedback to the Institute, and resulted in a revised and expanded marketing campaign to reach a more diverse population of female, African American, and Latinx Cadet prospects.
- As a direct result of the feedback obtained at its inaugural Diversity Conference, VMI achieved a 43% increase in inquiries over a five-year period. Further, the Institute achieved a 100% increase in female early decision applicants and a 46% increase in all female applicants since 2006.

**(I) Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of VMI Integration**

- In 2019, VMI hosted a panel discussion to commemorate the 50th anniversary of integrating the Institute.
- The Institute welcomed back members of the Class of 1972, the inaugural integrated class (each of whom matriculated in 1968).
- The panel discussion video is available at <https://vimeo.com/337319081>.

**(J) The Foundational Principles in the Five Pillars Plan**

- As released in July 2020, VMI firmly disavows a culture that tolerates or promotes racism or discrimination.
- VMI has and will continue to act swiftly when such incidents occur.
- The five pillars: Education; the VMI Corps of Cadets; Promoting Increased Commissioning; VMI Symbolology; and VMI Alumni.
- The full text is available at <https://vmi.app.box.com/v/GeneralPeayLetter-29July2020>.
- Expansion and updates of the Five Pillars are being undertaken by the Superintendent.

**(K) DEI Committee of the VMI Board of Visitors (“BOV”)**

- DEI Committee formed in October 2020 to oversee and monitor all race and gender related matters.
- Includes members of the BOV, two non-voting members of the VMI staff, and one non-voting Cadet member.
- Inaugural meeting held in November 2020, and included all BOV members, the Commonwealth’s Chief Diversity Officer, the Secretary of Education, and the Deputy Secretary of Education.
- Committee charter adopted by the BOV, and the committee has been incorporated into the BOV by-laws.
- Recent meetings have included detailed reports on the Institute’s diversity dashboard, diversity recruitment planning document (draft), updates on the hiring of VMI’s Chief Diversity Officer and the *ONE Virginia Plan*.



**(L) General Adoption of Delegate Jennifer Carroll Foy's Seven Guiding Principles on DEI**

- At the October 2020 BOV meeting, Delegate Carroll Foy's (VMI '03) Seven Guiding Principles were adopted into the VMI Specified and Implied Task list, as follows:
  1. Updating the policies, procedures, plans, and goals to include a diverse constituency.
  2. Developing a culture where racism of any kind is not tolerated.
  3. Racism, sexism, and bullying should be handled by the Cadet run General Committee, and elevated to the same level as the Honor System – single sanction.
  4. Ongoing diversity training for the Leadership, Staff, and Faculty – conducted on a semi-annual basis.
  5. Mandatory diversity education for the entire corps.
  6. A fully funded Diversity & Inclusion office that works with the Cadet Equity Association.
  7. Partnership with organizations with proven track records of identifying qualified minority applicants who are seeking careers in civil and/or military service.
- The BOV recommended that principle #3 be further studied by the new DEI Committee with a recommendation to the full BOV.
- Additionally, the BOV recommended that principle #7 be reviewed by the DEI Committee for recommendation to the full BOV after further development and consideration.

**(M) Diversity Dashboard**

- Launched in October 2020 to monitor admissions, graduation rates, and hiring at all levels of the Institute, to encourage and enhance DEI initiatives.
- Developed with input from the Teaching and Research Faculty, Administrative and Professional Faculty, Classified Employees, the Commonwealth's Chief Diversity Officer, and DEI professionals from James Madison University.
- Modeled on the Diversity Dashboard at The College of William and Mary.

**(N) Ceremonies and Memorials Naming and Review Committee of the BOV**

- Formed in October 2020 to review and make recommendations to the Board regarding all confederate iconography and make recommendations going forward for naming. Specific actions approved at May 2021 BOV meeting include:
  - Removing the name of General "Stonewall" Jackson from Jackson Memorial Hall and the arch that is the main entrance to the Old Barracks.

- *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* to honor all former Cadets who have died in wars and military conflicts from 1839 to present day, not just VMI Cadets who died in the Battle of New Market.
- New Market Battle mural to be preserved and possibly moved to a new location. Contextualization of the mural is to be deployed.

### **(N) Relocation of Stonewall Jackson Statue**

- In October 2020, the VMI BOV voted unanimously to remove the statue of confederate General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson from the Post.
- The statue was relocated to an appropriate storage location and will be erected at the New Market Battlefield in the summer of 2021.

### **(O) Modification of the New Market Ceremony**

- All alumni/Cadets who have sacrificed their lives in military service are remembered, across all wars, without naming any specific alumna/alumnus or Cadet, or focusing on any particular war or conflict.
- This ceremony is now known as the Memorial Parade, and it was held for the first time May 14, 2021.

### **(P) Changes to New Cadet Orientation**

- Relocated the new Cadet oath ceremony from New Market battlefield to the VMI Post and discontinued the re-enactment charge on the New Market battlefield by new Cadets.
- The theme of these events remains perseverance, determination in overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles, and the class unity.
- VMI is assessing conducting “staff rides” at the New Market battlefield in order to educate the Cadets on military tactics, and the significance of this battle to the Corps.

### **(Q) Relocation of Flag Poles**

- Centering the Parade Ground flagpoles on New Barracks (Marshall Arch).
- Previously, the flagpoles were centered on the statue of Stonewall Jackson (since removed) and Old Barracks.
- Target completion date is August 2021.

**(R) Refurbishing the Jonathan Daniels Courtyard**

- Jonathan Daniels was a VMI alumnus and valedictorian of the Class of 1961.
- Mr. Daniels was killed while protecting two black teenagers during a Civil Rights protest in 1965.
- In 1997, the VMI BOV established the Jonathan M. Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award in order to emphasize the virtue of humanitarian public service and to recognize individuals who have made significant personal sacrifices to protect or improve the lives of others.
- Previous recipients of the Daniels Award include former President Jimmy Carter, who received the inaugural award in 2001; former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, honored in 2006; international humanitarian worker Paul Hebert '68, in 2011; Georgia congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis in 2015; and children's rights activist Carolyn Miles in 2019.
- A courtyard honoring the life and memory of Jonathan Daniels is located adjacent to the VMI Barracks.
- Important enhancements include physical markers to denote key dates in Daniels' life, additional quote(s), and enhanced landscaping.

**(S) Enhanced Racial Sensitivity Training for Cadets, Faculty and Staff**

- A Cadet-led Cultural Awareness Training program is currently in development.
- The goal of this training is to enhance the Corps of Cadets' understanding of cultural differences amongst members of the Corps and to promote civility and respect amongst the same.
- Assistance provided to the Cadets by the Assistant Commandant for Cadet Government, and the program will be enhanced by the upcoming appointment of VMI's Chief Diversity Officer.
- Resources used in this program development include input from VMI alumni, the U.S./ Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, the
- VMI Alumni Association's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, ongoing focus groups with Cadets/faculty and current Cadet leadership.
- In addition, Cadet Government organizations (Officer of the Guard Association and the Cadet Equity Association) implement sensitivity/cultural awareness training in addition to punitive actions when applicable.

**(T) VMI Academic Curriculum**

- Including the U.S. civil rights movement (“American Civic Experience”) as part of a new core curriculum course to be required of all Cadets. Syllabus encompasses numerous key Supreme Court cases from the Civil Rights era, as well as essential Constitutional principles.
- Expanded search for a new Chair in American Constitutional History (a privately funded, fully endowed faculty position).
- Reviewing history elective coursework for revisions to focus and syllabus, including The Civil War and Reconstruction, History of the South from 1865, 19th Century South Africa, Africa in Pre and Modern Times, The Old South and The African-American Experience.

**(U) Other DEI Coursework Components and Institute Resources**

- Compiled a summary of VMI ROTC lessons and training in DEI matters.
- The Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force ROTC academic course include DEI components across a variety of forums and tools.
- In addition, the VMI Commandant’s Office, Title IX Office, Department of Human Resources, Academic Faculty, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Center for Leadership and Ethics are engaged in training and resource development.
- For example, VMI conducts focus groups to raise awareness around unconscious bias, designing role play and discussion points to build communication skills and understand micro aggressions, creating self-assessment tools in advance of training to prepare for uncomfortable discussions, providing educational remedies to facilitate conflict resolution, and organizing reverse mentoring relationships to create awareness, opportunities for inclusion, and shared purpose.

**(V) Review and Enhancement of the Human Resources Diversity Hiring Program**

- To be adopted consistent with the goals of the *ONE Virginia Plan*, the SCHEV “Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education,” and the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management “Navigating Pathways to Workforce Excellence” plan.
- To be finalized concurrent with the hiring of VMI’s Chief Diversity Officer.
- Expand advertising to increase diverse applicants (race, gender, veterans, and disabled).
- Revise training for hiring committee members, e.g., to address bias and discrimination.
- Include an equity coordinator on each hiring committee, and increase diversity in committee membership.
- Review hiring, onboarding and orientation processes.

- Note increase in female full time, tenure track faculty from 18% to 34% over last 10 years.
- Revise employee training, *e.g.*, civility, diversity, discrimination, and bias in the workplace.
- Embrace an environment where every employee is aware of and responsible for advancing diversity, equity and inclusive excellence.
- Identify, evaluate and eliminate institutional barriers to inclusion.

### **(W) Expansion of Cadet Recruiting Diversity Initiatives**

- Building on the core goal of fostering an inclusive community of minority, female, first generation college students, and other underrepresented populations.
- Expand targeted recruiting activities within and beyond the Commonwealth (in person, digital, direct mail, etc.).
- Tap resources in the Cadet, alumni and staff populations to help identify underrepresented populations and assist in recruitment of prospective Cadets.
- Participate in regional and national college fairs and other recruiting programs that focus on attracting students of color, females, and other underrepresented groups.
- Identify regional and Virginia high schools that enroll a high percentage of students of color and conduct admissions recruiting visits to these schools on a regular basis.
- Conduct information sessions targeting Junior ROTC programs regionally and within Virginia.
- Develop partnerships with schools, programs, and associations that work within communities to assist first generation, low-income and other underrepresented students to achieve academic success and provide opportunities for these students to educate them about the educational opportunities of higher education.
- Establish an “advisory” group comprised of Cadets, faculty, staff, and alumni to provide suggestions, feedback and guidance related to recruiting activities and other admissions functions geared toward the established goal.
- Pursue membership in the Coalition for College organization. This organization consists of a group of more than 150 colleges and universities in efforts to increase higher education access among underrepresented students and ensuring that all students have equal access to college-planning tools.
- Evaluating use of the Common Application as a means to identify, recruit, and enroll underrepresented groups.
- Expand the existing direct mail campaign to increase the number of underrepresented populations that are part of this method of identifying potential Cadets.

**(X) Consistent Implementation of Title IX Training and Compliance**

- In 2017, VMI successfully completed a monitor program implemented by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights (“OCR”) of the U.S. Department of Education.
- As part of this review, VMI conducted a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of its efforts to prevent and address sexual harassment and sexual assault and to promote a non-discriminatory climate, and submitted this documentation to OCR.
- OCR reviewed VMI’s complete case files and determined that VMI’s responses to the reports were adequate under Title IX’s prompt and equitable standards. OCR concluded that “VMI has fulfilled the requirements of the Agreement and that no further monitoring of VMI’s compliance with the Agreement is required. We are therefore closing our monitoring of this complaint effective the date of this letter.”
- VMI’s policies against harassment and discrimination, including its Title IX policy, are available in multiple locations throughout Post, listed on the VMI website and distributed to Cadets and staff. In addition, Cadets are given a laminated card at the beginning of each academic year with information on VMI’s Title IX policy, where reports can be made and support services available.
- VMI continues to deliver and invest in training enhancements to broaden our community’s understanding beyond Title IX protections and prohibited behaviors. VMI’s Title IX training programs are designed not only to communicate and identify behaviors that negatively impact our community but also to create a learning experience that is intended to result in the growth and personal understanding of individual responsibilities on the part of all members.
- VMI’s current training is comprehensive in describing the Institute’s response to reports of misconduct and strives to educate Cadets and employees on the process of recognizing and reporting impermissible acts of discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking.
- These trainings, in addition to being interactive and engaging, are based in research and around best practices for building healthy learning communities and promoting the value and dignity of each individual. Through a combination of internal and external programs, we deliver a wide range of training, facilitated by trained peer educators and professional staff.
- VMI’s programs are delivered both in large group classes, which have included breakout sessions to practice skills, and in small group settings allowing for interaction and in-depth discussions prompted by scenarios of consent, components of healthy relationships, implicit bias, bystander empowerment, supporting survivors, and understanding various types of violence, harassment, and discrimination.
- Through an ongoing review of these Title IX educational initiatives and involving a cross-section of our Cadet and employee leadership, VMI seeks to foster a culture of empathy, trust, and psychological safety, thereby sustaining an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

- Compiled “IG/Title IX Coordinator- Sponsored/Related Training,” which provides a month-by-month synopsis of the expansive training offered on Post.
- All Cadets complete online Anti-Harassment training.
- Cadets and staff receive annual Title IX training presented by the Inspector General/Title IX Coordinator.
- At the beginning of the academic year, Cadet leadership receives a full day of Discrimination, Harassment and Investigations training presented by Woods Rogers PLC, as well as sexual assault awareness training presented by the VMI Police, the Cadet Counseling Center and Project Horizon.
- Each Cadet class is briefed separately on Title IX at the beginning of each academic year.
- Each sophomore completes Bystander Intervention Training facilitated by the Cadet Equity Association with staff oversight in fall semester.
- Each spring semester, all cadets (organized by class) attend Sexual Assault Prevention training conducted by Campus Outreach Services.
- Each freshman completes Bystander Intervention Training in the spring semester.
- VMI is a member of the State University of New York-Student Conduct Institute (SUNY-SCI). All VMI faculty/staff participants in the Title IX grievance process to include Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision makers, and informal resolution facilitators receive relevant Title IX and other investigation/adjudication related training through SUNY-SCI.
- VMI Title IX investigators are also provided with Title IX Coordinator and Investigator Training from Stafford & Assoc., ATIXA Investigator Training, and Virginia Office of the Attorney General Title IX Training.

### **(Y) The Crucial Roles of the Cadet Equity Association and Bystander Intervention Training**

- The purpose of the Cadet Equity Association (“CEA”) is to provide education on equity to the Corps of Cadets, according to the guidelines established by the Superintendent’s Statement on Equity at VMI, and to maintain a post wide climate of respect and equitable treatment for Cadets.
- The mission of the Cadet-led CEA is to receive reports of incidents concerning sexual harassment and discrimination, to investigate these matters when appropriate, and to protect the privacy of the individuals involved insofar as it is possible.
- Cadets serving on the CEA receive training in procedures related to investigations and legal issues that involve gender, racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination. Sexual harassment infractions, depending on their magnitude, will be handled through the appropriate agency.
- CEA representatives facilitate Bystander Intervention Training for all freshman and sophomore class members.

- VMI fosters a culture of “see something, say something.”
- VMI also participates in the “Step Up” program developed by the University of Arizona, in partnership with the NCAA. Step Up is a prosocial behavior and bystander intervention program that educates students to be proactive in helping others.

### **(Z) Examples of VMI Policies Against Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct**

- Superintendent’s Statement on Equity at VMI (General Order 13, January 2021).
- Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy (General Order 16, August 2020).
- Retaliation Policy (General Order 90, August 2020).
- Existing Virginia Department of Human Resource Management policies are also applicable to the Institute.

### **(AA) VMI’s Support for Small, Woman-Owned and Minority (“SWaM”) Owned Businesses**

- VMI is committed to increasing participation in procurement opportunities for SWaM owned businesses.
- VMI has exceeded its goal (and the state averages) for SWaM spending in each year of the initiative. The last six fiscal years of data provided are strong evidence of the Institute’s commitment to supporting historically disadvantaged businesses in the Commonwealth.
- SWaM champions have been designated to promote and support VMI’s buyers as well as supporting vendor registration.
- VMI mandates SWaM goals for both prime contractors and professional service providers working with the Institute.
- See “Annual SWaM Procurement Plan FY 2021,” as presented and adopted by the VMI BOV.

### **(BB) Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program**

- Established by the Commonwealth of Virginia “for the purpose of reckoning with the history of the Commonwealth, addressing the long legacy of slavery in the Commonwealth, and acknowledging that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals.” Va. Code § 23.1-615.1(a)
- VMI, along with four other public colleges and universities, will execute this Program – without using tuition, fees or state funds – “by annually (i) identifying and memorializing, to the extent possible, all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property and (ii) providing a tangible benefit



such as a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty.” Va. Code § 23.1-615.1(b).

- SCHEV hosted the initial work group meeting with VMI and four other schools on May 12, 2021. The other designated institutions are Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University and The College of William and Mary. On a final note, the VMI Alumni Agencies – a separate 501(c)(3) organization that is independent from the Institute, and which encompasses the VMI Alumni Association, Keydet Club and Foundation – have also undertaken a very active slate of DEI initiatives, such as:

### **Diversity Discussions and Seminars with VMI Alumni**

- Between June and December 2020, the Alumni Agencies held diversity discussions with alumni in response to the issues the nation was facing in the summer of 2020 following the George Floyd tragedy. The discussions were successful, with thirty to forty alumni participating in each session.
- In addition to these diversity discussions, the Agencies are hosting an Alumni Engagement Conference on July 22-24, 2021. One of the two keynote speakers at the conference will focus on diversity and inclusion as well as three of the eight breakout sessions planned.

### **Established VMI AA Board of Directors DEI Subcommittee**

- This subcommittee represents racial diversity, gender diversity, religious diversity, and LGBTQ considerations. The subcommittee holds weekly meetings, which began in November 2020. The subcommittee authored and distributed engagement surveys to minority alumni.

### **Supporting DEI Training Efforts**

- The Alumni Agencies’ DEI Subcommittee chairman works with the Commandant staff to support the Cadet Equity Association (CEA) and the Officer of the Guard Association (OGA).
- While the CEA and OGA are run by VMI and managed by the Commandant’s office, the Agencies act in an advisory role to bring alumni in as appropriate.

### **Partnered with The Citadel Diversity Office for Best Practices and Programming Advice**

- Following the establishment of its DEI Subcommittee, the VMI Alumni Agencies reached out to the Chief Diversity Officer of The Citadel to seek counsel and mentoring as the subcommittee began its efforts.
- The Chief Operating Officer of the VMI Alumni Association met with The Citadel Chief Diversity Officer in early 2021 and one of the Agencies’ DEI Subcommittee members regularly sits in on The Citadel’s DEI Subcommittee meetings.
- The Citadel’s Chief Diversity Officer will address the VMI Alumni Agencies’ DEI Subcommittee in May 2021.

- The VMI Alumni Agencies have also collaborated with The Citadel's Alumni Association and meet monthly with its DEI committee chair.

### **Establishing VMI Cadet-Alumni Mentoring Program**

- The Alumni Agencies have a dedicated Cadet mentoring program for athletes and are working to establish a similar program for commissioned officers in all branches of the U.S. military and various academic departments.
- The Alumni Agencies have facilitated several virtual meetings to connect alumni with Cadets seeking assistance and guidance as they go through their cadetships and enter the work force as alumni.

### **Support for Cadet Recruiting Efforts**

- The DEI Subcommittee has assisted with the development of a minority recruiting brochure for VMI Admissions.
- Generally, the Agencies have established "Red/Yellow Officers" to support VMI admissions. These officers are dedicated alumni in various locales across the country who help to shepherd prospective Cadets through the admission process. They also assist Cadets preparing for matriculation.

**A summary of key dates and activities are provided:**

- 17-18 May, SCHEV Council Meeting
- 25 May, MG Wins Lunch Meeting with Del Bagby and Del Torian
- 1 Jun, B&T Report Issued
- 2 Jun, BOV Meeting and Adoption of Report Recommendations
- 10 Jun, MG Wins lunch meeting with W&L and Mayor of Lexington
- 11 Jun, MG Wins lunch meeting with Rockbridge NAACP
- 11 Jun, Keydet Club Meeting and Briefing to Alumni by MG Wins
- 15 Jun, MG Wins with Governor
- 16 Jun, Marge Connelly and Peter Blake with MG Wins
- 16 Jun, SecEd, DepSecEd, CDO and MG Wins
- 17 Jun, MG Wins meeting with Alumni in Richmond (Fine Arts Museum)
- BOV Investigation Committee Meeting (Date to Be Set)
- 1 Jul, DEI Plan Due (1 September Extension to be Requested)
- 1 Jul, 6-Year Plan Due
- Jul, Meeting on Post with Dr. Underwood and other Cabinet Secretaries (Date TBD)
- 9 Jul, CDO Starts Employment at VMI
- 13 Jul, SCHEV Council Meeting, MG Wins to Brief SCHEV Council
- 19-23 Jul, CDO Meeting with Governor and Dr. Underwood
- Jul – Aug, 6-Year Plan Presentations to Op-Six
- 2 Aug, General Assembly Special Session
- 9-11 Sep, BOV Meetings
- 13-14 Sep, SCHEV Council Meeting
- Jan, 1st Quarterly Report on Investigation Due to BOV, SCHEV, General Assembly



# **One Corps – One VMI A Unifying Action Plan**



**Office of the Superintendent  
Virginia Military Institute  
Lexington, Virginia 24450**

**Assessment by the Superintendent  
and accompanying Unifying Action Plan**



SUPERINTENDENT  
VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

May 19, 2021

Upon my arrival in November, VMI was in the midst of a crisis. Despite its long history of producing leaders of character of all races and gender, media reports of VMI led state policymakers to believe VMI glorifies a dark time in our nation's history, lacks diversity and was making no effort to improve, and has a culture of structural racism in its treatment of minority cadets. My 35 years of military and civilian service permitted me to have first-hand interactions with leaders and organizations that performed at their best because of their diversity. This experience would not have been possible however, without the rigorous education, tough discipline, and honorable living impressed upon me at VMI.

My priority as interim superintendent was to perform a personal assessment of the Institute's climate, culture, policies, and procedures. Of particular concern was understanding the current status of what is fundamentally the VMI experience: the unique method of education that challenges cadets physically, mentally, and academically while instilling in them traits of character built on honor, integrity, civility, personal conduct and discipline, and a lifelong bonding through the "brother rat" spirit. One Corps, One VMI is the product of that assessment.

With the ongoing turbulence, I believe we find ourselves needlessly fractured. We must return our collective focus on VMI's mission which defines the Institute and what it means to be a VMI cadet. Our method of education develops young leaders beyond the classroom and is critical to their success in military, civil, academic, and corporate life. The Institute must focus on the 21st Century ensuring the culture and climate of VMI is such that any cadet, faculty, or staff member can find their place. Therefore, One Corps, One VMI focuses on five outcomes:

- **Honor.** The VMI Honor Code must continue to be a way of life for each and every cadet and alumnus.
- **Diversity and inclusion.** VMI must ensure that every cadet, regardless of race, gender, religion, or nationality, feels a part of the VMI legacy.
- **The VMI brand.** The outward face of VMI should be built around young leaders of character who exemplify honor, civility, and service above self.
- **Competing and winning.** VMI cadets must compete to win in the classroom, on the hill through their cadet life in barracks, and on the field of competition.
- **One VMI.** VMI's strength is in its diversity of experiences, thought, abilities, and backgrounds. No single cadet's challenge is greater than another's. It is through the reliance on their fellow cadets that the Corps succeeds.

VMI continues to be a leadership laboratory that is among the finest in the nation. There's no question that VMI continues to produce young leaders the state and our nation needs to take on 21st Century challenges. Through this Unifying Action Plan, and in coordination with partners throughout the commonwealth, VMI will set a path to remedy any perceived wrongs that may exist and to continue to fulfill its mission of educating cadets to be citizen-soldiers and leaders of character.

Cedric T. Wins  
Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)

# Introduction

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This is VMI's Unifying Action Plan. It is intended to achieve a single purpose – advance the VMI experience, traditions, and culture to be more positive and inclusive producing leaders prepared for the complex world we live in today and into the future. This plan aligns with the long-term Vision 2039 benchmarks.

Allegations of structural racism must be taken seriously. We must look at ourselves critically and ensure that VMI presents a welcoming environment to any young man or woman seeking the benefits of the VMI experience. As a top-performing state, national and international institution, VMI's contribution over its 182-year existence is invaluable. VMI produces high-caliber leaders who fill essential roles throughout our society and with global impact. A plan is required to address the allegations, reveal any evidence of racism, initiate appropriate corrections, and reverse any perceptions among the wide range of VMI constituents that VMI supports an environment of institutional racism.

The VMI Unifying Action Plan takes the 14 descriptors of Vision 2039 and reinforces the focus on the Cadet as an individual committed to the unifying principles of 'One Corps, One VMI' – a Cadet fully embracing pride in the accomplishments and diversity of the Corps, inclusive of all Cadets and respectful of the tests of character each Cadet must overcome in academics, athletics and within our military system.

This plan ensures VMI's unique method of education and training continues to prepare future generations of America's leaders for honorable and devoted service to our state, nation and society. The VMI Unifying Action Plan will produce graduates whose life experience at VMI is based on mutual respect, built on the strength diverse talent offers and a collective commitment to the greater good of those they serve and lead in life.

# Background

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Founded in 1839, the Virginia Military Institute is the first state supported military college in the United States. Located in Lexington, Virginia, VMI is the second institution of higher education created by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is a highly respected and ranked institute of higher education. Nationally, under Title 10 of the United States Code, VMI is one of six institutions of higher education designated as a Senior Military College and unique among them where its entire student body is organized as a military corps.

VMI has many distinguished alumni among its graduates, including:

- 11 Rhodes Scholars
- 7 Medal of Honor recipients
- 285 Generals and Admirals
- Professional sports athletes
- Numerous college and university presidents
- Industrialists
- Countless business leaders
- Scores of historic and legendary civic, political and military leaders.

Our Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs supporting the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps frequently top the nation in innovative military educational and training practices. VMI leads the nation's colleges and universities as a significant source of commissioned officers.

VMI, through its rigorous military-like environment and its comprehensive academic and physically demanding program, is anchored on a regimental, class, honor, and educational system producing young men and women who embody the values of honor, integrity, respect, civility, duty, service above self, and academic excellence. These attributes are in high demand in our society and highly sought after in military, government, medical, legal, and private and public industry throughout the nation. Society needs, now more than ever, self-disciplined leaders with a resolute sense of duty. As our record soundly shows, VMI produces those kinds of people.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has directed an independent, third-party review of VMI's culture, policies, practices and equity in disciplinary procedures. VMI came under scrutiny due to accusations of structural racism by some of its Cadets and alumni. These serious accusations led Virginia's Governor, The Honorable Ralph S. Northam, a VMI alumnus, to announce he would launch an independent probe into "structural racism" at VMI.

Accusations were made that VMI is flawed with institutional racism, outdated, obsolete and should be shut down. Further, the symbology of the American Civil War on VMI's Post does not provide the appropriate environment and culture, exacerbating the situation, as social stress across the United States found its way to Lexington and the Institute itself.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia issued a Request for Proposal on 5 November 2020 to contract a third party to conduct the investigation and announced on 7 December 2020 they intended to award the contract to Barnes and Thornburg LLP, a law firm with a national reputation.



## Problem Statement

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As a highly valued state, national and international institution, VMI's contribution over its 182-year existence has been invaluable. VMI produces high-caliber leaders who fill essential roles throughout our society. In light of racism allegations, VMI has and will continue to actively take the opportunity to assess itself and implement necessary change, so that:

*The Virginia Military Institute recasts the VMI experience, traditions, and culture, to be inclusive and honorable for all VMI Cadets, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and friends. Should the Institute fail to change, it risks altering or eliminating the pillars of its proven unique educational model.*

VMI reaffirms its commitment to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community. As such, there is **zero tolerance** for racism, sexism, discrimination, hatred, intolerance, or prejudice of any kind. Behavior which attacks diversity, inclusion, equal-opportunity and accountability is unacceptable.

To ensure VMI operates in and supports an environment and culture which emphasizes and inculcates in its members this commitment, the following actions are ongoing or will begin:

- VMI welcomes the independent third-party investigation and equity audit with full cooperation and grants full access to the Institute;
- VMI will review the report produced by Barnes and Thornburg, assess their recommendations to determine those which are actionable, and establish a plan and timeline for implementation.
- VMI will make all efforts to actively respond to any and all acts of racism and eliminate or correct it as appropriate;
- In addition to the independent review, VMI has commenced with a top-down, bottoms-up internal review of the Institute and will take immediate, near-term and long-term actions to correct identified shortfalls.
- VMI has already taken steps to: address iconography, memorials and symbols of the institute; examine hiring practices; implement training and education to address diversity and inclusion; review Cadet led governance and administrative oversight that holds the Corps accountable for racist and sexist acts; develop plans for recruiting and retention of a diverse student body, faculty, administrative and administrative support staff, and classified workforce.
- Under Title IX, existing VMI policies address discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct, equity and retaliation. Those policies require periodic review to ensure they are understood and continue to appropriately address reports of infractions among the Corps. Similar policies, consistent with state laws and human resource regulations, exist to protect the rights of our faculty, staff and administrative support staff.

While a zero-tolerance policy is an important and immediate action, VMI will ensure that it keeps pace and better exemplifies our society in the 21st century, while producing graduates who represent the best of our nation, capable of leading in the complex world in which we now live. As VMI moves forward, whenever and wherever opportunities are found to better the Institute, the VMI experience, or the quality of our current Cadets, then such improvements must and will be made.

## Statement of Purpose

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*“The character of the individual Cadet is directly influenced by the prevailing culture of the Institute...” “The way Cadets – men and women – live together and work together while at VMI lays the foundation for the way they will live and work throughout their lives.”*

Vision 2039 – Focus on Leadership

As a result of my own initial assessment through a series of listening sessions with Cadets, faculty, athletic coaches and staff, as well as engagements with the VMI Board of Visitors, alumni and senior national leaders, I have concluded VMI must move past accusations of institutional racism by placing increased emphasis and focus on diversity, equity and inclusion with accountability at all levels. To transition this assessment into action, I formed a focused planning effort to produce and implement this action plan.

My 45-day assessment identifies the following key areas that need addressing:

- 1. Diversity and inclusion:** Since 1968, the experience, reflection, and achievements of VMI graduates is built upon the cumulative changes made and now reflected in VMI’s multiracial, international, co-ed student body and the leaders we have produced who continue to excel in the military, private industry, public and governmental service and politics. While measures of diversity – racial, gender, ethnic and economic – grew slightly over the past five years, among that diverse group, the quality of high caliber Cadets with strong credentials who desire to excel at VMI, has proven to be undeniable. We must ensure we are using appropriate and achievable benchmarks which reflect VMI leadership’s attention to diversity in the Corps of Cadets, faculty and staff. More can be done to improve on the diversity of our Corps, faculty and staff.
- 2. Visible manifestations of VMI:** Understand how to recalibrate VMI’s visible emphasis on traditions, symbology and outward manifestations of our culture towards the accomplishments of the Institute and its notable alumni in the 20th and 21st century. VMI has a long history spanning nearly two centuries. The earliest part of that history has a very different meaning through the modern lens. Extensive discussions with Cadets, faculty, staff and some alumni suggest our traditions and symbology, in certain cases, are divisive. We must find common ground about what exemplifies the bonds created during one’s Cadetship that is inclusive of every member of the VMI community. We cannot erase our history, but we will place ourselves properly as a part of Virginia’s and our Nation’s history reflecting the more relevant, diverse and inclusive world our graduates will lead into the future.
- 3. The Honor Code and its application through the Honor System:** Review the governance and oversight of the Honor System ensuring fair and equitable enforcement of our enduring, single sanction Honor Code. The Honor Code is foundational to the educational experience and, as such, its administration through the Honor System must be beyond reproach. There remains a perception that Cadets are targeted, guilt is applied first, and punishment rendered unevenly. Better education of Cadets on their obligation to remain personally accountable for conduct that runs counter to the Honor Code during their Cadetship is needed. We must ensure all Cadets understand and are committed to their personal development to attain achievement through hard work, merit and avoiding shortcuts.

4. **A Unified Corps of Cadets:** Return to the strength of a **unified** Corps, stratified only by the class system. The notion that there are opposing components of the Corps – athlete versus non-athlete; permit versus non-permit – runs against the fundamental notion of a common purpose for producing young men and women who represent the fulfillment of the VMI mission. A truly unified Corps represents one of the best opportunities to demonstrate that the Cadet experience – VMI’s learning laboratory where character is honed – is incompatible with the notion that racist, sexist or homophobic acts of any kind are tolerated.
5. **The three pillars of the VMI experience:** Rebalance the three aspects of a VMI education: academics, athletics, and military life. We’ve become imbalanced with redundant requirements, unclear standards and our application of systems that dominate the daily lives of our Cadets. Each pillar tests (and expands) the limits of a Cadet’s abilities, so they are prepared to address the demands of life. Challenging our Cadets to excel to the best of their abilities in all three areas simultaneously is what makes VMI unique in its development and educational system. While the military and athletic components are integral parts of the VMI experience, VMI is an institution of higher learning where the resource of time must be applied appropriately to academics as a focus. Cadets and faculty both expressed a need to devote adequate time to their studies while also investing in academic opportunities beyond their normal coursework.

### The VMI Unifying Action Plan begins by declaring what VMI stands for:

VMI is renowned for taking a diverse group of individuals, immersing them in the curricular and co-curricular experiences and over time, carefully and deliberately building leaders who:

- Possess unwavering character
- Demonstrate great skill in sound reasoning
- Make appropriate ethical decisions
- Lead naturally among their peers and in their communities
- Engage in societal problem-solving yielding wide impact
- Stand and deliver through strength and conviction
- and above all else, lead honorably and serve selflessly

### The VMI Unifying Action Plan also defines what VMI is not for:

*At VMI, we are not for violating the simple Honor Code; “A Cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do.” We are not for personal gain above personal honor.*

*At VMI, we are not for those who engage in or tolerate acts of racism, sexism, discrimination, hatred, or prejudice. There is zero tolerance for this type of dishonorable behavior.*

*At VMI, we are not for behavior that fails to treat all Cadets, faculty and staff with respect and dignity.*

On the grounds of this premier military institution, everyone must be treated with respect, civility and honor. We must hold ourselves accountable to demonstrate the very best of VMI. The second there is a departure from ethical conduct into hatred, discrimination, bullying or marginalization, then we are moving backwards; and that is not where VMI needs to be – VMI is moving forward towards continued betterment and future achievements.

# Outcomes

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For the future, the VMI system will successfully achieve these outcomes through the VMI Experience:

- #1. **The VMI Brand.** The outward face of VMI is built around young leaders who carry themselves honorably, with civility and humility. It's what our alumni, parents, local and national leaders and potential employers come to expect of a VMI Cadet. It's reflected in an inclusive legacy from the VMI Post to the classroom; from the field of competition to the battlefield, from the training grounds to the boardroom. We are prepared and can be trusted to lead our subordinates or support our superiors. That is what others outside of VMI must see in us, and what we must see in ourselves.
- #2. **A VMI which is Diverse and Inclusive.** A diverse and inclusive VMI begins with a Corps of Cadets who build on our legacy. A legacy based on the VMI experience with every Cadet being a part of its traditions; living in a positive and meaningful culture; inclusive and respectful of all. That diversity extends to how we recruit the best talent in our faculty, coaches and administrative staff to train and develop Cadets, because we believe, respect and advocate that diversity is our strength.
- #3. **Committed to Honor.** The heart of VMI is the Honor System. Cadets live by a simple code which pervades all aspects of Cadet life, rapidly becoming a lasting lifestyle. A Cadet's honor is their most guarded possession, a cherished leadership trait, an outcome which is only found so strongly in a single sanction honor system.
- #4. **A VMI that Competes to Win.** The VMI experience is appropriately balanced and centered on academic excellence. It has the right measure of high achievement coupled with physical and mental rigors of a military-like environment which are intended to build resiliency, character, and leadership qualities. We play at the highest level in athletics well represented by Cadet athletes who are pursuing a quality education and always compete to win.
- #5. **One-VMI.** VMI accepts individuals from all walks of life and builds successive classes of leaders, imbued with a high sense of public duty, possessing the skills to successfully lead across the military, government, public, and private sectors. At VMI, one is no less than any other and success comes from working together as a team and supporting one another. Our athletes must embrace opportunities to demonstrate their leadership and commitment to the VMI experience both on and off the field. The Corps of Cadets must recognize the efforts of all Cadets and that all are being challenged academically, militarily, and athletically; each constrained by time and resources, all in a pursuit of excellence.

## Action Concept

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Moving VMI forward means adopting an action concept where VMI looks, thinks, and acts facing forward to the future. This best practice ensures a diverse and inclusive environment, with equal opportunity for all and where we reaffirm VMI's core values and avow what VMI is not for. My intent for implementation is for the Institute Planning Committee (IPC) leaders to review, refine and identify actionable tasks that are measurable and focused on achieving the identified outcomes.

The action concept achieves the previously stated outcomes and is descriptive of VMI in the 21st century. VMI will succeed in these outcomes through the pursuit of five functional areas. These five areas continue forward to:

1. improve the health, welfare and resiliency of the Corps of Cadets;
2. maintain and provide modern facilities and quality of life;
3. provide greater leadership, mentorship and talent management;
4. increase faculty and staff efficacy; and,
5. produce effective internal and external communications.

While progress toward the outcomes is measured by the five functional areas, they are sequenced by immediate, near-term and long-term tasks which are needed at specific points in the process to move forward.

Foundational to improving VMI is Cadet Life. Fundamental and meaningful change to VMI starts and ends with caring for VMI's Cadets. The VMI Corps of Cadets is the centerpiece of VMI and improving Cadet Life underpins the future VMI experience.

Ensuring there is a unifying balance between athletics, academics and the military is essential. The standard of living for Cadets should evolve as necessary to remain conducive to success by continuously upgrading facilities and classrooms; recent examples of which include safety and security enhancements and technological improvements within barracks.

A VMI oriented on improving Cadet Life will allow VMI Cadets to gain the skills, qualities and attributes for the future. Hence, as the Unifying Action Plan is implemented, all efforts ensure the VMI Corps of Cadets has a safe, trusted and healthy environment where they can learn and grow, immersed in a 21st century academic, athletic and military educational and training environment which operates under the premise of excellence.

# Key Tasks

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## *Key Tasks + Focus Areas = Outcomes (VMI Cadet Life as the Foundation)*

The first key task in the Unifying Action Plan is investigation and reviewing VMI's culture and eliminating any discovery of institutional racism on the VMI Post. As soon as that achievement starts, VMI pursues a deeper effort for a second key task to upgrade the VMI System. A third key task is focused on investing in the future with greater talent management for Cadets, faculty, and staff.

### KEY TASK 1

#### **Investigate and Review VMI's Culture for Any Institutional Racism and Intolerance - Immediate Actions.**

Ending any institutional racism starts with reaffirming a zero-tolerance policy and ends when mandatory diversity education for the entire Corps of Cadets, faculty and staff is institutionalized. Steps along the way are:

- Reaffirm VMI's zero tolerance for racism, hatred, and intolerance; recognizing all are dishonorable;
- Advance VMI symbology to associate toward example-setting 20th and 21st century traits;
- Establish a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program with a Chief Diversity Officer, directly reporting to the Superintendent and informed by other similar state and national entities and efforts;
- Continue strategic communications to inform varied communities of VMI's progress;
- Maintain the comprehensive training programs for the Corps of Cadets for ready and resilient Cadets, sexual harassment/assault response and prevention, suicide prevention, substance abuse and bystander intervention;
- Continue mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion education for the entire Corps of Cadets, faculty, and staff.

### KEY TASK 2

#### **Upgrade a VMI experience that leverages more Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - Near-Term Actions.**

Advancing towards a culture which is diverse, equitable and inclusive with its own accountability means upgrading the VMI Experience. Modernizing VMI commences with building a Cadet governed system of diversity, equity and inclusion, and ends when a culture emerges where racism, prejudice, and hatred of any kind is not tolerated. Steps along the way are:

- An accountable Cadet leadership and governance which self-corrects and resolves any acts or inferences of racism, sexism, and harassment;
- Review and update VMI's organization and functions to improve the Institute's ability to achieve VMI's outcomes;
- Review VMI's policies, procedures, plans, and goals to verify incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusivity;
- Continue a culture where racism, prejudice, and hatred of any kind is not tolerated or embodied as attributes of a VMI Cadet and graduate.

## KEY TASK 3

**Invest in the Future - Long-Term Actions.** Building a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture is an investment which will take five years (a full cycle of a class plus an additional year) to incorporate final changes. The third key task commences with the Matriculation in August 2021 and ends when the Corps of Cadets, faculty, and staff more closely reflect the diversity of the United States population in the 21st century. Steps to get VMI there are:

- Institutionalizing continuous diversity and inclusion training for Cadets, faculty and staff;
- Partnership with organizations with proven track records of identifying qualified minority applicants who are seeking careers in higher education, civil and/or military service;
- Address challenges that inhibit VMI from recruiting Cadets, faculty, and staff to better reflect the population of the United States;
- Elevate to a talent management system which recruits Cadets for: (1) excellence in academics, career military service and/or civilian occupations and winning inter-collegiate teams; (2) faculty for a 21st century educational system; and (3) accomplished and deeply experienced military professionals who lead and mentor from the front;
- Continue to implement the major tenants of Vision 2039; the master plan aims at improving the academic, military, and athletic programs and the infrastructure of the Institute to enhance Cadet leadership development and the environment in which it takes place.

# Focus Areas

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Focus Areas are the avenues traveled to achieve the Five Element End-State. These Focus Areas are sequenced in time as the key tasks are achieved and produce the conditions, improvements, changes, and advancements necessary to realize VMI's End-State and a diverse, equal, and inclusive environment representative of our nation.

## Focus Area 1

### Health, Welfare and Resiliency of the Corps of Cadets.

**Objective:** Continue to provide and care for the VMI Corps of Cadets including; good order and discipline for the Corps; an advantageous place to learn and grow; streamlined systems to resolve misconduct and misbehavior and reward success and achievement; empower Cadets to gain strength through diversity, acceptance by inclusion, and the building of resiliency.

**Reason:** Protect Cadets from negative influences and safeguard them from harm. The Corps of Cadets is the centerpiece of VMI. Their health, education, welfare and resiliency are the primary focus of the Institute.

## Focus Area 2

### Facilities and Quality of Life.

**Objective:** Further a positive environment where Cadets can learn and grow, where faculty educate with the latest means available, and staff can provide an open, safe and positive workplace and living accommodations. Facilities are modern and functional, allow essential connectivity within VMI and outside, and are well-maintained.

**Reason:** Cadets are safe with an appreciable level of comfort to live in. A healthy, clean, comfortable and positive learning environment; safe and positive.

## Focus Area 3

### Leadership, Mentorship and Talent Management.

**Objective:** Always embracing a system where Cadets, faculty and staff live positive leadership attributes and demonstrate respect, thriving in a diverse and inclusive environment with supporting mentorship. A place where role-models are prevalent, sound judgement is the order of the day, and the right talent comes from the VMI experience.

**Reason:** Focus VMI on building the right talent for America, which is intolerant of hatred, prejudice and unacceptable behavior which prevents diversity, inclusion, equal-opportunity and accountability. Prejudice, dishonorable behavior, and intolerance is not perceived as systemic at VMI, and if it surfaces, it is eliminated.



## Focus Area 4

### Greater Academic Diversity - Faculty and Staff Efficacy.

**Objective:** As academics are the cornerstone of the Institute, greater academic capability is required. Enhance VMI faculty's ability to deliver world-class academics through 21st century technology and pedagogy designed to meet the needs of today's Cadets, along with cutting-edge courses/curriculum which further a Cadet's ability to synthesize knowledge. Increase VMI's staff's ability to support the VMI mission with diversity, equity, inclusion and accountability. Provide education tailored to teach leadership and success in the complex 21st century domestic and international environment.

**Reason:** Ensure VMI's System attains the VMI vision and includes diversity, equal opportunity, inclusion and accountability.

## Focus Area 5

### Internal and External Communications.

**Objective:** Continuous communication to varied and wide audiences the VMI vision, mission and ability to produce a superior education free from prejudice and intolerance.

**Reason:** VMI's processes to stop intolerable behavior are communicated and clearly understood. Precise, succinct and clear communication (up and out, and down and in), demonstrating that VMI is vigilant and that immediate action is taken to swiftly resolve issues encountered.

## Conclusion

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VMI is at a crossroads. As the world around VMI changes, the Institute must continue to evolve or risk becoming irrelevant. Keeping pace with change, if not leading it, is necessary to meet the demands and complexities of the 21st century. With change so comes opportunity.

At this point in VMI's history, we have a tremendous opportunity to recast our proud and strong legacy, to advance the VMI experience, traditions, and culture, and to be increasingly positive and honorable for all VMI Cadets, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and friends. The goal of the VMI Unifying Action Plan is to move VMI forward, while maintaining our best traditions and producing leaders who positively contribute to a modern 21st century society. This means we must look at ourselves critically, fix the problems we find, and change our ways with an eye towards the future.

*The difference between success and failure in this life of ours is mostly hard work, so you must constantly work to try to improve yourself.*

**Burke Davis, *Marine! The Life of Chesty Puller.***

On this 19th day of May 2021

By Order of:

Major General Cedric T. Wins, '85  
Superintendent  
The Virginia Military Institute





