



Superintendent  
Virginia Military Institute

October 13, 2025

To the Alumni of Virginia Military Institute,

It is the honor of a lifetime to serve as the 16th superintendent of Virginia Military Institute. As I begin this journey, I want to share with you the expectations I've set for our Corps of Cadets, faculty, and staff—expectations rooted in honor, discipline, education, and mutual respect. These time-tested and timeless values are the same values that you learned at VMI, carried into the world after graduation, and exemplify to this very day.

I have asked the cadets, faculty, and staff to recommit to honor, academic excellence, military bearing and discipline, respect and accountability, and physical and mental toughness. I have asked them to embrace these ideals, not merely as a set of rules, but as guiding principles for their behavior and actions every day. These values should continue to grow within each of us—not as mere ideals, but as a way of life. They have long defined the character of this institution and set our graduates apart from others across the nation. At its core, my message is simple: I am asking every member of the VMI community to commit wholeheartedly to the pursuit of excellence in every endeavor. For I believe that how we do anything is how we do everything. Excellence is not a part time pursuit; it must be a habit of thought and action that pervades everything we do!

In this pursuit of excellence, I am asking for assistance and help from our alumni. You are the living breathing soul of the Institute, the guardians of our traditions who uphold and personify our legacy of honor, courage, and excellence. Your connection to today's Corps of Cadets endures—through your personal example and the daily demonstration of our world-renowned brother rat spirit. This spirit continues to provide tangible benefits and opportunities to our cadets and enriches the lives of every alumnus and alumna. Your continued engagement is essential to the future health of the Institute. In that regard, I need your help in:

- **Supporting our cadets and returning to post:** Serve as mentors, role models, and advocates. Engage and be present. Share your experiences, offer guidance, and help them navigate the challenges of life at VMI and beyond. Invest in VMI graduates through employment opportunities from leaders who bring VMI's values to work with them each day.
- **Promoting the Institute:** Be ambassadors of VMI's values in your communities and professions. Speak proudly of VMI and help others understand the unique value of a



VMI education. Recruit prospective cadets. Help find the next generation of VMI graduates.

- **Investing in the mission:** Support scholarships, academic programs, and athletics and encourage your brother rats to do the same. We have big plans to keep VMI on the leading edge of innovation in higher education while sustaining our unique Honor Code, leadership development experience, and military environment. We stand ready to move forward—but progress depends on increased private support. Your generosity empowers VMI to compete for top cadets and sustain its promise of delivering a world-class education and transformative leadership experience. Give today and help shape the future of the Institute we all hold dear. We once led the nation for public colleges in the percentage of graduates who provided monetary support back to the Institute; unfortunately, today, only around 20% choose to do so.
- **Staying connected:** Attend alumni chapter events and gatherings and engage with cadets and faculty. Maintain the bonds of the VMI family and strengthen our shared commitment to the VMI experience.

Since the announcement of my appointment as superintendent, I have heard from many of you. I continue to listen as I visit chapter and alumni events around the country. For those who are concerned VMI has lost its way, let me assure you the strength of the VMI program is evident in the stellar cadets who walk this post. I am committed to our values, traditions, and unique process of educating young men and women. I fervently believe that if we all do our part, we will ensure that VMI remains a beacon of excellence in education, athletics, and leadership well into the 21st century. I look forward to working with every alumnus and alumna to reach that desired end state as soon as possible. Rah Virginia Mil, Whole Damn Team!

Respectfully,

David J. Furness '87  
Lieutenant General, USMC (retired)  
16th Superintendent of Virginia Military Institute