

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA 24450-0304

October 20, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

On behalf of the Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors, I welcome an objective, independent review of VMI's culture and the Institute's handling of allegations of racism and/or discrimination. I am confident that the reviewers will find that the Institute has acted according to the values that we aim to instill in our cadets – with honor, integrity, respect, and civility. I pledge the full cooperation of VMI officials in the review.

We look forward to meeting with the independent, third-party reviewer as well as the commonwealth's chief diversity officer and secretary of education in the coming months.

The incidents detailed in the *Washington Post* article, several of which are many years old, had more to do with an individual's lapse of judgment than they do with the culture of the Institute. Each one, as is the case with any allegation of racism or discrimination, was investigated thoroughly and appropriate action was meted out in a timely fashion. These incidents were perpetrated by few individuals and were in no way condoned by the Institute.

Virtually all colleges in the 50 states can point to inappropriate behavior by their students or faculty members. VMI is not immune. However, systemic racism does not exist here and a fair and independent review will find that to be true.

Current events have likely caused everyone to reflect upon our understanding and exposure to racism and discrimination. The Institute is no different. We have spent countless hours seeking the input of a diverse group including of cadets, faculty, staff, alumni, and community leaders. The result was a vision and plan regarding a way forward to ensure equal treatment for all of our cadets.

Administrators have already begun a review of nearly 30 operational elements of the Institute including traditions, ceremonies, culture, and the relationship between our cadets and alumni just to name a few. The way forward was thoroughly reviewed and discussed at the September 2020 Board of Visitors meeting and was endorsed as a path toward ensuring an Institute free from racism and discrimination. The Board of Visitors will continue to diligently exercise our oversight responsibilities.



Again, we look forward to working with your cabinet members and the third-party reviewer with the utmost candor and transparency.

Sincerely,

John William Boland

John William Boland '73
President, VMI Board of Visitors

cc: The Honorable Justin Fairfax
The Honorable Mark Herring
The Honorable Eileen Filler-Corn
The Honorable Louise Lucas
The Honorable Lamont Bagby
The Honorable Janet Howell
The Honorable Luke Torian
The Honorable Richard L. Saslaw
The Honorable Charniele D. Herring
The Honorable Mamie E. Locke
The Honorable Dr. Janice Underwood
The Honorable Atif Qarni
The Honorable Aubrey L. Layne, Jr.

