

**VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE**  
**Lexington, Virginia**  
**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee**  
**Tuesday, March 15, 2022**

MINUTES

Board Members Present:

MG Cedric Wins '85 (Superintendent)  
LTC Jamica Love  
Vice President, Gene Scott '80 (Committee Co-Chair)  
Mrs. Lara T. Chambers '03  
Mr. Lester Johnson, Jr. '95  
Damon Williams '90  
J. Conrad Garcia

Board Members Online:

Mr. Thomas R. Watjen '76 (President)  
Mr. Michael L. Hamlar (Committee Co-Chair)  
Mr. Hugh M. Fain III '80  
Mr. E. Sean Lanier '94  
Mr. David L. Miller '70  
The Honorable Joe R. Reeder  
Richard K. Hines, V '66  
Gussie Lord '01  
Karen Bliss (Ex-Officio)

***Opening Remarks:***

***Thomas Watjen:***

Mr. Watjen said the board approved three simple objectives as it relates to DE&I. Today we want to take a deep dive into one of those action steps to create and foster a safe, equitable, and inclusive environment for all on post through education and training. Mr. Watjen also acknowledged Gene Scott being assigned as the Co-chair of the BOV.

***Mike Hamler:***

Mr. Hamler thank everyone for making time to come to the special call meeting. He said it was important to have this discussion so that everyone could have access to the real information oppose to the conversations circulating in the public.

### ***MG Cedric Wins Remarks:***

MG Wins opened his comments by saying this time last year VMI was dealing with two major challenges to the institute. The first was the environment under which we were operating with respect to Covid and the second had to do with issues that resulted in the equity audit that took place at the direction of the previous governor of the state of Virginia.

He declared that as a result of the equity audit, we produced a document called One Corps, One VMI: A Unifying Action Plan. It was built around a series of listening sessions that were conducted, several briefings and assessments to identify five major outcomes, several objectives and initiatives that are necessary for the institute to move forward.

- The first is centered around VMI's honor and the Importance of our honor code and how foundational it is to the institute.
- The second is to ensure that we move forward based on the need to produce 21st-century leaders, that VMI is diverse and inclusive.
- Third is our brand that is centered around our cadets and on how they conduct and carry themselves:
- Competing to win is the fourth:
- The fifth is the idea of One VMI where the experiences of all our Cadets should be embraced and welcomed as they all go through a journey that is intended to lead to their success.

He relayed to the committee that despite the equity audit the foundational aspect of the institute remained in place and largely untouched. He added that the honor code is reinforced, the tradition of the four-year journey for all cadets including the ratline tradition is untouched and as one of the six senior military colleges, VMI's Class and regimental system remains intact.

In speaking on the institution's budget, he highlighted areas of the budget that were targeted specifically towards the life, health, safety, and resilience of the Corps of Cadets. He further stated to the Committee that the portion of the budget that will go to DE&I initiatives pales in comparison to the overall budgetary request which includes balancing out compensation inequities that exist among VMI's workforce especially when it is compared to other state institutes' salary compensation incentives.

MG Wins asked the question, "When we talk about Diversity here at VMI what that means?" He said he equates Diversity and Inclusion with mission readiness. He further highlighted that VMI has a mission to produce educated, honorable women and men that are prepared to be 21st-century leaders of the world. He elaborated that VMI's DE&I efforts mirrored that of the Department of Defense and Corporate America. He further stated that understanding and respecting our differences will strengthen the Corps of Cadets as they prepare for life as citizen soldiers. He closed by saying, we are one Corps, One VMI, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, or socioeconomic status. Equity initiatives are available to all cadets, faculty, and staff, irrespective of our many different and defining characteristics.

***Dr. Jamica Love Remarks:***

Dr. Love started by stating that her hope for the day's meeting is for everyone to understand what Inclusive Excellence means to VMI. She said she wanted faculty, staff, and cadets to be able to speak about Inclusive Excellence with the same clarity as they do with the Honor Code and uphold Inclusive Excellence just the same. She also mentioned that VMI has always been about achieving excellence and being the best. Dr. Love posed the question, "What is Inclusive Excellence and how did it come into existence?" She further stated that Inclusive Excellence at VMI did not start with her but was previously introduced as a development plan to address social issues and diversity issues. Dr. Love also spoke to the three diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives that the Board of Visitors identified for VMI.

First: Create and foster a more diverse VMI.

Second: Create and foster a safe, equitable, and inclusive environment for all on post.

Third: Ensure and maintain a safe rigorous process for escalating issues that have even the potential to violate the honor code.

Dr. Love also highlighted the Department of Defense's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. She asserted that if VMI is going to prepare Cadets to be leaders in our society then we must ensure that they are culturally competent. She went on to demonstrate, through PowerPoint slides and a short video, highlights of some of the DE&I office's works, programs and presentations that were geared towards the educational process of training Cadets on DE&I at Virginia Military Institute.

***The floor was opened to welcome statements from VMI Executive members:***

COL Bogart remarked that his training in Inclusive Excellence began at VMI and expanded over time through his numerous experiences. He said that as a result of Inclusive Excellence at VMI he observed a Corps that was more civil, more cooperative, a Corps that was more willing to give and take. A Corps that is more actively engaged in the world around them. He said that it was imperative for VMI to have Inclusive Excellence so that as an institution we can live up to the responsibility of producing citizen soldiers that can lead in any environment they found themselves.

BG Moreschi said he was speaking from an academic perspective wherein VMI's goal inside each classroom was to educate, not indoctrinate. He asserted that in his experience in teaching, some topics may come across as being divisive to some people. BG Moreschi said that VMI is about educating Cadets, providing facts and details on which to base their understanding and for them to make up their own minds without someone declaring to them what to believe.

John Young said that Inclusive Excellence at VMI aligns with the idea surrounding readiness. He said creating a ready force runs parallel to VMI's mission of preparing Cadets to be ready citizen soldiers in our society.

***Other Topics that were discussed on the floor.***

- Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Education vs Indoctrination
- Creating a bold statement in support of DEI
- Focus on information and facts, not opinions (DEI is not CRT)

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 1pm.