



INSTITUTE REPORT

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Rat Challenge Climbs, Jumps, Swings to New Heights

By Kelly Nye

The new Corps Physical Training Facility has expanded opportunities for cadets in many programs at VMI since opening in January, but with the first rat mass to matriculate since its opening, the building is finally getting put to the test with Rat Challenge.

The extensive 10-week program, overseen by the physical education department, gives every non-athlete rat the chance to train on North Post and in the CPTF. The program also offers company cadre members stationed at each obstacle the opportunity to lead new cadets through the challenges.

"The facility offers fantastic new experiences that will challenge the rats in new ways that we did not have a year ago," said cadet in charge Duncan Naylor '18.

The program is designed not only for building physical strength, but also for pushing the new cadets out of their comfort zone. Stations inside the CPTF include the rock wall, the high ropes, and the indoor mobile initiative course.

Unlike the obstacles on North Post, the indoor mobile initiative course follows an



Tyla Player '21 makes her way up the cliff face above the Maury River during Rat Challenge.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

experiential education model that encourages small group dynamics. And the indoor high ropes course is roughly twice as high as the one on North Post.

"I know that each of the rats freak out a little when they see how high up they are," continued Naylor. "The whole point is that they push through it, overcome the obstacle, and then they surprise themselves and realize how much more capable they are."

Stations outside of the CPTF haven't changed much over the years, Rat Challenge still utilizes access to House Mountain and the Maury River in addition to VMI property. But conditions are always in flux. The river may not be deep enough for the zip line station in the coming years

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'Invest in This Next Generation' Faculty Alumni Find Themselves in Familiar Settings

By Mary Price

At this fall's orientation for new faculty and staff, at least three faculty members needed less help than most in learning about VMI culture, customs, and history—because they'd been here themselves as cadets.

Joining the faculty this academic year have been Capt. Henry A. Wise III '05, an instructor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies; Col. Tom Timmes '92, associate professor

of civil and environmental engineering; and Col. Dean Kershaw '68, adjunct instructor of civil and environmental engineering.

Wise, who holds a master of fine arts from the University of Mississippi, had been aware of VMI since childhood thanks to his impressive family legacy. His great-great grandfather, John

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Stonewall Jackson House Accredited

By Ashlie Walter

The Stonewall Jackson House has been accredited by the American Alliance for Museums for the first time, and the VMI museum system—which has maintained accreditation with the agency since 1970—has been reaccredited.

According to the agency, only three percent of the nation's 33,000 museums are recognized with this distinction.

"It's an assurance, like the 'Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.' Someone has reviewed the presentation, the professional standards and they have met [the agency's] qualifications to be considered professionally accredited," said Col. Keith Gibson '77, director of the VMI museum system.

The reaccreditation cycle is every 10 years with the process for the next accreditation to start in 2026.

The accreditation process is a way of proving that a museum has sound business practices, stewardship of collections, accountability to the public, and integrity of historical presentation.

"When you are part of an institution of higher education, there is an expectation of professional standards," said Gibson, noting the similarities in the process to NCAA or Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaccreditation. "That's one reason we have committed every 10 years to this arduous process."

The Virginia Museum of the Civil War in New Market was folded into the accreditation in 1990, and this year the Stonewall Jackson House was part of the accreditation process for the first time. The Stonewall Jackson House had not sought accreditation prior to joining the VMI Museum System in 2011.

"The process of accreditation gave us an opportunity to look at our operations and see how we could improve. Going through the process helped us to focus more on our mission and where we need to be as a museum in

the next year and in the next five years, both in interpretation and ways to better serve our visitors," said Grace Abele, site director at the Stonewall Jackson House.

She added the approval from the accreditation committee was a great reminder of the hard work of all the staff and volunteers at the Jackson House.

The first part of the two-year reaccreditation process is a self-study by the museum of all policies from ethics policies to emergency management. After the self-study, a two-person team from the Alliance was sent for an on-site study of the museum.

The team arrived at VMI on April 12 and visited all three museum sites, Gibson said.

Using the whole package of self-study, policy documents, and a report from the visiting team, a council of appointed museum professionals will decide if a museum should be accredited. The council can return three verdicts: pass, conditional accreditation, and fail. All three VMI museums passed.

Since its founding in 1845 by Superintendent Francis Henney Smith, the museum has been a model for small to mid-size museums, Gibson said.

"Once or twice a year, we have other museums contacting us and we've consulted with them. We share with them our experience and knowledge so they can strengthen," he said.

The American Alliance for Museums is an organization that supports museums through advocacy to strengthen the museum community. 🌿



The garden behind the Stonewall Jackson House blooms with the last flowers of summer.—VMI Photo by Ashlie Walter.

'There Are Opportunities Everywhere'

Economics Professor Teaches Entrepreneurship Both Far and Near

By Mary Price

Dr. Dekuwmini "Dee" Mornah is passionate about teaching entrepreneurial thinking—so much so that he's willing to take cadets as far as Africa to inculcate that lesson.

Mornah, assistant professor of economics and business and a native of Ghana, is planning to take cadets to that West African nation next summer to learn alongside students from Ashesi University, a private liberal arts school in the Ghanaian capital of Accra.

Together, the students will explore ways to generate more tourism in Ghana by developing business models for tourist attractions centered around the nation's abundant natural resources.

"We have the highest mountain in West Africa, and many waterfalls," explained Mornah.

However, these natural attractions are usually not accessible to tourists. "You can go to the highest mountain, and on the other side is a beautiful waterfall, but it's undeveloped," Mornah continued.

As an economist interested in helping his native land develop its full potential, Mornah sees opportunities for economic development every time he goes home, as he did this summer when he spent 12 weeks in Ghana preparing for next year's study abroad experience.

"I realized each time that I went to Ghana that there are opportunities everywhere," said Mornah. "When I go there, I see opportunities. I can imagine cadets working alongside other students—they will see opportunities that the communities themselves otherwise don't see."

Mornah explained that plans so far call for 15 to 20 cadets to travel to Ghana next June and July. There, they will work in three- to four-person teams with students from Ashesi University. Because English is the native language of Ghana, there will be no language barrier, and Mornah expects the two groups of students to learn from each other and challenge one another's thinking.

"That cross-pollination of cultures will elicit more creativity," he said.

Closer to home, Mornah has redesigned the entrepreneurship course he teaches each fall with the goal of helping cadets see the interconnectedness of all of their coursework within the department. Last fall, Mornah implemented a new concept in the class when he gave the cadets \$5 each and an assignment: use the seed money they'd been given to start and run a business for two hours.

The two-hour entrepreneur, as the project was dubbed, was a success, with many cadets seeking to fill a need for their fellow cadets, such as delivering fast food to barracks. This time, though, Mornah decided to push the learning deeper by giving them \$10 instead of \$5, and having the cadets run the business twice.

Between rounds, they're expected to develop a list of problems encountered while running the business and come up with an



Dee Mornah teaches a class on entrepreneurship in Scott Shipp Hall on Sept. 19.—
VMI Photo by Ashlie Walter.

accompanying list of possible solutions, drawing on their previous course work in economics and business.

"The department has been trying to do curriculum integration—they want the [cadets] to see how the different courses are interrelated," explained Mornah.

And the cadets' learning should continue even after they've finished the entrepreneurship course. Mornah's plans call for the cadets to create detailed business plans for their businesses as part of the capstone course that's required for economics and business majors.

More than anything else, Mornah hopes cadets will learn that running a business is not a one-time, static endeavor. "Business is an agile process," he noted. 🌱



Cadets in Dee Mornah's entrepreneurship class test the paper airplanes they were assigned to build using only one hand. The exercise was a chance for them to learn to rely on each other under restrictive circumstances.—VMI Photo by Ashlie Walter.

Sergeant Wise, was one of the cadets who fought at the Battle of New Market, and one of three Wises overall in the battle. The new faculty member's grandfather, Henry A. Wise '27, wrote *Drawing Out the Man: The VMI Story*, a history of the Institute published in 1978. An uncle, Richard "Dick" Wise, graduated with the Class of 1968.

Growing up, Henry Wise III had thoughts of coming to VMI, but he wasn't set on it until he attended an open house in high school and got to spend time with cadets in barracks. "I just wanted to see if I could do it," said Wise of his decision to matriculate at VMI.

After graduation, Wise spent several years teaching English in Taiwan. After earning his MFA degree at Ole Miss, he became an adjunct faculty member there, but he kept in touch with his faculty mentors at VMI, among them Col. Rob McDonald, Col. Bill Badgett '53, and Col. Emily Miller.

"It's been a really positive experience," said Wise. "I just find that there's a real idealism here, which is really refreshing ... I think cadets really want to live ethically, for the most part."

This semester, Wise is teaching three sections of English 101, a college writing class for 4th Class cadets, as well as a course on American gothic writing.

Outside of the classroom, Wise has joined Maj. Mary Atwell as a faculty advisor to *Cadence*, VMI's literary magazine. As a cadet, Wise was editor of the magazine when it was known as *Sounding Brass*. "I think *Cadence* has really improved over the years," Wise noted.

Like Wise, Timmes knew VMI alumni before he matriculated—but in the case of Timmes, the alumni were Army officers serving under his father at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Both Maj. Robert Murray III '72 and Col. William Faistenhammer '74 knew Timmes as a high schooler, and it was their stories of life at the Institute that first piqued the teenager's interest.

After graduating from VMI with a degree in civil and environmental engineering, Timmes commissioned into the Army Medical Service Corps, where put his degree to work in the areas of water and wastewater management. At the end of October, Timmes will retire from the Army, having concluded a 25-year career.

That career took Timmes to places he'd never imagined as a cadet, including Johnson Atoll, a U.S. territory near Hawaii, where he helped to demilitarize chemical weapons. While serving as the division environmental science officer for the 82nd Airborne, Timmes was deployed to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, and Norway.

At the time the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, took place, Timmes was working in Maryland at Aberdeen Proving Ground. He was chief of Army field water at the time—and thus it was his job to make the call as to when the water in the Pentagon would be safe to drink again. Thanks to his work on that project, Timmes was



Capt. Henry Wise III '05 teaches Writing and Rhetoric I to 4th Class cadets in Scott Shipp Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

named Maryland's outstanding young engineer of the year in 2002. For this honor, he was profiled in the *VMI Alumni Review*.

Later, Timmes found himself teaching at the U.S. Military Academy. "What I enjoyed most in the Army was teaching," explained Timmes. When he heard of an opening to teach at VMI, he didn't need to think twice.

"If I go back to VMI, I can continue to invest in this next generation," he said.

Kershaw, Timmes' colleague in civil and environmental engineering, is likewise glad to be back at VMI.

After growing up in New Jersey, he found the Institute through a high school teacher and spent 29 years in the Army Corps of Engineers. After retiring from the Army in 1999, Kershaw went to work in private industry.

Ten years ago, Kershaw and his wife built a house in Rockbridge County. He's recently begun working from home and found himself with time to fill. Seeking to give back to the Institute, Kershaw not only applied to teach at his alma mater, but he is also currently in training to become a docent at the Stonewall Jackson House.

Not surprisingly, Kershaw sees a lot of differences between the cadets of the 1960s and the cadets of today. "The biggest difference is that I find the whole Corps to be much more relaxed than we

were in the '60s," said Kershaw.

Like Timmes and Wise, Kershaw has welcomed the chance to return on the opposite side of the lectern. "[VMI] reinforced my sense of integrity," he remarked. "I wanted to do something to give back to the Institute. ... It's my job to make sure that graduates can perform in the military or the civilian world." 🌟



Col. Tom Timmes '92, in his role as Officer in Charge, speaks with cadets just before they fire the evening gun.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

VMI Ranked Highly by *U.S. News & World Report*

By Mary Price

Virginia Military Institute climbed seven places among national liberal arts colleges in the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings released last month. This year, VMI claimed the 65th spot, up from 72nd in 2016.

Among schools in Virginia, only Washington and Lee University and the University of Richmond were ranked higher. Those institutions claimed the 10th and 23rd spots, respectively.

The Institute retained its national fourth place ranking among public universities, coming in only behind the United States Military Academy, the United States Naval Academy, and the United States Air Force Academy.

The rankings are based on such factors as a college's reputation as rated by academic leaders nationally, the retention of students, class size, the quality of the faculty, the quality of students, financial resources,

graduation rate performance, and the alumni giving rate.

In the engineering category for colleges whose highest degree is a bachelor's or master's, VMI was ranked 26th. The only other Virginia school included in the engineering rankings was James Madison University, 38th. The rankings in the engineering category are based exclusively on the reputation of the program.

selors, whose work gives them a unique insight into the reputations of colleges and universities.

Earlier this year, VMI ranked 24th among public colleges across the country, and 41st out of 711 public and private colleges nationwide, in *Money* magazine's annual college rankings. In addition, *Forbes* ranked VMI 11th on its list of "Top 25 Public Colleges With the Highest Earning Graduates." 🍀



VMI is now ranked 65th among national liberal arts colleges according to *U.S. News & World Report*.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

For the second year in a row, VMI is included on the unranked list "A+ Schools for B Students." This listing evaluates the quality of a school's academic program and the academic program of admitted students.

VMI was also listed in 47th place in the category, "High School Counselor's Top Picks." This is a new category for *U.S. News*, one which strives to give voice to the experience of high school guidance coun-

VMI Alumni Agencies Reorganization Continues

By Scott Belliveau '83

On Sept. 8, the VMI Alumni Association's Board of Directors formally approved the amended and restated Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws for the VMI Alumni Agencies Board, formerly the VMI Development Board. With that approval, and the recently approved VMI Alumni Agencies Board Operating Agreement, the framework is now in place for the reorganization of the VMI Alumni Association, the VMI Foundation, and the VMI Keydet Club.

"The goal of everything that has been done and will be done in terms of the reorganization," said Steve Maconi, the CEO of the VMI Alumni Agencies, "is to provide better service to every member of the VMI family

and to sustain and enhance the private financial support that is essential to VMI's future progress."

One of the changes in the reorganization will be the evolving nature of the governing boards of each organization. In the future, the members of these boards will focus on governance, oversight, and policy direction. As Maconi stated, the goal is for them to be "micro-informed and macro-engaged."

Another change is the new title—chief operating officers—of those who are responsible for running their respective agencies on a daily basis. This change, according to



Steve Maconi poses with Carol and Buddy Bryan '71 just before the VMI campaign leadership dinner on June 14 in Richmond.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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Sandhurst, VMI Swap Professors

By Mary Price

There's an old saying that history sometimes repeats itself. For the VMI Department of History, that saying has come true this academic year as Col. Geoff Jensen is teaching at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Britain's training ground for future Army officers, for the second time in his academic career.

Jensen, professor of history, first participated in a faculty exchange program with Sandhurst 17 years ago while teaching at the University of Southern Mississippi. During that first stay at Sandhurst, Jensen met Dr. Klaus Schmider, senior lecturer at Sandhurst, and the two have kept in touch ever since.

This fall, Schmider is teaching at VMI—and for him, it's a whole new world, as he had never been to the United States as an adult before this year.

"I wanted to do something marginally different," said Schmider of his decision to participate in the faculty exchange. "You go stale, sooner or later."

During the one-semester exchange, Schmider is teaching two courses at VMI, one on modern European land warfare from 1870 to 1945 and another on insurgency and counter-insurgency. "The first impression has been very favorable," said Schmider of the cadets he's teaching.

Schmider does see several differences between VMI cadets and their counterparts at Sandhurst—chief among them the age difference, as almost 90 percent of Sandhurst cadets already have a bachelor's degree before they arrive.

Schmider also sees a subtle but crucial difference between the two institutions. "Sandhurst is a military academy," he noted. "Military priorities will always come first." At VMI, he said, "There are intimations of a clash [between military and academic priorities] But when everything is said and done, academics take more of a center stage here."

Another difference that caught Schmider off guard, at least at first, was the fact that he was to design his own courses. Sandhurst's Department of War Studies, where Schmider regularly teaches, offers a set curriculum with the same courses each year.

"Here you have almost anarchic freedom," Schmider commented. "It's intoxicating, and a little bit scary."



Klaus Schmider answers a question during his class on European land warfare in Scott Shipp Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Across the Atlantic, Jensen is teaching courses on modern military history, which includes World War II, the Arab-Israeli wars, and the Falklands/Malvinas war, among many other topics. Because Sandhurst's program of study only lasts one year, Jensen explained, the program is intense, and the Department of War Studies focuses its attention almost exclusively on 20th and 21st century military history.

For Jensen, the brevity and intensity of Sandhurst's program contrast sharply with VMI's four-year cadetship.

In an email interview, Jensen wrote, "One thing that I like most about VMI is watching the cadets develop in and out of the classroom over the years; at Sandhurst the much shorter cadetship means that I don't get to see the same kind of maturing process and

long-term intellectual development among my students as I do at VMI."

Jensen also senses a cultural difference at Sandhurst, where the school's website and letterhead include the royal cypher of Queen Elizabeth II, and hints of the British aristocracy reveal themselves in a school that has horses and polo fields.

"There is also an

aristocratic feeling to life at Sandhurst not found at VMI," Jensen commented. "Although it is slowly changing, overall the British Army's officer corps is still a long way from the VMI citizen-soldier ideal. Sandhurst in turn reflects this characteristic of British military culture."

Col. Mark Wilkinson, chair of the history department, noted that the exchange program allows an opportunity to "freshen things up" by giving both Schmider and Jensen the chance to teach in a different environment. "It's good for the cadets," he added.

All involved—Schmider, Jensen, and Wilkinson—expressed hope that this year's pilot exchange program will carry on in the future. "We want to press ahead with ironing out something of a more permanent nature," said Wilkinson. ❄



Labor Day Parade

Members of the VMI Pipe Band march through Buena Vista Sept. 4 as part of the city's annual Labor Day Parade. Hundreds of onlookers lined the one-mile parade route, which was also traversed by politicians running for office, local political organizations, and student musicians from nearby schools.—VMI Photo by Maj. John Robertson IV.

"The Right Traditions"

Gen. Peay, BOV President Offer Perspective on VMI's Heritage

By Maj. John Robertson IV

The president of the VMI Board of Visitors, John William Boland '73, and the superintendent, Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62, issued a statement on Sept. 12 regarding the Institute's history and its place in the nation's future.

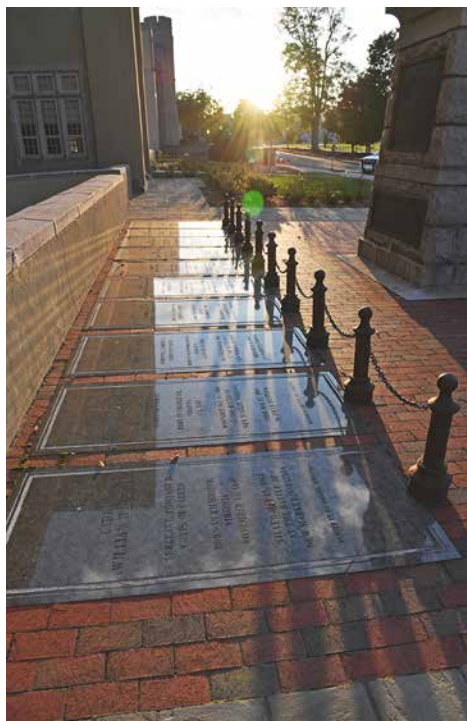
The statement read in part, "who we were in the past only defines in part who we are today. Hate, bigotry and discrimination are wrong, do not represent the values of the Virginia Military Institute, and will always be addressed decisively. We will learn from the past and take the best from our predecessors in shaping our cadet citizen-soldiers for today and tomorrow."

The statement coincided with the Board of Visitors' first meeting since the violence among competing protesters in Charlottesville on Aug. 12 took the national spotlight and ignited vigorous debate on the suitability of Confederate monuments in cities and college campuses across the country.

Peay and Boland's statement established their intent to recognize all those who are part of VMI's history—including those memorialized in bronze.

"We choose not to honor their weaknesses, but to recognize their strengths. We will continue to learn and not to repeat divisions. We strongly encourage all to move forward together in the defense and advancement of our Nation."

Peay spoke to the Board of Visitors prior to the written statement's release, acknowledging that many citizens have sharply differing opinions, honestly and often heatedly held, about how the nation's history is interpreted. He also emphasized that VMI's traditions are valuable tools that support the mission of producing exceptional leaders.



Six of the ten cadets who died in the Battle of New Market rest in front of Nichols Engineering Building at the base of *Virginia Mourning Her Dead*.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

"We're trying to be leaders for the nation going forward to have a nation that's not divisive in its approach, but builds on the incredible military strengths that our long history has," said Peay. "We're a different school, and we build on the strengths of our traditions—the right traditions... that we have to make our graduates stronger and better for a nation that needs to move to the future."

He also supported the notion that there are lessons about character and devotion to duty that can be gleaned from the Corps of Cadets'

participation in the Civil War, particularly in relation to the Battle of New Market.

"We're talking about emulating young men, 16, 17, 19 years old that had the fitness to march 83 miles, that had cadets die in their arms and care for them as classmates, that believed in ethics, that took their orders in duty," said Peay.

The Institute's monument to those cadets, *Virginia Mourning Her Dead*, served as an example of how VMI's traditions continually evolve. Created as a monument to the New Market cadets, the statue has become emblematic of all alumni killed in the line of duty.

Peay considered other changes that have taken place over the past decades in the way the Institute remembers its history.

"If you go to 1972, the integration of African-Americans at VMI, you'll notice the African-Americans in those first classes were all heroes to us today—highly respected," said Peay. "The Institute wisely at that time stopped playing 'Dixie,' took the Confederate flags out of all of the color guards. There are no Confederate flags at VMI today except in the museum."

More recent changes, including ending the practice of saluting Lee Chapel and having rats salute the U.S. flag rather than Stonewall Jackson's statue, were the product of careful consideration rather than reactions to a heated political climate.

"You know, sometimes the best leaders don't make decisions in times of emotions, and these are raw emotions in the Commonwealth right now," said Peay. "Steady boy, steady... could be the better approach." 🌿

Class of 1992 Presents 25th Reunion Campaign Gift

On Sept. 9, at the Saturday morning reunion parade, the Class of 1992 presented the initial proceeds of its 25th Reunion Campaign: \$1,800,419.92, most of which came in the form of immediate gifts and short-term pledges. Making the presentation were Andy Tate, class agent and chairman of the 1992 Reunion Campaign Committee; Woody Woodward, class agent; Bill Sharp, first captain; and Marc Orgain, president of the Class of 1992. Bob Louthan '82, president of the VMI Alumni Association, accepted the check on behalf of the VMI Alumni Agencies, and Gen. J. H. Binford Peay III '62 accepted on behalf of the Institute.—Photo courtesy the VMI Foundation.



POST BRIEFS

Employees Honored for Service

Three members of the Commandant's team retired this month. Sandi Shiplett served the Institute for 49 years, Kay Pitner for 25, and Monika Dickens for 19 years. Commandant of Cadets, Bill Wanovich '87, called the three "legendary icons," noting that alumni from the past five decades have

benefited from their work. Also retiring at the beginning of October was Charlene Wilson after 19 years, most recently as a procurement officer in the Procurement Office. The three were honored for their service to the Institute at a luncheon in September.

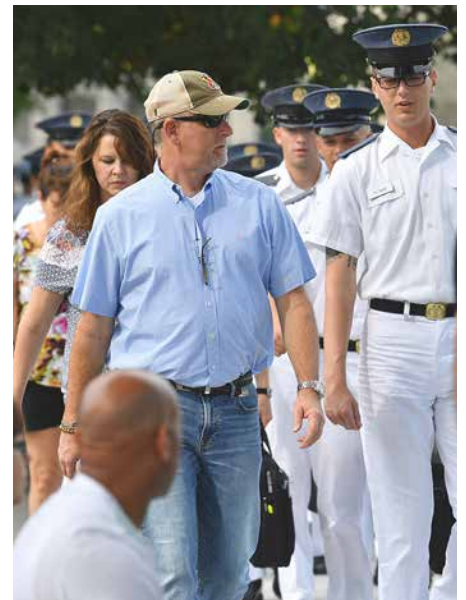
VMI Endorses Growth4VA

Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62, announced his support of the newly-launched Growth4VA campaign Sept. 25. The campaign will focus on promoting reform and reinvestment in Virginia's top-ranked higher education system. The campaign, backed by a partnership of higher education and business leaders, aims to help grow the Virginia economy, expand access to education and job opportunities for all Virginians, and regain

Virginia's No. 1 ranking for business. "VMI's goal is to produce citizen-soldiers who are leaders in the military and in civilian life," Gen. Peay said. "Many of our graduates take up junior leadership positions in the military for a relatively short time before they return to civilian life. The leadership traits learned at VMI and solidified in the military stand them in good stead when they transition to careers with Virginia's businesses." 🇺🇸

Family Weekend

Family and friends visit cadets over Family Weekend Sept. 22-24. During that time, parents were able to attend classes, watch two parades, and tailgate before the football game against University of Tennessee—Chattanooga, which drew a crowd of over 5,300.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, and Kelly Nye.





Oath Day

Rats spend the day at the New Market Battlefield Historical State Park Sept. 3 to learn about VMI's role in the Battle of New Market. Cadets rotated among stations, learning about the various aspects of the battle and received their shoulder boards after charging across the battlefield. Following a lunch with parents, cadets marched in a parade down Main Street in the town of New Market.—VMI Photos by Ashlie Walter.



VMI Takes First In Math Competition

By Ashlie Walter

VMI took home the top spot at the Shenandoah Valley Math Modeling Challenge hosted by VMI Sept. 30 to Oct. 1. It was the Institute's first victory at the event since the competition was established three years ago.

The contest attracted 35 students from all corners of Virginia and surrounding states. Teams were given the choice of selecting a problem from two options and then given 23 hours to solve the problems using math.

This year's prompts were a choice between creating three presidential campaign plans in response to three different variations of the Electoral College or create a way to evacuate a back-country campground at Glacier National Park in a quick way and get rescue teams out there in case of a forest fire with little to no cell phone reception. Glacier Park also prohibits the use of the motorized vehicles in the back country.

VMI had three teams of eight cadets total participating.

Maj. Karen Bliss, assistant professor of applied mathematics, has organized the

October 2017

event each year. She said priority is given to cadets who have not participated in the contest before. The event gives math majors a taste of what they will have to do for their senior capstone, a 96-hour international math challenge.

Kao-Pu Chang '20 said his team picked the Electoral College prompt because it seemed more familiar to everyone. He added they put a lot of effort into the competition.

"We didn't go to sleep until 3 a.m. on Sunday morning because we had so [much data] to analyze. Analyzing vote rates of 435 districts of America is not easy at all," Chang said, adding it was worth it no matter what prize they got.

This was his first year participating in a challenge like this one. Chang said he learned a lot from his teammate Shang-Cheng Su '19 who taught him how to model and write science papers as well as improve his logical thinking.

Eric Marland, professor and chair of mathematical sciences at Appalachian State University, said he invites his students to



Mu-Chi Lu '19, Hanchu Zhang '19, and Edward Olbrych '18 chose between two prompts to solve mathematically during a 23-hour competition hosted by VMI on Sept. 30 through Oct. 1.—VMI Photo by Ashlie Walter.

participated in the challenge because it's a friendly atmosphere and an introduction to working as a team. His school took home the top prize last year.

The challenge is also a way to inspire students to stick with the math program.

"It convinces them to keep at it and, hopefully, that is more successful than who the winner is," he said. "I don't care about who the winner is but I care if they have fun doing math." ❁

Equestrian Club Rides High

By Mary Price

Since the U.S. Army mechanized its cavalry in 1948, horses have been largely absent from the VMI post. Some of today's cadets, though, keep the equine spirit of yesteryear alive through participation in the VMI Equestrian Club.

Various equestrian clubs have existed at VMI since the Army mounts departed, but the current incarnation of the Equestrian Club has been around for roughly 10 years, said Gammon Castellvi, club coach. Castellvi explained that the club began thanks to the efforts of Becky Harris '09, who stabled her horse with Castellvi during her cadetship.

For the first few years, Castellvi noted, the VMI Equestrian Club existed without funding from the Institute. Now, though, VMI leases 10 school horses from Castellvi for the cadets to use. Since 2013, the program has been housed at Penmerryl Farm in Greenville, Virginia, which is about a 20-mile drive from post. The VMI riders practice the equestrian discipline of eventing, which consists of three phases: dressage, cross country, and show jumping.

With the drive time, and cadets' busy schedules, it's not easy for any of them to make it out to the barn, but Castellvi noted that showing up and working hard are standard procedure for her cadets.

"They've been incredible to work with," said Castellvi of the 21 cadets on this year's roster. "The majority have zero riding experience. They work so hard on our limited time."

Perhaps as a result of using their time wisely—and the well-known VMI work ethic—the cadets are doing well in competitions. On Sunday, Sept. 24, VMI riders Nathan Dugie '18 and Grace Fisher '18 took home first place ribbons, and Marie O'Shaughnessy '18 took home a second place ribbon, at the Cedar Creek Horse Trials in Staunton, Virginia.

Even the raw beginners, though, find reasons to be pleased with their progress.

One of those beginners, Jacob Foley '18, admitted that he was scared of horses before coming to VMI. "I had a friend at VMI who was [a member of the equestrian club] and she brought me out to the barn, and I got over it with her help," he explained. "This year, Nathan [Dugie] suggested that I come out with the team and learn how to ride, and I thought it was a good idea."

Like all of those new to the saddle, Foley has found that controlling a 1,500-pound animal through two slender reins isn't as easy as it looks from the ground. "It can definitely be frustrating at first, but then things start to click," he said.



Josiah Womack '19 takes a jump during last year's Penmerryl Horse Trials on Nov. 13, 2016.—Photo courtesy of Swita Photography.

Unlike Foley, Fisher had ridden a good bit before she came to VMI. She was such an avid rider that she considered attending a college well known for its equestrian program but was daunted by the cost. VMI was a much more affordable option—plus there would be an opportunity to ride.

"I did know about the equestrian program when I came and that was part of what motivated me [to come to VMI]," Fisher explained. "I really wanted to join the equestrian team from the start."

Fisher admits that every now and again she thinks about that "horsey" school. "But in some ways I got a more invaluable experience here," she acknowledged. "[Castellvi] is a horsewoman before anything else. We have a very, very special opportunity to train from her."

Also grateful for the opportunity to ride at VMI has been Josiah Womack '19. Like Fisher, he'd ridden before coming to VMI—but his passion has been Civil War cavalry reenactments.

"It's a lot of fun," said Womack of the cavalry reenactments. "You thought cross country was an adrenaline rush—it's double, maybe triple that sometimes."

And while he's away from the reenactments, going to the barn at Penmerryl has proved to be the source of some much-needed horse therapy and camaraderie with fellow cadets. "I really miss this place over the summer," said Womack. 🐾



Grace Fisher '18 guides Port of Call over a crossrail at Penmerryl Farm in preparation for a show on Sept. 24.—VMI Photo by Mary Price.

Cadets Train in T-38 Talons

Information courtesy of Air Force ROTC

Four Air Force ROTC cadets, John Hefti '18, Michael McElroy '18, Christopher Rambali '19, and Chase Orrell '19 took part in a training exercise that included flights in T-38 Talon jet trainers.

The exercise was held at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Virginia, Sept. 16-17.

Their time in the air also provided training for Air Force pilots flying F-22 Raptors, who played the adversary role in the training scenario.



Christopher Rambali '19 and Chase Orrell '19 pause for a photo during their visit to Langley in September. —Photo courtesy of Air Force ROTC.



Cadets had a spectacular view from the cockpits of the T-38 Talon jet trainers. — Photo courtesy of Air Force ROTC.

“On Saturday, we got to fly two 1-hour sorties where we flew out over the ocean, and then got chased by the F-22s as they tried to shoot us down,” said Hefti. “We all got a little stick time and had the chance to pull a lot of Gs too. I wish we could go back soon, but we just have to wait till flight school now.”

Prior to their time in the air, the cadets went over safety basics and learned lessons from seasoned pilots.

“It was great. The first day we were there we spent most of the time learning how to eject and parachute down if anything went wrong,” said Hefti. “Then we got fitted for all of our flight gear and got to go hang out with the F-22 and T-38 pilots afterwards. It was great getting to hear all the stories and advice the pilots gave us.” 🇺🇸



Thai Delegation

Chief of Defense Forces for the Royal Thai Armed Forces, Gen. Surapong Suwan-ath '78 joins Col. Keith Gibson '77 in a tour of the VMI museum where his uniform is now on display. Suwan-ath spent the day touring post before signing his uniform over to the museum, then joined Gen. Peay to review the afternoon parade. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Rat Challenge *continued from page 1*

because of the possible removal of the Jordan's Point dam. So the PE department is getting more creative and adding new stations to the river. The raft station, implemented last year, allows rats only a few materials to build a raft to make it across the river and back.

Using these facilities and public space involves a great deal of coordination to make happen every year.

"At any one time on a Tuesday or Thursday we have over 500 young people participating," said Col. Jay Johnson, director of Rat Challenge. "It is an enormous program that most people don't realize the complexity, the liability, the safety, the communication between departments that has to occur before we even step out there."



Rat Challenge cadets walk across the high ropes course in the Corps Indoor Training Facility.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Cadre member Angela Mullins '19 instructs Company C cadets on the North Post high ropes course during Rat Challenge.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

That level of responsibility makes Rat Challenge just as much of a learning opportunity for the upperclass cadets leading it as it does for the rats participating in it. Even though PE department staff oversee every station, cadre volunteers secure the lines, check harnesses and helmets, and instruct the rats on safety.

"It is a leadership lab," Johnson explained. "There is a seriousness and professionalism that has to be upheld during Rat Challenge."

The CPTF brings that leadership opportunity to a new level during Rat Challenge. Fulfilling the Rat Challenge mission statement "to foster self-confidence and physical conditioning in new cadets by creating training situations which are reasonable enough yet stressful enough to show them that they're capable of doing tasks which surpassed previously self-imposed mental and physical limits." 🌟



9/11 Run

Cadets in VMI's Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force ROTC units joined together for a run around post to recognize the 16th anniversary of Sept. 11. The group ran from the Parade Ground to North Post then down to Jordan's Point and back during the joint physical training time.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Women's Soccer, Cross Country Start Seasons Strong

By Chris Floyd

It has been a slow start for the VMI athletic teams this fall, but a couple of the squads have tasted some early success.

The women's soccer team recently defeated Mt. St. Mary's, 1-0, to end a three-game losing skid. Taylor Callahan '19 scored the winning goal with just six minutes remaining in the Sept. 10 contest in Maryland, and Ceci Keppeler '19, who leads the team with 69 saves in goal, made four stops to complete the shutout.

The Keydets, now 3-7 on the season, are led by Emma Quirk '18, who has three goals on the season, while Blake Cashin '19 and Keniya Lee '19 have both contributed a pair of assists in the 10 games.

The cross country teams have also turned in some outstanding efforts in the early part of the season.

On the men's side, Jahanzib Shahbaz '20 has been the top finisher in two of VMI's first three meets, including a fourth-place finish in the James Madison University Invite Sept. 9 in New Market. The Keydets finished second as a team in that meet. VMI also placed second in the season-opener Sept. 1 in Blacksburg. Justin Adams '20 was the top finisher for the Keydets in the Hokie Invite, placing 10th.

Bethany King '18 led VMI's women in all three of their cross country events this fall. She was seventh in the Hokie Invite as the Keydets placed third as a team, and she was 12th in the JMU Open, with VMI again taking third in the team standings. On Sept. 15 in Blacksburg, King placed 31st in the Virginia Tech Alumni Invite, leading VMI to a ninth-place team effort.

Meanwhile, two other VMI squads were still seeking their first victories of the season at press time.

The football team (0-4) most recently fell to Chattanooga, dropping a 63-7 decision Sept. 23

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Members of the rifle team shoot air rifles from standing position during the match against The Citadel on Sept. 30 in Kilbourne Hall.—VMI Photo by Ashlie Walter.

in Lexington. Through the first four contests, which have seen the Keydets commit nine turnovers and score just 27 points, Daz Palmer '20 has emerged as VMI's leading rusher, with 200 yards on 44 carries, and receiver, with 11 catches for 114 yards. Austin Coulling '19 leads in the passing department with 364 yards, while Allan Cratsenberg '18 paces the defense with 32 total tackles.

The men's soccer team stood at 0-5-2 through Sept. 23. Early in the season, the Keydets fought to a 2-2 draw with Longwood as David Wright '18 scored both VMI goals, and VMI went two overtimes with St.

Joseph's before settling for a 0-0 tie.

VMI's next best chance for victory came Sept. 20 in Lexington, but Howard scored late in the second half to steal a 2-1 win. VMI tied the game with just 11 seconds remaining before intermission when Wilson Tuck '21 found the back of the net for his first career goal.

Two other squads opened their seasons at the end of September, with the men's and women's rifle teams playing host to The Citadel. On Sept. 30, VMI split wins with The Citadel, with the women's team scoring 4382 aggregate points to the Bulldogs' 4109. The men's team fell to the Bulldogs 4472 to 4552. 🌟



Keniya Lee '19 puts the ball back in play during the Aug. 26 game against St. Peter's University on Patchin Field.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

National Competition Within Reach for Cadet Climbers

By Chris Floyd

For the first time, VMI's climbing club is training consistently for national competition, thanks to the dedication of VMI staff, hard work of cadets, and the availability of the Corps Physical Training Facility's rock wall.

The club, which was started about five years ago, will enter at least two competitions away from post this year, and hopes are that plans for two more events will be finalized soon. With the completion of the CPTF, at least one of those competitions could be at home, and VMI could win.

"In the early days, we didn't have a wall to climb on, really, so we spent a lot of time taking trips to the climbing gym in Roanoke or out to Goshen Pass," said Capt. Isaac Slone, CPTF director. "Since the opening of the CPTF, though, daily practices and our ability to win meets have skyrocketed."

According to Slone, VMI competes in "Bouldering difficulty comps." That involves climbs on walls that range from seven to 25 feet high. Climbers get a set time to complete as many routes as they can, with each route assigned a certain number of points, depending upon its difficulty. Each climber's points are totaled after time

expires, and the one with the highest tally is the winner.

VMI's climbing club currently has 15 members, but after cadre and other duties are over, that number is expected to increase.

"The number should grow next semester," said Slone. "The long term vision right now is to double in size and start training cadets earlier in their time here at VMI so that by the time they are firsts, they are competing on the national level against schools such as West Point and Virginia Tech."

This year's national tournament is scheduled for February in Utah.

The climbing club is not the only group able to take advantage of the climbing facilities, however. The Institute has developed an open climb program, opening the rock wall to all members of the VMI community.

"Our hope is that by opening up the climbing wall, more people will see the health benefits of climbing and also get an opportunity for people in different departments and areas to interact and bond," Slone explained. "The program also gives cadets the chance to use

the facility and hopefully realize that they don't have to just run or lift weights to get in a good workout."

Though the program is in its infancy, the earlier reviews have been good.

"We have had very positive feedback from cadets and staff since we launched the program," said Slone. "The only negative feedback was that we couldn't provide even more days for people to climb."

"We are excited to see this program grow," he added, "and hopefully see this move into technique and skill class in the future as well." ❧



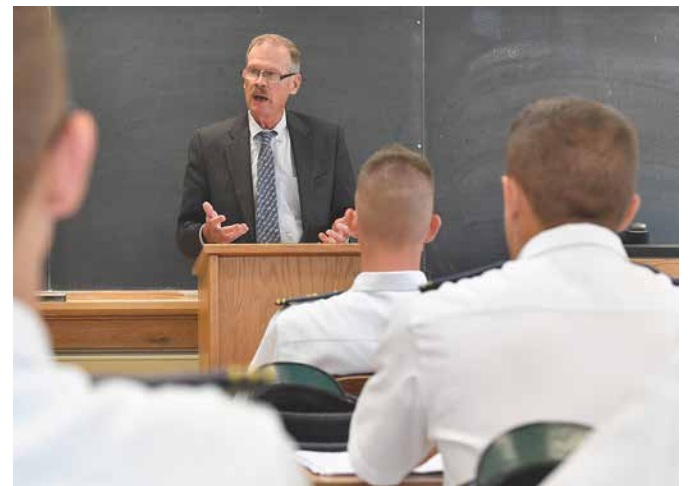
Garrett Smith '20 nears the top of the rock wall in the CPTF while practicing for the rock climbing club.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Jack Freischlag '20 climbs the rock wall in the CPTF during a free climb session for the rock climbing club on Sept. 25.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

McDougall Talk

Dr. Walter McDougall, Pulitzer Prize winning historian, speaks to Lt. Col. Spencer Bakich's U.S. foreign policy class to follow up with questions cadets had after attending his Sept. 28 talk, "American Heresies: How Civil Religion Made Us a Dangerous Nation... Especially to Ourselves." During the talk McDougall concluded that church and state are two sides of the same coin, and that cultures throughout the ages, including the United States, have mixed "spiritual legitimacy with secular authority."—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Cadet Wellness Fair a Success

By Ashlie Walter

More than 200 cadets attended the first Cadet Wellness Fair to learn from nearly 25 vendors about local health resources on post and in the wider Lexington-Rockbridge area.

The fair on Sept. 25 was held in Cocke Hall, a location that provided a high volume of through traffic from cadets going to or from a workout or participating in the blood drive.

"I think it went well. We heard back from community members and VMI attendees, all good feedback ... they said it was fun and they would love to come back next year," said Maj. Megan Ullrich, health and wellness coordinator and the organizer of the event.

Ullrich said the fair featured a wide range of providers—from organizations offering health and wellness products to opportunities to interact with staff from offices they may not have come across otherwise.

Participating offices included the Center for Cadet Counseling, the infirmary, the chaplain's office, and the Miller Academic Center.

The Center for Cadet Counseling table featured a large spinning wheel with questions about the center's services on each section for cadets to answer as well as a raffle.

Cadets were able to win prizes, including food, apparel, and VMI merchandise.

Cadets made connections with organizations outside of VMI, and Ullrich heard from a Rockbridge YMCA representative that a few cadets were interested in volunteering.

The Cadet Wellness Fair is looking to build on this year's



Nurse practitioner Jenny Crance gives cadets information on the health care provided by the VMI Infirmary during the Cadet Wellness Fair.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Catherine Berry '18 stops to talk to Corps chaplain Bob Phillips '87 during the Cadet Wellness Fair in Cocke Hall on Sept. 20.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

wellness fair with the goal of expanding the number of vendors and getting the word out to a larger number of cadets. 🍀

Alumni Association Hosts Colorado Events

The VMI Alumni Association hosted a VMI versus the U.S. Air Force Academy weekend in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Aug. 31-Sept. 2. Events included a new cadet recruiting event, a golf outing, and a pep rally hosted by Todd Baldwin '06 at his business. There was also a tailgating event attended by 360 alumni and friends, plus the VMI Band, just prior to the Keydets' football game against the U.S. Air Force Falcons.—Photo courtesy of the VMI Alumni Association.



Alumni Agencies *continued from page 5*

Maconi, is part of the ongoing restructuring of the VMI Alumni Agencies and is meant to better express the significant and enduring responsibilities of the three leaders.

Under the reorganization, the VMI Alumni Association's Thom Brashears '95, the VMI Keydet Club's Greg Cavallaro '84, and Warren J. "Buddy" Bryan '71 of the VMI Foundation are responsible for the successful execution of their respective agency's core functions, such as, in the case of the VMI Alumni Association, the organization of reunions and the publication of the VMI *Alumni Review*.

As CEO, Maconi is responsible for the overall direction of the combined agencies and ensuring the maximum possible efficiency in each agency. Maconi is also responsible for

what he terms 'enterprise-wide functions,' which include personnel, information technologies, and donor services.

Additionally, the new operating agreement delineates David Prasnicki's role as the chief financial officer for each agency, and the role of his staff in providing infrastructure support to the VMI Alumni Association, the VMI Foundation, the VMI Keydet Club, and the VMI Alumni Agencies Board for finance, database, informational technology, and human resources services. This change, according to Maconi, "will now provide the CFO with the authority commensurate with his responsibilities to each agency."

The next step in the process will be the modification of the each agency's existing articles of incorporation and by-laws. 🍀



Bedford Trip

New cadets visit the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford on Oct. 1 to learn about the sacrifices made at Normandy from veterans and volunteers. After rotating through the stations, cadets joined the Commandant of Cadets, Col. Bill Wanovich '87, in placing a wreath at the memorial while *Taps* played in honor of the fallen. The annual trip inculcates ideals of service, duty, and sacrifice in the new cadets.—VMI
Photos by Ashlie Walter.

