



INSTITUTE REPORT

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

Volume 47, Number 2, October 2018

'They Did Things They Weren't Expecting to Do' National Security Minor Pairs Research, Real-World Learning

By Mary Price

Now in its seventh year of existence, VMI's national security minor allows a select number of cadets to take on more challenge than the Institute already offers—and almost all of them succeed in spades, despite the requirements of coursework, a thesis, and an internship.

Jacob Van Dyke '19 is no exception. A first-generation college student, he came to VMI because while he was fairly certain he wanted to commission into the military, he didn't want to be locked in as he would at the service academies.

Van Dyke came in as a physics major, but switched to international studies before classes began—and before he was even out of the Rat Line, he was studying Japanese on his own. He'd heard about VMI's exchange program with Japan's National Defense Academy, and since VMI doesn't offer classes in Japanese, Van Dyke took the bull by the horns and began preparation on his own, despite the fact that he'd never studied an Asian language before.

The next fall, Van Dyke left the United States for the very first time—and studied abroad at the Japanese National Defense Academy, where all classes are taught in Japanese. As the weeks went by, fear was replaced by confidence as his language skills blossomed and strangers became friends.

"Just all in all, it was a growing experience," commented Van Dyke, who plans to commission into the Army. "That semester was amazing."

From the moment he arrived back on U.S. soil, Van Dyke had one ambition: to get back to Japan and keep working on his language skills. This summer, he did just that, studying in Tokyo under the auspices of IES Abroad, a company providing study abroad opportunities to college students. The experience not only gave him the language credits he needed to graduate but also fulfilled his internship requirement for the national security minor.

Leading the Way to New Market

The New Market marchers make their way across the East Lexington Bridge on the first day of their journey. Read about the march on page 12.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



See National Security Minor, page 4

Cadet Essay Published in Literary Magazine

By Ashlie Walter

In his first submission to a literary magazine outside of VMI, Joel Thomas '19 won honorable mention in a nonfiction contest and a \$100 prize. Thomas, who is on the editorial board of VMI's literary magazine, *Cadence*, has been writing for many years, inspired by his years growing up in the rural South.

The award-winning essay, titled "Whimsyton, N.C.," published under the *North Carolina Literary Review's* Alex Albright Creative Nonfiction contest, was inspired by an article he read about how small towns' marketing campaigns can "flatten" their culture.

"The place was familiar to me but how they were branded seemed alien at the same time. They had been reduced to advertising gimmicks. That spurred me to think more on the issue," Thomas said.

Thomas was one of two honorable mention winners out of 63 submissions to the contest.

Contest judge Randall Kenan said in a press release of the honorable mention essays, "These two struck me as distinguished and having something refreshing to say and a refreshing way of telling it."

Coincidentally, Thomas' mother, Sally Thomas, received second place this past summer in the NCLR's James Applewhite Poetry Prize competition, which Joel Thomas was unaware of until the winners were announced.

He said his mom had always been a published author and it was a "sort of weird accident."

His other pieces, fiction and nonfiction, follow the same vein of focusing on a rural lifestyle.

"I write a lot of fiction, short fiction, focused on forgotten segments of the population. Growing up in the rural South, kind of hiding in plain sight are pockets of people isolated from the rest of the population," he said. "My nonfiction focuses on the idea of place in the South, what it means to be from a place and what makes a place."



Joel Thomas '19.

That sense of place comes from growing up in the town of Lincolnton, North Carolina, since the age of 10. After he'd lived there for a time, he realized that it had its own closed system of rooted people and common knowledge, specific to that place.

While he has earned acclaim for his writing, Thomas' major is in biology, something he says marries well with his writing.

"I'd say the overarching thing is a desire to explore and a deep-seated curiosity. It comes from the same place of curiosity, how people work and not so much how they work in a psychological way, but how that expresses reality and how we can use art to perceive art," he said.

After graduation, Thomas hopes to attend medical school and specialize in psychiatry. 🌿

Republic of China Military Academy Visits Post

The superintendent of the Republic of China Military Academy, Maj. Gen. Chen Chung-Wen, meets with Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62 during his visit to VMI Sept. 4. Chen was joined by the ROCMA director of the military student office, a mechanical engineering professor, and a representative from the center for international affairs. They toured post, viewing barracks, North Post, academic row, the VMI Museum, and athletic facilities during their trip.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye and H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 47, Number 2, October 2018

The Institute Report, VMI's monthly newsletter, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; (540) 464-7207; or VMIReport@vmi.edu. © 2018 Virginia Military Institute.

Director Col. Stewart MacInnis
Editor Maj. John Robertson IV
Assistant Editor Kelly Nye
Designer Robbin Youngblood
Institute Report Staff
Chris Floyd
Stephen Hanes
H. Lockwood McLaughlin
Mary Price
Ashlie Walter
Header photo on page 1 by Kelly Nye

The Virginia Military Institute is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and that is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. In pursuit of this goal, any question of impermissible discrimination on these bases will be addressed with efficiency and energy and in accordance with VMI General Order 16. General Order 16 also addresses complaints or reports of retaliation against those who have opposed prohibited practices, those who have filed complaints or reports of prohibited practices, and those who have testified or otherwise participated in enforcement of General Order 16. Questions regarding discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, or other federal law, may be referred to the VMI Inspector General and Title IX Coordinator, 212 Carroll Hall, VMI, Lexington, VA 24450, (540) 464-7072. Any cadet or prospective cadet having questions about disability services for students should contact the Director of the Center for Cadet Counseling and Disability Services, 448 Institute Hill, 2nd floor, Post Infirmary, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7667. For employment-related disability services, contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, VA 24450, (540) 464-7322.



Football vs. ETSU

The Keydets lost a hard-fought match 24-27 against the East Tennessee State University Buccaneers Sept. 14 in Foster Stadium. Originally scheduled for Sept. 15, the game was moved due to weather forecasts for Hurricane Florence. —VMI
Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



While in Japan, Van Dyke also undertook a research project under the auspices of the Summer Undergraduate Research Institute. For that project, he interviewed Japanese military personnel about U.S.-Japan relations. He'll take the information he gleaned from those interviews and use that as the basis for his thesis on the national security culture of Japan.

Van Dyke's trip to Asia even helped to strengthen the ties between VMI and the Japanese National Defense Academy, as he met up with Col. Howard Sanborn, professor of international studies, and introduced Sanborn to leaders at the Japanese academy.

"We've had a really nice relationship with [the Japanese military academy]," said Sanborn, who was making his first trip to the academy. "We want to keep that relationship strong and even build on it The driving thing for me is to get cadets to Asia."

Van Dyke's experience with the national security minor is far from unique, said Lt. Col. Spencer Bakich, associate professor of international studies and director of the national security minor program.

"This is the stuff that makes for organizational leaders down the line," said Bakich. "For the type of cadet that's able to get in, the national security minor is a critical component in their intellectual development. I've heard from a number of cadets that their projects were incredibly meaningful to them. They did things they weren't expecting to do."

Since its inception, admittance to the minor has been via a competitive selection process and enrollment has been capped at 20 cadets—10 from the 1st Class and 10 from the 2nd Class.

Keeping the minor small is necessary for two reasons, Bakich explained. One, supervising cadet theses takes a lot of faculty time, and two, funds are needed to support cadet internships. Not all of the internships are paid, so there's an effort made to level the playing field by making sure no cadet is denied an internship due to financial concerns.

The national security minor has been quietly underwritten financially by Louis Blair, who recently retired after many years of serving as the Mary Moody Northen visiting professor in the social sciences. "It's a pretty special thing he's done," said Bakich. "He's an inspiration."

Bakich isn't the only one appreciative of Blair's altruistic spirit. "The minor would not exist without [Blair's] generosity and

commitment," said Col. Dennis Foster, head of the Department of International Studies and Political Science.

"It's a phenomenal program," said Bakich of the national security minor program. "If there's one thing I'd love to be able to do, it would be to generate more money for it, because I would love to be able to expand these opportunities for the cadets. I'd love to give cadets more opportunities to do more of these types of things."

This summer, not only did Van Dyke study abroad in Japan, but another cadet pursuing the national security minor, Kristian Perez, attended the Peace and Security in the South Caucasus program in the Republic of Georgia. Yet another cadet interned in the office of Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, and still another was an intern at Lockheed Martin. Those cadets, Bakich noted, found these opportunities on their own.

"As in life, very little is given to you," he remarked. "We work with [the cadets], but they drive the train." 🌸



Jacob Van Dyke '19 confers with Lt. Col. Spencer Bakich about his thesis for the national security minor.—VMI Photo by Mary Price.

COW Gives to Community

Holly-Guilaine Njabo '20 and Matthew Cotton '19 present Gary Kohl, president of The Community Table, a donation of \$115 on behalf of the College Orientation Workshop program. COW participants volunteered at the Community Table every Monday during the four-week program in the summer as part of their service project. Njabo and Cotton both worked as cadet counselors for COW this summer, and Cotton participated in it before coming to VMI.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.





Oath Day

The rat mass learns about VMI's heritage at the Virginia Museum of the Civil War in New Market before taking the New Cadet Oath Sept 2. After the ceremony, the new cadets charged the battlefield as cadets did in 1864. Following the charge, company commanders handed out shoulder boards to the rats. The visit ended with a parade through downtown New Market. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Reaping—and Studying—the Fruits of Their Labors

'Soy Travel Team' Members Research What Influences Soybean Seed Production

By Mary Price

They've traveled over 6,000 miles, traversing Virginia 24 times in the process, all for the purpose of tramping through hot and dusty farm fields to harvest soybeans. They've analyzed over 4,300 samples, chopped stems, then counted and weighed those stems plus their pods and seeds. They've created a massive spreadsheet and painstakingly entered their data into it. And, of course, there's no tallying how many late nights in the lab they've weathered in the process.

Over the past year, 19 cadets have worked alongside Lt. Col. Anne Alerding, associate professor of biology, as she's used grants from the Jackson-Hope New Directions in Teaching and Research Fund and the Virginia Soybean Board to study why soybeans, a \$40 billion per year crop in the United States, are producing so many aborted pods and thus lower yields.

Now in her third year of working on the soybean project, Laura Davis '18 graduated in May but didn't leave post for long, returning to the lab this fall as Alerding's paid assistant. She's leaving later this year for a job at the National Institutes of Health working alongside a pharmacologist who's researching cancer, but for now, her job is to help solve the soybean mystery.

"There's a connection between a tissue called the pith—basically a storage part of the plant—the more pith a plant has, the [fewer] aborted pods it has," she said. "The more pith you have, the more you're able to store and the more you have to give to your seeds."

Like humans, plants make trade-offs in allocating resources, Alerding explained. "The idea is that during the seed-filling stages, the plant should be sending its energy/nutrient resources to making pods and seeds," she commented, "but we discovered a few years ago that there's this internal battle between continuing to grow vegetative structures or making fruits."

But to figure out why a plant allocates its resources the way it does requires some in-depth sleuthing. That's where Tyler Will '20 comes in. He's using a microscope normally used by Col. Wade Bell, a microbiologist, to study cross sections of the soybean stems, with an eye to determining how



Laura Davis '18 works in the lab as Lt. Col. Anne Alerding's research assistant.—VMI Photo by Maj. John Robertson IV.

much xylem and phloem, which are tissues transporting water and nutrients, are in them.

"[The microscope] allows you to differentiate different tissue systems," said Will. "Col. Bell's microscope has a fluorescent camera which uses different color pigments and wavelengths of light to be able to separate one of the images on the computer into three separate channels. It's three separate pictures. One picture shows all of the xylem, one picture shows all of the phloem, and one picture shows it all together."

He then uses a software program to analyze the images coming

from the microscope. With this aspect of the project, Alerding and the cadets have had invaluable assistance from Dr. Aryeh Weiss, a professor of engineering at Bar-Ilan University in Israel who's an expert on the software. This summer, Weiss traveled to VMI for the third year in a row to assist with Alerding's research.

"[Using the software] helps us differentiate the xylem from everything else," said Will.

Once the xylem is isolated, Will can determine if there's growth in the cells, and in particular, if how much lignin,



Tyler Will '20 uses special software to identify stem tissues in soybeans.—VMI Photo by Maj. John Robertson IV.

a supporting chemical, is in the cell walls. “Plants with more lignin in them put more of their energy into plant growth rather than seed production,” Will noted.

While Davis and Will are working on tissue analysis, Angela Mullins '19 is tackling the problem from another angle—quite literally. She's studying whether branching angle—the angle at which an individual branch comes off the stem—influences seed development.

“I used some angle tools to measure branching angle from the first epicotyl branch,” she explained. An epicotyl branch is the first branch emerging from the base of the main stem. “The first epicotyl branch is an indicator of fruit yield.”

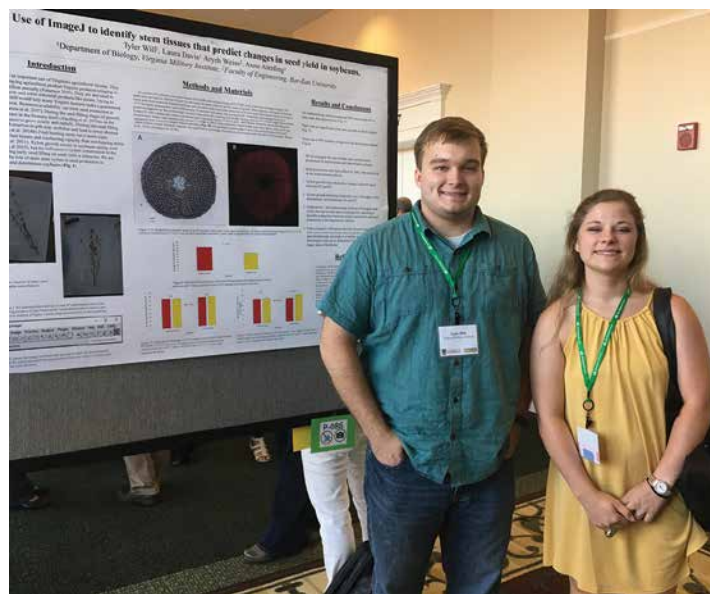
Mullins explained that with trees, it's been established that if a branch has a thicker diameter, it will have a narrower angle and produce more fruit. “So I thought with the soybeans, if we have a narrower angle and a thicker diameter, we're going to have more fruit,” she said. “But what we found was that that was only half true for soybeans.”

A wider angle, rather than a narrower one, is indicative of high fruit yield in soybeans, she noted. Mullins has concluded that the reason for this has to do with lifespan: while a tree has years and years to grow, a soybean plant's life cycle is limited to one growing season. “Any changes in their diameter aren't going to have as significant an impact on their branching angle,” she commented.

A thicker branch diameter, though, is good for both fruit trees and soybeans, Mullins explained, as it provides the plant with stability and keeps fruit from breaking off easily. The next step, she said, would be for plant geneticists to step in and see what genes influence branching angle.

“The goal is really, how do you get this crop to produce more and higher quality fruit?” said Mullins. “We need to figure out how all of these components are influencing the fruit yield.”

As a result of their work on the soybean project, both Davis and Mullins have had the satisfaction of seeing their names in print. They are both credited as co-authors, along with Alerding, of an article recently published in the *Journal of Crop Improvement*. 🌱



Tyler Will '20 and Angela Mullins '19 present their research at a biennial soybean conference in Athens, Georgia, Aug. 27.—Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Anne Alerding.

“A Capstone Project in a Week” Conference Allows Cadets to Share Research

Over the past year, the cadets in Lt. Col. Anne Alerding's research lab have learned a lot about soybeans—and so has recent alumna Laura Davis '18, who is now working as Alerding's research assistant.

But Tyler Will '20, Angela Mullins '19, and Davis haven't just learned more about the nation's second-most planted field crop—they've also had a chance to share their learning with an international audience. Recently, the trio, plus Alerding, traveled to Athens, Georgia, to attend a biennial soybean conference that attracted attendees from as far away as Asia and South America.

“I had a lot more people than I expected come up,” Davis commented.

Like Davis, Will was surprised by the amount of interest their research generated. “I learned that soybeans are a very hot topic right now, and they're actually not studied very much compared to other crops that we produce,” he stated.

But first Will had to get ready for the conference by presenting his research findings in a poster-sized format.

“It was probably the hardest thing I've ever done in my life,” Will said of putting together his poster. “I pretty much did a capstone project in a week. I collected all of the data, figured out what it all meant, put it together, and made a poster in a week.”

After VMI, Will hopes to do concussion research at the National Institutes of Health.

Working on the soybean project, he noted, has been excellent preparation for more research down the road—a sentiment echoed by Mullins and Davis as well.

“[Working on this project] has helped me understand the amount of recording, the amount of time, and the amount of stress you're going to have doing research,” Will said. “It's fun but it's not easy.”

Mullins, who's been working on Alerding's project for three years, said that research has taught her patience. “It's like taking a jigsaw puzzle with no pictures on it and having to put [all of the pieces] together,” she commented. “There's a lot of critical thinking that goes into research.”

She plans to attend medical school after taking a gap year first.

Davis, the recent alumna, has also gotten a first-hand look at what life as a researcher is really like.

“I've learned how important it is to pay attention to detail, and just the patience of everything,” she commented. “In some cases, a mistake can cost you an entire sample.”

Davis originally entered VMI with the career goal of becoming a pharmacist. That's still an option, but she's also thinking about graduate school down the road. Finding a research topic, though, is critical.

Davis first discovered how powerful an incentive the right topic can be when she took organic chemistry with Col. Tappey Jones '70.

“He gets so excited when he teaches organic chemistry,” she stated. “My goal is to find a topic that I get that excited about and then to research it.”

— Mary Price

ATHLETICS

By Chris Floyd

Women's Soccer

The Keydets continued the best start in program history with a 2-0 victory at Richmond Sept. 12.

VMI scored two goals in the first 10 minutes of the contest to score its sixth win of the season. Julianne Knoblett '20 got the Keydets on the board first early in the contest, and just 10 minutes later, Blaike Cashin '19 added the insurance goal to give VMI a two-goal lead.

Ceci Keppeller '19 recorded two saves in goal to earn the shutout. As a team, the Keydets have blanked their opponents six times this year. VMI has allowed only one goal through the first seven games.

Sierra Brewer '20 currently leads the Keydets with four goals. The Keydets boast a 6-0-1 record to begin the year.

Just one win away from matching last year's victory total, VMI opened Southern Conference play Sept. 21 against UNC-Greensboro in Lexington. The Sept. 16 contest against William & Mary was postponed.



Gabby Criscione '22 plays against Delaware State Aug. 23 on Patchin Field.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Cross Country



Members of the men's cross country team race at the New Market Battlefield during the James Madison University Invitational Sept. 8.—VMI Photo by Chris Floyd.

Both the men's and women's cross country teams turned in sterling efforts at the JMU Invitational Sept. 8 in New Market. The men placed second in the 8K race, while the women took third in their 5K competition.

Davone Hernandez '21 was the top finisher for the VMI men, taking third place overall with a time of 26 minutes, 22 seconds. Carlos Fernandes '20 also placed in the top 10 for the Keydets, crossing the line 10th in 27:29.

For the women, Locan Luckett '20 ran to VMI's best finish, taking 10th in 20:24. Anna Arnfield '21 was just a second behind, good for 11th place in the individual standings.

St. Francis won the men's race with 18 points, while host James Madison University took first place in the women's event with 21 points.

The Keydets returned to action Sept. 29 at the George Mason Invitational in Leesburg, Va.

Football

VMI just missed a chance for its first victory of the season, falling to East Tennessee State, 27-24, Sept. 14 in Lexington, a game that was pushed up a day due to threats from Hurricane Florence.

The Keydets led 17-13 at halftime, held a 24-20 advantage late in the third quarter and had a chance to retake the lead late in the contest. But the final VMI drive ended when a fourth-down try came up short at the ETSU 31-yard line, and VMI fell to 0-3 this year, 0-2 against Southern Conference foes.

Despite the loss, the Keydets did turn in several outstanding offensive performances. Quarterback Reece Udinski '21 set a VMI record for pass attempts in a single game with 60. He completed 27 of those aerials for a career-high 305 yards and a touchdown. Receiver Kris Thornton '21 caught 10 of those passes for a personal-best 119 yards.

The Keydets returned to the road Sept. 22 with another SoCon contest against Western Carolina in Cullowhee, North Carolina. 🍁

Meacham Highlights Presidential Virtues

By Ashlie Walter

Two of the most common questions presidential historian Jon Meacham is asked in regards to today's society is "has it ever been like this? has it ever been worse?" and "how do we get out of it?"

Meacham went on to answer those questions by exploring characteristics of good leadership and followership at VMI's annual Academic Convocation Wednesday, priming the cadets for lessons they will learn throughout the academic year.

Meacham offered a way of viewing their own contributions to American civic life through the examples set by U.S. presidents.

"The future does not belong to observers of democracy. The future belongs to activists and citizens who say this is not what we want," Meacham said.

He noted that the U.S. Constitution, to which many cadets will swear allegiance, was designed for seasons of unrest and unhappiness in public society and "it assumes we will get everything wrong but it gives us the best possible chance to get something right for a more perfect union to unfold."

He elaborated on characteristics of good presidents from curiosity to candor and the humility to ask for help. Specifically, he noted John F. Kennedy's call to former President Dwight D. Eisenhower for advice and to learn from his mistakes after the



Presidential historian Jon Meacham speaks at Academic Convocation in Cameron Hall Sept. 5.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

misadventure when confronted with the challenge of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, lessons that may have prevented a nuclear war.

"You all are young. As you get older, it gets harder to admit that you need to learn something," Meacham said to the cadets.

After the journey through past presidents' lives, Meacham wrapped up with lessons from his conversations with former President George H.W. Bush, including a letter that he read from the president to Bush's mother about Robin Bush, his daughter who died from leukemia as a child.

The letter, written shortly before the birth of their fourth son, described the palpable absence left by his daughter's death. Meacham asked George H.W. Bush to

disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion by U.S.-supported Cubans hoping to overthrow the Castro regime. He used lessons he learned from that

read the letter aloud for him. He described Bush's emotional reaction.

"We were making enough commotion that his chief of staff came in and saw what we were doing that, asked 'why did you ask him to read that?'" Meacham replied "If you want to know someone's heart," and Bush finished, "you have to know what breaks it."

"If you all become the leader George H.W. Bush was, well done. Even better done if you become the men and women [with the human qualities of] George Bush....," he said. "That man embodies the best of the soul of this country and I am confident you all can too."

Meacham is the author of a newly published book, *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*. In it, he discusses how the highly partisan political climate we find ourselves in today is not new at all but has been a recurring feature of American history, from Reconstruction and the advent of the Lost Cause to the fight for civil rights in the 1960s.

His other works include the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*, *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush*, and *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*. ❁



Jon Meacham speaks to Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62 and BOV President Bill Boland '73 after his academic convocation address.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Napoleon Exhibit Field Trip

Ryan Uzzell '19, Josiah Womack '19, and Annika Tice '19 attend the exhibition *Napoleon: Power and Splendor* at the *Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* in Richmond Sept. 1. Maj. Jeff Kendrick and Maj. Abbey Carrico led the optional field trip for the French 450W: modern language capstone course.—Photo courtesy of Maj. Abbey Carrico.



VMI Ranked Highly by Major Media Outlets

By Mary Price

Virginia Military Institute again placed highly in national rankings of thousands of accredited colleges and universities released recently by major publications.

For the fourth year in a row, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked VMI fourth among public national liberal arts colleges, behind the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Air Force Academy.

VMI's engineering program also held onto its previous ranking of 26th in the category for schools granting only a bachelor's or master's degree.

The only other Virginia school in the top 100 for engineering was James Madison University, tied for 30th. The rankings in the engineering category are based exclusively on the reputation of the program.

Overall, *U.S. News* ranked VMI 81st out of 239 national liberal colleges from across the country. The only Virginia schools ranked higher were Washington & Lee University, 11th, and the University of Richmond, 25th.

The *U.S. News* rankings are based on such factors as a college's reputation as rated by academic leaders nationally; the retention of students; class size; quality of the faculty; quality of students; financial resources; graduation rate performance; and alumni giving rate.

In other recent rankings, VMI was also ranked in the top 20 percent nationally by the *Wall Street Journal's* U.S. college rankings, coming in at 168th out of 968 colleges and universities. The Institute was ranked in the top 13 percent in the South.

In late August, *Washington Monthly* released its yearly college rankings, showing VMI ranked 39th out of 228 national liberal arts colleges. The only school in Virginia ranked higher was Washington & Lee University, 2nd.

Additionally, the Institute is ranked 31st in the best bang for the buck, southeast, category. Other Virginia schools in that category were W&L, 1st; Mary Baldwin University, 20th; James Madison University, 23rd; Bluefield College, 27th; and the University of Richmond, 28th. 🌿



VMI's post is home to a rigorous academic program and rewarding extracurricular activities.—Photo courtesy of Maj. John Robertson IV.

9/11 Stair Climb

Members of the fire club, cadet EMTs, and VMI's regimental commander, honor court president, general committee vice president, and several cadet captains prepare to climb stairs in Third Barracks in honor of 9/11 victims. Each cadet carried the name of a firefighter or paramedic who died during the terrorist attack 17 years ago.—VMI

Photos by Kelly Nye.



Kill Caesar! Explores Assassinations of Roman Emperors

By Mary Price

Even today, the Roman empire is well-known for its governmental structure, organizational efficiency, and massive reach. It's also well known that the emperors, who often exercised absolute power, were guarded by close to 9,000 soldiers. With that level of security, it's reasonable to assume that assassination wouldn't have been a concern—but in truth, close to three-quarters of the emperors met their deaths via precisely that route.

Why the Roman legions failed to protect their supreme leader is the subject of Col. Rose Mary Sheldon's new book, *Kill Caesar! Assassination in the Early Roman Empire*, which is scheduled for publication in November.

Sheldon, who holds the Henry King Burgwyn Jr. chair in military history in the Department of History, explained that the idea for her book sprang from a cadet question as to why Roman emperors died so often at the hands of their subjects. Sheldon did some quick math and came up with an assassination rate of close to 75 percent. "That can't be right" was her first thought, but sure enough, the figure was correct.

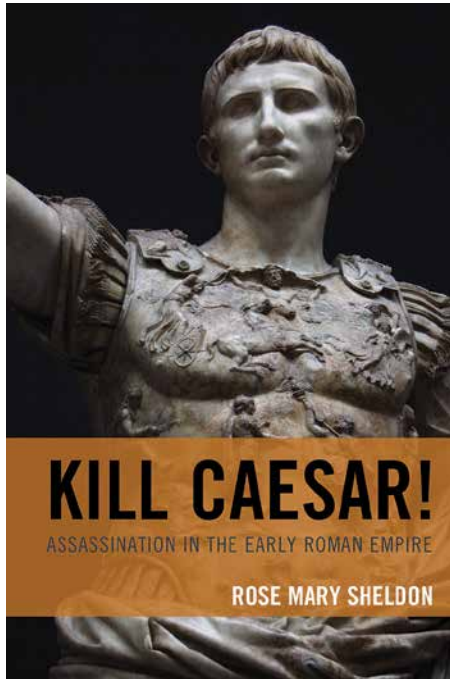
With a longstanding interest in ancient espionage, Sheldon knew she'd found the topic for her next book.

"If the Roman emperor, starting with number one, creates the Praetorian Guard, which is close to 9,000 men dedicated to keeping you alive, how can you possibly have a 75 percent assassination rate?" she asked. "Somebody is doing something wrong."

As Sheldon dove into her research, she quickly discovered that writing about all of the Roman emperors who were assassinated would fill more than one volume. She therefore chose to write about the Julio-Claudian emperors first—and is now planning a second volume on the Flavian ones.

Sheldon also discovered that assassinations of Roman leaders were quite different from assassinations of American presidents. In American assassinations, the culprit is usually a crazed loner.

"They all seem to be weird people who want to impress someone by killing the president," said Sheldon of American assassins. "It's not that way in the Roman world, because crazies don't get to the emperor. They don't have access."



Rose Mary Sheldon's book is *Kill Caesar! Assassination In The Early Roman Empire*.—Photo courtesy of Rose Mary Sheldon.

Nor is it appropriate to point a finger at the Praetorian Guard, the soldiers who served as personal bodyguards for the emperor. Only six out of the 92 emperors were killed by member of the Praetorian Guard, Sheldon stated.

Rather, in the Roman world, assassins were usually senators, or hit men hired by senators. "You kill the emperor because you want his job," said Sheldon. "It's not who pulled the trigger. It's who paid for the bullet ... It's the higher-ups who do it. There's always more people in on it than we even know."

Many times, it's hard to determine the truth of circumstances surrounding an assassination, because the modern-day reader can hardly know if an ancient source is accurate. The historian's motives, for example, must always be considered.

"The historians who write about the emperors being killed are senators," said Sheldon. "They come from the same order as the people who did the killing. And they may even be hired by the man who hired the killer."

Without this knowledge, it's easy to accept the standard narratives about emperors such as Nero and Caligula as being crazy. Sheldon, though, doesn't take those stories at face value.

"I don't think any of them were insane," she stated. Rather, she's found that the emperors who were killed tended to be those who tried to make big cultural changes or ignored the wishes of the senate.

At the end of September, Sheldon gave a talk about her soon-to-be published book at the fall meeting of the Classical Association of Virginia. "I'm going to talk about the Julio-Claudians and map out who the families were," she said in early September. "Since it's a roomful of classicists, they're going to know who some of these people were." ❧



Secretary of Education Visit

Atif Qarni, Virginia's Secretary of Education, meets with commandant Col. Bill Wanovich '87 and superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62 for a tour of barracks during his visit to VMI.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Cadet Leadership Lead the Way to New Market

By H. Lockwood McLaughlin

On a warm and foggy morning in late August, 19 cadets stood in front of *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* and took part in Breakfast Roll Call before departing post on foot for New Market.

The Corps formed a cordon to cheer them on as they began the four-day, 80-mile trek northward. Joining the cadets were Lt. Col. Kevin Faust '96, assistant commandant, and Maj. John Casper '04, associate chaplain.

"So far, so good," said Faust on Day 2 of the march, as the group reached Greenville and the heat index topped 100 degrees. Faust has done the march with the cadets 13 times since 2005.

"It's always a great honor to be a part of the big group that hikes up to New Market. There's always a great group of cadets year on year on year," he said.

The cadets carried with them 500 pairs of shoulder boards to be given to the new cadets following the Sept. 2 oath ceremony and the ceremonial charge across the battlefield.

"I remember doing that as a rat," recalled Weston Gloger '19, cadet in charge of the march. "Seeing these guys, guys that are our dykes' class, as first classmen do this, I thought that day: I want do that when I'm a first classman." Gloger made the trek during both his 2nd Class year and this year.

Despite the physical effort and logistical challenges that come with long marches, spirits stayed high throughout the four-day march.

"It does take a toll on your body," said Casper. "Everybody's going though it together, and there's this camaraderie that begins to form as each day passes and people start



The rat mass forms a cordon as the New Market marchers leave post Aug. 29. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

to get closer. You march for that long with people, and you really get to know them. So I think that's been, for me, the highlight of it. It's been really meaningful."

Principally marching on U.S. 11, the group made a notable stop at Augusta Military Academy in Fort Defiance. There, the cadets had lunch and toured the academy's museum.

also led the Oath Day charge across the battlefield—got to see and re-experience the new cadets' milestone.

"I want them to realize what it is that we're doing, the importance of it all," said Ekundayo. "I'm excited to see my rats. I'm excited to see how they take on the charge and the oath. And I just hope they take it to heart." ❁



Cadets take a break near Greenville on the second day of their march to New Market. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

With careful planning and diligent execution, the distances marched each day proved manageable for the group.

"Just walking 20 miles every day, it's not that bad," remarked Band Company Commander Oladokun Ekundayo '19. "My feet are fine and my back is fine, so it feels good."

As an integral part of the New Cadet Oath Ceremony, the marchers—who

Promotions, Granting of Tenure Announced

By Mary Price

Brig. Gen. Robert "Bob" Moreschi, deputy superintendent for academics and dean of the faculty, has announced the promotion and granting of tenure to several members of the VMI faculty. Promotions became effective Aug. 1, 2018. Tenure will become effective Aug. 1, 2019.

In the Department of International Studies and Political Science, two members of the faculty were promoted, and one was promoted and granted tenure. The department also has a new head.

Ryan Holston and Howard Sanborn were both promoted to the rank of professor and colonel. Holston, who earned his doctorate at the Johns Hopkins University, has taught at VMI since 2009. He teaches courses in political theory, American political thought, constitutional theory, and philosophy of law, among other topics. Sanborn teaches courses in comparative politics-East Asia, American politics, and political methodology. He earned his doctorate at the University of Iowa and has taught at VMI since 2008.

Also in the Department of International Studies and Political Science, Patrick Rhamey has been promoted to the rank of

lieutenant colonel and associate professor and granted tenure. He holds a doctorate from the University of Arizona and has taught at VMI since 2012. He teaches a course in introductory political science and another in regional politics and powers.

Col. Dennis Foster is now head of the international studies department, a position formerly occupied by the late Col. Jim Hentz. Foster, who holds a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, teaches courses in international politics, American foreign policy, terrorism, and domestic politics, among other topics. He has taught at VMI since 2004.

In the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Chhanda Samata has been promoted to professor and colonel. She has a doctorate from the University of Maryland and teaches courses in general physics, nuclear physics, and radiation detection. Samata has taught at VMI since 2013.

In the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, Dr. Reshef Agam-Segal has been promoted from assistant professor to associate professor and granted tenure. A philosophy specialist with extensive knowledge of Wittgenstein, he

has taught at VMI since 2012. He earned his doctorate at the University of Oxford, U.K.

Brad Coleman '95 has been promoted to professor and colonel in the Department of History and granted tenure. Coleman, who is director of the John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis, came back to VMI to teach in 2012. His doctorate is from the University of Georgia.

Also in the history department, M. Houston Johnson V has been promoted to associate professor and lieutenant colonel and granted tenure. He specializes in military aviation history and earned his doctorate at the University of Tennessee.

Jessica Libertini has been promoted to associate professor and lieutenant colonel in the Department of Applied Mathematics and granted tenure. She teaches courses in mathematical modeling and earned her doctorate at Brown University.

In the Department of Economics and Business, Dr. Dekuwmini Mornah has been promoted to associate professor and granted tenure. He teaches courses in public choice, international economics, and applied econometrics. He holds a doctorate from the University of Mississippi.

Other recent changes on post include the arrival of Col. Craig Streeter '91 as head of Naval ROTC and the promotion of Col. Diane Jacob to head librarian.

Streeter, a 27-year veteran of the Marine Corps, served in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom and later served with the counterterrorism division of the U.S. Africa Command, among a multitude of other assignments. He came to VMI from his posting as director of the Maritime Expeditionary Warfare Integration Division, Combat Development Division, at Quantico.

Jacob, a library staff member since 1979, was promoted to the position of head librarian in July, and continues to serve as head of archives and records management, in addition to head librarian. 🐼



Col. Brad Coleman '95 teaches cadets about primary resources available in the Marshall Library.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Kimchi, Won, and K-Pop Come to Crozet

By Ashlie Walter

During lunchtime in Crozet Hall, cadets have the opportunity to not only nourish their bodies but also their minds.

For several years, professors have offered the chance for cadets to hone their language and culture skills in a casual environment by attending language tables on the second floor of Crozet.

Being the only Korean faculty member at the Institute, Dr. Youna Jung, assistant professor of computer and information science, wanted to spread her knowledge of Korean culture and language to other members of the community.

What originally started as a club morphed into a language table during lunch on Tuesdays for cadets to learn Korean culture and language and to enjoy Korean food.

That food includes authentic homemade kimchi that Jung makes for the group with ingredients sent from Korea by her family.

Jung noted that faculty members have joined cadets at her table to share their experiences of Korean culture.

"The other faculty members are soldiers, some of their duties were in South Korea. Some of the faculty members contacted me because they knew I was in Korea and they wanted to talk about their experience, the culture," Jung said.

The meetings last about an hour and topics can range from culture to currency and how to order at a Korean restaurant.

"Korea has a unique culture, different from China or Japan. Many don't know that," said Jung. "We have a different food culture and etiquette."

Miyah Boyd '19 joined the language table because she is interested in the contrasts among Asian cultures.

"I just like how their cultures are very together—family oriented and with a structure in the family we don't have here," Boyd said.

She added she watches Korean dramas and listens to k-pop, Korean popular music.

"I speak a little German, enough to get by if I went there; I want to be able to do that in Korean," she said.

On the same day as the Korean table, other languages can be heard such as Chinese or French.

Laura Xie, assistant professor of Chinese, usually has 10 to 15 students at her table but participation dwindles as students become busier. The cadets can learn not just another language but also culture.



Dr. Youna Jung leads a discussion on Korean currency during lunch in Crozet Hall Sept. 18.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

"They come to practice, to learn about the culture... more chances to talk," Xie said, noting that Chinese exchange students will attend their meetings.

Across the room, Maj. Jeff Kendrick, assistant professor of French, has hosted the French language table for almost five years. Founded with fellow professor Maj. Abbey Carrico, the table attracts all classes of cadets, in addition to students from Washington and Lee University and French speakers in the community.

"We've had alums come, people working at VMI and W&L. Last year, we had a French au pair [a young person working in exchange for room and board]. Last week, there was a cadet whose family was from Cameroon," Kendrick said.

The tables are held between noon and 1 p.m. and languages vary from day to day. ✿



Laura Xie confers with cadets and faculty at the Chinese lunch table in Crozet Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

POST BRIEFS

Adjunct English Professor Conducts Workshop for Marines

Dr. William "Bill" Kimsey, adjunct professor in the department of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies, conducted a training workshop on strategic communication Aug. 15-16 for the U.S. Marines Security Cooperation Group based at Ft. Story, Virginia. The workshop included theoretically informed guidance regarding possible basic communication problems and

perceptual errors, among other topics. Kimsey, who formerly taught at James Madison University, currently teaches two classes at VMI: fundamentals of public speaking and rhetoric and public address. He holds a master's degree in human communication from Arizona State University and a doctorate in speech communication from Southern Illinois University.

Gillan '19 Completes SERE School

Cadet Hannah Gillan '19 completed the U.S. Army's Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape school at Fort Rucker, Alabama, June 24. In a SERE class of more than 70, she was one of only six females. SERE school is a requirement for all Army aviators, and Gillan, who said she "wanted to fly more than anything," decided to apply; however, Gillan learned in August that she will not be able to serve as an aviator because her eyesight does not meet specific requirements. Gillan is nevertheless upbeat and said

the SERE training was "still a great experience" and was "easily the best training I've ever gotten. It was set up in a way that every bit of your time, even when you're resting, is useful." After completing SERE school, the rest of Gillan's summer was packed with more military training, as she spent a month in Fort Knox, Kentucky, at Cadet Summer Training that all Army ROTC cadets in the country attend between their junior and senior college years. ✪

McDew '82 Rises to the Top

In 1978, a young Darren McDew '82 from Hampton, Virginia, stepped onto the grounds of Virginia Military Institute to begin Matriculation Day. He didn't realize that day would begin a journey that would end 40 years later as a U.S. Air Force 4-star general and senior leader in the Department of Defense.

According to an old edition of *The Cadet* newspaper, "McDew was not always on the top."

"No matter what they did to me, I was too stubborn to leave," he said. "And then as I've grown farther, I decided I was going to be somebody's good-leadership example."

In 1981 McDew, a civil engineering major, became a regimental commander, setting a pattern of rising to the top that would continue throughout his career.

After his 1982 graduation he commissioned into the Air Force and began pilot training at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona.

During his nearly four decades as a military leader, his career culminated in command of the U.S. Transportation Command.

"If you would have told me as a young second lieutenant in Strategic Air Command, flying KC-135s, that I would one day be sitting in the U.S. Transportation Command headquarters, I would have told you that you were absolutely out-of-your-mind



Gen. Darren McDew '82, pauses with U.S. Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, during McDew's retirement ceremony—Photo courtesy of Rob Wieland, USTRASCOM Public Affairs.

crazy," said McDew during an *Airman Magazine* interview.

At his recent retirement ceremony, the VMI alumnus was humble in his remarks about his career and the people he worked with.

"I've been blessed to work with many amazing people," said McDew. "You inspire me every day and I thank you deeply for your outstanding contributions to the defense of this nation."

He credited his wife, Evelyn, for encouraging him to become a better

mentor and helping him progress in his military career.

"I'm an introvert, but she told me I had a story to tell and I should tell it," McDew said. "She got me out of my comfort zone and inspired me to help others achieve their full potential, especially during my times as a commander."

McDew concluded his remarks with a nod to both the past and future. "It has been an honor and a privilege to serve in the United States military, and I will watch eagerly as future generations continue to dream and innovate to keep our nation a global superpower." ✪



Virginia Military Institute
Communications & Marketing Office
Lexington, VA 24450-0304

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 78
Harrisonburg, VA



Rat Crucible

Matriculation Week culminated Aug. 26 with Rat Crucible, which included training on the North Post obstacles, running on the Woods Creek Trail, and swimming to Jordan's Point. The event concluded with a march up Letcher Avenue and the rats' first Old Yell. — VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Chris Floyd.

