



INSTITUTE REPORT

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Class of 2022 Breakout

Breakout began with a blast from the Corps' cannon, Little John, at 5 a.m. and ended with an Old Yell for the Class of 2022 around the Old Barracks sentinel box at 8:30 p.m. For everything in between, see pages 10-11. —VMI Photos by Maj. John Robertson IV and H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



'A Tremendous Leader'

Hoopes Named Nation's Top Army ROTC Cadet

By Mary Price

For the second time in three years, a VMI cadet has been ranked No. 1 in the nation by the U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Alec Hoopes '19 has the honor of holding the top spot on the Army ROTC's Order of Merit list, which is a comprehensive numerical ranking of all Army ROTC cadets in their final year of college. The rankings are based on a variety of factors, among

them grade point average, performance on the Army physical fitness test, participation in extracurricular activities, leadership in ROTC, and performance at Advance Camp, which is a required summer training program for commissioning cadets.

See Hoopes, page 4

Cadet Volunteers Honor Alumnus During Furlough

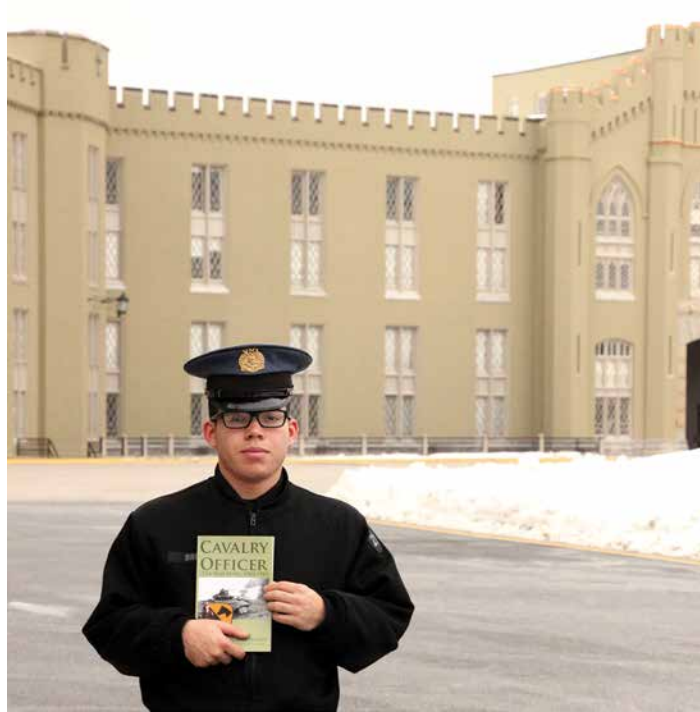
By Molly Rolon, VMI Alumni Agencies

Life on post doesn't leave cadets with much time for relaxation—there's rigorous academics, military commitments, athletic practices, and a multitude of required cadet activities. It's no wonder that furlough time is eagerly anticipated, but recently, two cadets gave up part of their Thanksgiving furlough to honor the memory of an alumnus.

On Oct. 31, 2018, the class agent for the class of 1942, Harry J. Siebert '42, died at the age of 98. A call went out through the commandant's office for cadet volunteers to represent VMI at the funeral, which was scheduled for the first day of the Corps' Thanksgiving furlough. The email notice for volunteers included a brief description of Siebert, an Army cavalry veteran who participated in the Normandy invasion during World War II.

Requests for volunteers to attend funerals, weddings, or other events are not unusual, said Cadet Josh Brown '21. Brown, a member of Company E, had previously participated in the wedding of a Company E alumnus. Despite the funeral taking place during a Corps furlough, several volunteers came forward, said Corps and Institute Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers.

From the volunteers, two cadets were selected: Cadet Ethan Smith '19 and Brown. The cadets' commonplace surnames were fitting,



Cadet Josh Brown '21 holds a copy of *Cavalry Officer: The War Years, 1942-1945*, written by the late Harry Siebert '42. Brown, along with Cadet Ethan Smith '19, spent the first day of his Thanksgiving furlough representing the Institute at Siebert's funeral in November 2018.—VMI Alumni Agencies Photo by Molly Rolon.

Sowers noted. "[Smith and Brown] represent the cadets," he said. "They are the same as every other cadet at VMI."

Brown volunteered, he said, because his great-grandfather was a World War II

veteran who died a few years before Brown was born. Although Brown never met his great-grandfather, the man left a legacy which Brown's mother passed down to him when she related stories of his great-grandfather's life.

"I didn't get to know my great-grandfather," Brown said. "I wanted to honor the man who possibly fought alongside him. There's not many of those people around to go see, or talk to, or honor."

After the funeral, Jody Siebert—Harry's widow—was able to spend some time talking with Brown and his mother, and told them more about Harry and his life experiences. Jody was, she said, incredibly honored and touched by the two cadets who took time out of their vacations to pay their respects and represent VMI at her husband's funeral.

Before parting ways, Jody gave Brown several copies of a book written by Harry detailing some of his time at VMI and his military service.

"Life at VMI turned me in a new direction, gave me purpose and ambition, and most of all developed my character," Harry wrote in the preface of *Cavalry Officer: The War Years, 1942-1945*, which was published when he was in his ninth decade. "I owe so much to the leadership, army officers and professors who started me on a new path." ❀



Jackson House Contributes to RARA

Stonewall Jackson House staff member Natalie Carey and volunteer Larry Spurgeon drop off 167 pounds of food donated during Christmas at the Jacksons' to the Rockbridge Area Relief Association's food pantry. The food was collected as an admission fee to the event on Dec. 4. During the family-friendly event, volunteers dressed in period attire and celebrated an 1859 Christmas with visitors. Around 80 visitors contributed nonperishable foods and pet food to be donated to RARA.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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Header photo on page 1 by Kelly Nye

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VMI Among Top in Nation

By Maj. John Robertson IV

Money released an article in January listing the top 10 liberal arts colleges in the nation, ranking Virginia Military Institute ninth. VMI was the only publicly funded school to be included on the list and one of only two schools in the commonwealth to make the cut. The top spot was claimed by the Institute's neighbor—Washington and Lee University.

The magazine based its list on *Money's* annually released ordering of best colleges, which ranks institutions of higher learning in terms of educational quality, affordability, and post-graduation outcomes. Released in August, those rankings put VMI 63rd out of the 727 institutions evaluated.

VMI's expansive core curriculum was noted in the article—a defining characteristic of any liberal arts institution.

"Its curriculum is designed to give its 1,700 cadets broad exposure to the liberal arts," stated the author. "Cadets take courses in subjects like modern languages, international studies and computer science alongside ROTC."



VMI's rigorous academic program prepares graduates for success in all walks of life.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Also cited in the article was VMI's small class size: "there's a tight-knit community on campus—some classes only have 11 people in them..."

VMI is consistently ranked among the top liberal arts colleges nationwide by authoritative publications such as *U.S. News & World Report*, which has ranked VMI fourth among public national liberal arts colleges, behind only the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Air Force Academy for the past four years. Overall, *U.S. News* ranked VMI 81st out of 239 national liberal colleges from across the country this year. 🌟



Rat-Dyke March

Rats and their dykes—first class mentors—make their way up Robinson Gap Road for a 20-mile march Jan. 19. The cadets were bused to Parry McCluer High School in Buena Vista to begin the hike into the George Washington National Forest. The event is a bonding experience for the rats and their dykes.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

This year's Order of Merit list contains more than 5,500 names, according to Sean Cook, operations officer with VMI's Army ROTC.

"His performance [in ROTC] has exceeded everything we could expect," said Cook of Hoopes. "He has a very grounded personality and a great sense of leadership. He brings everyone together. He's a tremendous leader."

Col. Michael Wawrzyniak, professor of military science, echoed Cook's high opinion of Hoopes, saying, "He's performed outstandingly in all areas. He brings all the qualities you're looking for. ... He comes across confident but at the same time down to earth."

The youngest of three children in a non-military family from Latrobe, Pennsylvania, Hoopes knew from high school that he wanted to attend a military college. As high school graduation loomed, he began touring schools with strong Army ROTC programs. His second stop was at VMI, and right away he knew that he'd found what he was looking for.

"I saw so many opportunities to get involved in things," said Hoopes of his decision to come to the Institute. "There were so many opportunities to lead."

Over the course of the past four years, Hoopes has taken advantage of many of those opportunities. He's held rank in the Corps of Cadets, serving as a corporal his 3rd Class year and as an operations sergeant his 2nd Class year.

This year, he's a 1st Class private, but only because he's serving in the highest leadership role possible for ROTC—battalion commander, in charge of the approximately 900 cadets enrolled there.

Hoopes said he's drawn lessons from all of his leadership experience, both within the Corps and in ROTC.

"I've never had to lead that many people at once," said Hoopes, referring to his position as battalion commander. "You have to give your intent in a certain way that people can understand it and take it and accomplish what needs to be done."

In the Army, Hoopes noted, a battalion commander would typically be at the lieutenant colonel level. "It's learning how the actual Army functions," he commented.

But it was within the Corps that Hoopes received the training needed to succeed at a high level of leadership.

"The Corps has taught me a lot about how to read people and work with others," said Hoopes. "That's the big part about leadership. You've got to understand the people you're leading. And the Corps has taught me that. You've got to work with different kinds of people every year, and you have to learn how to motivate them."

During his 2nd Class year, Hoopes was elected to the Honor Court. After serving as an assistant prosecutor last year, this year he's the vice president for investigations, responsible for making sure that investigations into possible breaches of VMI's single-sanction Honor Code are conducted properly.

"It's a lot of extra work but I'm honored to have the position," Hoopes noted. "The Honor Code really allows this school to be what



Alec Hoopes '19

it is. ... Without it, very little would function the way it does."

Coming in to VMI, Hoopes declared a major in civil and environmental engineering, and he quickly gravitated toward the environmental engineering aspect of that major, while maintaining a near-perfect grade point average. He's a member of Tau Beta Pi, the national engineering honor society.

Once he commissions, Hoopes will serve as an environmental engineer

in the Army's Medical Service Corps. Down the road, he'd like to earn his professional engineer certification and work for a technology company.

At VMI, Hoopes said he's learned the value of consistent effort and treating others with respect.

"If you work hard at whatever you're doing in life, you treat people the right way, and live a life of integrity and honor, there's nothing you can't do, essentially," he stated. "You can accomplish a lot by maintaining that lifestyle."

Prior to Hoopes, the last VMI cadet to hold the top slot on the Order of Merit list was John Luke Phillips '17. Before Phillips, cadets holding the No. 1 position were Jason LaCerde '07 and Kyle W. Schriefer '06.

"It's the quality of the cadets that VMI is recruiting," said Cook of the Institute's success in producing top-ranked cadets. "VMI is definitely pulling in the right future leaders."

Wawrzyniak likewise believes that VMI's consistent success is no accident.

"Across the board it represents VMI Army ROTC well, to have this caliber of cadets," he commented. "Really, a large portion of our cadets do quite well, but then to have a few get the national recognition really helps to highlight the overall group of cadets that we have. Two in the past three years is pretty neat ... and the good news is that we're producing officers in terms of quality and quantity."

Wawrzyniak stated that in fiscal year 2018, VMI's Army ROTC commissioned more 2nd lieutenants than any other Army ROTC program in the nation. This year's commissioning numbers for VMI are expected to be smaller—120 to 125 cadets, after 140 last year—but Wawrzyniak noted that this year's graduating class is also smaller.

This year, nine VMI cadets from the Class of 2019 were ranked in the top 10 percent on the Order of Merit list. In addition to Hoopes, they are John O'Donnell, Sarah Dolitsky, Steele Lamade II, Zachary Herring, Andrew Schifalacqua, Colton Curry, Hannah Gillan, and Jacob Drake—in addition to Washington and Lee student Collins Speed. ✿

O'Donnell to Receive AMCSUS Award

Cadet John O'Donnell '19 has been selected as a 2019 Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States Leadership Award winner.

Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62, superintendent, offered his congratulations to O'Donnell "on this high honor recognizing your record in competition nationally with the very best ROTC officers commissioning in the United States Army this summer. VMI is proud of you. Well done!"

The award, which consists of a \$1,000 check and a plaque, is to be presented at the AMCSUS Awards Banquet Feb. 25. The award



John O'Donnell '19

recognizes the exceptional leadership characteristics displayed by cadets from the top ROTC programs in the nation, and is given annually to two cadets at the college level and two at the high school level.

AMCSUS consists of 40 military colleges and high schools, including the nation's senior and junior military colleges. Headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, the nonprofit organization advocates on behalf of its member institutions and promotes high military and ethical standards.

The award has been earned by VMI cadets several times in the past decade. Recent recipients include Chad Surganovich '12, Hardy Hendren '15, and Luke Phillips '17.

– Maj. John Robertson IV

Army ROTC Earns MacArthur Award

By Mary Price

For the third time in the past four years, the Army ROTC unit at Virginia Military Institute has been named as one of eight winners of the prestigious MacArthur Award.

The awards have been presented annually since 1989 by the U.S. Army Cadet Command and the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Foundation. They recognize the ideals of duty, honor, and country, as advocated by MacArthur, one of only five men in modern times to rise to the rank of General of the Army.

The MacArthur award is based on a combination of the achievement of the school's commissioning mission, its cadets' performance and standing on the Command's national Order of Merit List, and its cadet retention rate.

"[The MacArthur Award] is meant to recognize excellence," commented Col. Michael Wawrzyniak, professor of military science with Army ROTC. "We've been recognized as the top program in our brigade."

The VMI unit represents the U.S. Army Cadet Command's 1st Brigade, which consists of the nation's six senior military colleges and five of the military junior colleges.



Army ROTC cadets prepare for FTX earlier this fall. –VMI File Photo by Kelly Nye.

The 2018 cohort produced 140 2nd lieutenants, "which is by far the highest in the country," Wawrzyniak commented. He explained that there are a total of 274 schools across the nation offering Army ROTC, making the competition for the highest number of commissions especially fierce.

What's more, the 2018 cohort also produced 47 Distinguished Military Graduates. "That was as high as we've ever had," said Wawrzyniak. ROTC cadets from across the nation ranking in the top 20 percent on the Order of Merit list are named

Distinguished Military Graduates.

Army ROTC is the largest ROTC program at VMI, providing military instruction to about two-thirds of the Corps of Cadets.

Prior to this, VMI's Army ROTC won the MacArthur Award in 2015 and 2016. 🌿

Defense and Diplomacy *En Espanol*

New Course Emphasizes Cultural Competence

By Mary Price

A new course in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures is designed to equip Spanish language learners with the knowledge and skills they'll need to navigate the linguistic and cultural waters of a Spanish-speaking country.

Spanish for Diplomacy and Defense was developed by Col. Mary Ann Dellinger, professor of modern languages and cultures, with input from two recent alumnae, Kennedy Smith '18 and Rebecca Serrano '18, along with a current cadet, Ryan Uher '19.

The course is built around the concept of language for specific purposes, which is endorsed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as a way of preparing students to use their language skills in the real word.

"That's the whole point of language for specific purposes: what are you going to do with the language that's real?" explained Dellinger.



Ryan Uher '19 explains an online game that cadets in Col. Mary Ann Dellinger's class will be playing together in Spanish. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

The new course is designed for cadets who may spend all or part of their careers working in a Spanish-speaking country. That's especially true not only for cadets majoring in modern languages and cultures, but also international studies, history, and economics and business. Cadets in all of those departments are required to study a foreign language, Dellinger noted.

"A lot of [the cadets] are commissioning, and a lot of them go into diplomacy and the alphabet soup agencies," she commented.

Because of this, Spanish for Diplomacy and Defense, which is taught entirely in Spanish, focuses not so much on grammatical accuracy, although that is encouraged, but cultural competence. Much attention is paid, for example, to teaching cadets how to navigate hierarchies, which are very important to the culture of Latin America.

"What do you do, for example, when you're on a base? You have to have nationals. ... How do you deal with them? How do you approach them?" Dellinger stated.

When the new course was opened for enrollment, there was so much interest that the department wound up creating two sections of 12 cadets each. Dellinger teaches one, and Dr. Ivelise Faundez-Reitsma, an instructor in the department, teaches the other.

Smith, who graduated with the Class of 2018 and is now serving with the Army at Fort Meade, Maryland, said that the course is designed to have a "more hands-on and culturally immersive style." It's an approach she'd come to appreciate during her years at VMI, as she traveled abroad twice, once to eastern Europe and once to Nepal, during her cadetship.

When it comes to learning how to actually use a language, "just sitting in a classroom doesn't do it," she noted.

"The language community is starting to turn more and more to [language for specific purposes]," she



Cadet assistant Ryan Uher '19 speaks to Dr. Ivelise Faundez-Reitsma's class Jan. 29. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

continued. “The research backs what Col. Dellinger and I did ... Most students prefer a more interactive course.”

As a result of her work in helping to develop the course, Smith had the opportunity not only to present her research at VMI’s Undergraduate Research Symposium, where she won first place, but she also traveled to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to present at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research. She and Dellinger also made a trip to Nashville, Tennessee, where they presented their research at ACTFL’s national convention.

Uher, an international studies major who will commission into the Army, helped during the course development process and is now serving as a teaching assistant in the course.

It was Uher who encouraged Dellinger to adopt the PechaKucha, which is Japanese for “chit chat,” in lieu of a written final exam. A PechaKucha is a video presentation in which there are 20 slides shown for 20 seconds each, and audio narration to accompany each slide.

Cadets enrolled in Spanish for Diplomacy and Defense must pick a scenario in which they are working at either the American embassy or a NATO base, and narrate their PechaKucha in Spanish as they address their fictional colleagues at either the embassy or base.

Uher had done a PechaKucha instead of a final exam in an Army ROTC class, and thus was familiar with the concept.

“It’s supposed to fit information into roughly five minutes,” he commented.

In his role as teaching assistant, Uher has had to shift his thinking pattern from that of a student to that of a teacher.

“As a [teaching assistant], I have the benefit of knowing how everything is supposed to go,” he commented. “I’m thinking in ways of, ‘If I were taking this class, what would be the best way to assist someone with the questions they have or in completing the assignments?’”

Uher also has hopes that as the semester progresses, helping others will advance his own Spanish language growth. “I’ll be able to see what everyone is doing, so I get to pick up stuff from everyone in reviewing their assignments,” he stated.

Spanish for Diplomacy and Defense is just the latest of the 14 courses Dellinger has developed at VMI, as she strives to provide the kinds of course offerings that cadets both need and want.

“I like to play into what the cadets like,” she commented. “I think it’s important to make [language learning] authentic, and that’s what I’ve done.” ❁

Save the Children CEO to Receive Daniels Award

By Mary Price

Carolyn Miles, president and CEO of Save the Children, has been selected to receive the Jonathan Daniels Humanitarian Award at VMI. She will accept the award Wednesday, March 6, 2019, at 11 a.m. in Cameron Hall.

Miles will be only the fifth recipient of the Daniels Award since its inception in 1997. The award was established by the Board of Visitors to honor

Jonathan M. Daniels ’61, who gave his life to save a young black girl during a voter registration drive in Alabama in 1965. The award recognizes individuals who have made significant personal sacrifices to protect or improve the lives of others.



CEO of Save the Children, Carolyn Miles, will receive the Daniels Award March 6. —Photo courtesy of Save the Children.

Save the Children is a global organization with the goal of driving down the number of preventable deaths for children under 5 years of age, ensuring that every child gets a high-quality basic education, and protecting all children from harm. The organization

currently serves more than 157 million children in the United States and in 120 countries.

Miles began her career with Save the Children in 1998 and became chief operating officer in 2004. She became president and CEO in September 2011. Under her leadership, Save the Children has more than doubled the number of children it reaches with nutrition, health, education, and other programs. Miles’s signature issues include hunger, learning outcomes, and ending preventable child deaths.

Previous recipients of the Daniels Award include former President Jimmy Carter, who received

the inaugural award in 2001; former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, honored in 2006; international humanitarian worker Paul Hebert ’68, in 2011; and Georgia congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis in 2015. ❁

"Loyalty is the Currency"

Black Hawk Down Veteran Talks Leadership, Fear, and Faith

By Maj. John Robertson IV

More than 200 cadets, VMI employees, and members of the community gathered in the Hall of Valor Jan. 30 to hear retired Army Maj. Jeffrey Struecker speak about fear, faith, loyalty, and leadership.

Struecker is best known as the enlisted Army ranger who led his three-Humvee convoy through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, to evacuate Pfc. Todd Blackburn from the searing firefight that inspired the movie and book *Black Hawk Down*. He served for 10 years in the 75th Ranger Regiment, enlisting at age 18, earned a commission, and retired after more than 22 years of service. He spent the final 10 years of his military career as a chaplain.

Struecker's reputation as a war hero and faith leader brought the crowd to its feet as soon as he walked onto the stage, and Struecker returned the crowd's affection.

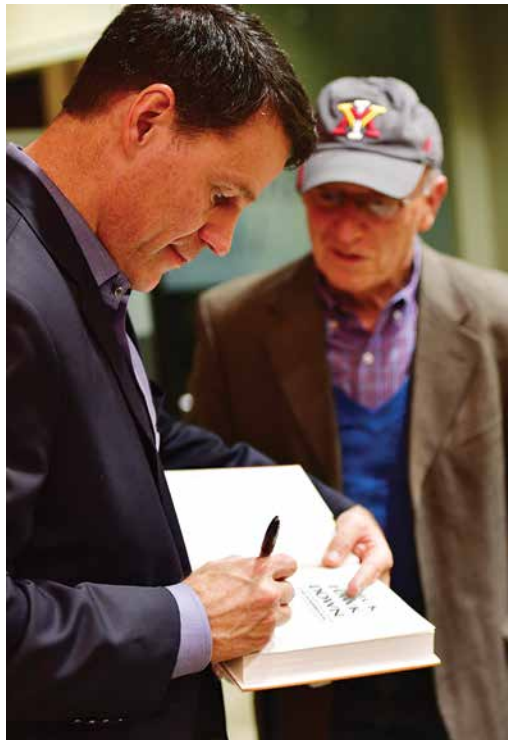
"I am a huge fan of this institution," said Struecker. "Because of the leaders that this institution has created and what they have done for our country over more than 100 years, this institution has always meant a great deal to me."

In his talk, part of the Center for Leadership and Ethics' courageous leadership series, Struecker recalled the events of the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, in which 18 U.S. service members were killed and 73 wounded. He used the battle as a means of relating leadership lessons.

Struecker shared his reaction to the death of Sgt. Dominick Pilla, who was killed as the convoy returned to base under heavy fire.

"When I looked over the back of my shoulder, it was like the whole back of that Humvee had been painted red," said Struecker. "As a combat leader, I want you to hear something... at this moment I was terrified for my own life."

Struecker went on to describe how he took charge of the situation. With the knowledge that the lives of his soldiers depended on maintaining self-control, he overcame that fear and directed his convoy through the firefight, back to base, and into battle again.



Jeffrey Struecker signs a copy of *Black Hawk Down* in Marshall Hall for Louis Preysz III, instructor of economics and business.—VMI Photo by Maj. John Robertson IV.

"It's hard to lead men into a firefight. It's exceptionally hard to lead men back into the firefight that you just came out of," said Struecker.

"What moves a man to get back into those Humvees?" Struecker asked the audience. "The thing that will move a man or a woman to do something like this is love. Love for your buddies."

Those personal bonds, Struecker emphasized, are the key to exceptional leadership in all walks of life.

"Loyalty is the currency that allows a leader to lead with courage on the battlefield. Loyalty is the currency that allows somebody to lead with courage in a boardroom. It's the currency that allows somebody to lead with courage in their living room or their kitchen."

Struecker took time to express his admiration for one member of the audience familiar to many in the VMI community—local physician Dr. John "Rob" Marsh, who led the medical team that saved dozens of

lives during the battle.

"Frankly, it was your self-control that caused me to start to get things under control," Struecker said to Marsh during the talk. "There are several men from Task Force Ranger that are alive because of him."

Throughout his address, Struecker alluded to the role that his faith played in his life and how it has influenced his decision making.

He spoke more specifically about his faith during a prayer breakfast the following morning in Crozet Hall. Cadet chaplain Emily Kirk '19 attended Struecker's talk and the breakfast.

"It was almost overwhelming to see how his faith played a role in his actions and leadership style, not only in Somalia, but in his life in general," said Kirk. "He talked about looking at life through a faith lens and that statement really made me evaluate my life and how I interact with others." 🙏



Damon Sutton '20 asks Struecker a question after his talk Jan. 30 in the Hall of Valor.—VMI Photo by Maj. John Robertson IV.

Biology Course Sends Cadets out of the Classroom

By Mary Price

Last semester, Maj. Mary Beth Manjerovic, assistant professor of biology, gave the cadets in her conservation biology class a new challenge: independent projects dealing with resource conservation.

Cadet projects consisted of initiatives on post and in the community, including an analysis of water usage by the toilets in barracks, with an eye towards possibly replacing them with smart toilets; helping Boxerwood,

a local nature preserve, deal with nutrient runoff from a nearby golf course; installing duck boxes and restoring habitat in wetland areas; and preventing trash from accumulating on post.

Two cadets, Christian Vaccaro '19 and Brandon Campbell '20, took the assignment as a chance to do some teaching themselves by giving a presentation on plastic pollution in the world's oceans to a fifth grade class at Central Elementary School.

The cadets, both biology majors, gave a PowerPoint presentation and entertained a large number of questions from a very engaged and inquisitive group of students during their Dec. 3 visit to the school.

Vaccaro and Campbell kicked off their presentation with a slide showing two people trying to row their way through what looked like an endless sea of garbage. Then they shared some facts about what's become known as the Great Pacific garbage patch, a concentration of trash, mainly plastic in nature, between California and Hawaii. The patch is now twice the size of Texas, the cadets told the



Brandon Campbell '20 and Christian Vaccaro '19 speak to Coleene Cosgriff's 5th grade class at Central Elementary about ocean plastic waste Dec. 3.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

youngsters, and contains approximately 18 trillion pieces of plastic.

The cadets also shared with the students the side effects of the near-dominance of plastic products in the modern world, such as sea turtles with plastic straws stuck in their noses and whales who've washed ashore dead with stomachs stuffed full of plastic.

Immediately, the children jumped in to talk about solutions, such as capturing as much of the floating debris possible in nets. The cadets then led them to talk about

responsible use of plastics via recycling and the need to reduce the use of single-use plastics as much as possible. All too soon, though, the time was up.

"I was impressed with how knowledgeable the kids were already about ocean pollution," said Campbell. "I was very happy with how engaged they were with us."

Vaccaro agreed, saying, "They came out hot, firing with ideas, all sorts of different solutions and stuff like that. We barely made it through the PowerPoint by the time the time was up."

The two also learned that while it's a good idea to go in with a plan, it's just as important that the plan be flexible. The cadets had originally thought of dividing the children into teams to brainstorm solutions for ocean pollution, but then found no need to do that as students were raising their hands to be called on regularly.

"It was more effective that we let it happen naturally," said Vaccaro. "Just being there and having the stuff up there on the screen was enough to get them to participate."

This was the first year that Manjerovic, who's in her second year teaching at VMI, had assigned an independent project to her conservation biology cadets.

"This way they could pick something they wanted to work on, so they were more engaged and interested in the project," she commented. "Conservation is a very applied science." ❁



Mason Briggs '20 installs a duck box during Thanksgiving Furlough.—Photo courtesy of Hannah Grace Harris.



Breakout

After waking to the sound of munitions in barracks, the rats were marched into Cocke Hall for the first of the day's sweat parties. Breakout continued with workout stations on North Post and at McKethan Park. After marching back to post on the Chessie Trail, the rats charged the Parade Ground for the culminating event. During Breakout dinner in Crozet Hall, the new 4th Class Cadets heard from U.S. Rep. Mike Waltz '96 of Florida's 6th district. See more photos of the day's events at [flickr.com/vmi-photos/albums/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vmi-photos/albums/). —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Maj. John Robertson IV, Kelly Nye, and VMI Alumni Agencies Photos by Micalyn Miller.





Around the World in 16 Days

Institute Brass Adds New Zealand to Nations Visited

By Mary Price

Long known as one of the Institute's most well-traveled groups, the Institute Brass recently made a trip that brings to mind the title of a Jules Verne novel: *Around the World in 80 Days*.

The VMI group, though, circumnavigated the globe by airplane in two weeks—and took their music to verdant, sun-soaked New Zealand, a nation that the ensemble had never visited before. For the Institute Brass, the trip was another chance to bond as a group, because all six of the cadets traveling to New Zealand had been to Morocco with the ensemble in April 2018.

"They became like brothers and sisters," said Col. John Brodie, band director, of the cohesion that developed among group members.

The cadets and Brodie began their long journey Dec. 28, leaving from Washington, D.C., and flying to Dubai before continuing on to Auckland, New Zealand, for a total of 28 hours airborne. Once in Auckland, the group had a few days to recuperate from jet lag before heading out to explore.

"The people made it a great experience, and they really helped us out," said Abby Dimirack '20, who plays the trumpet. In contrast to Morocco, where the native language is French and the food is sometimes unfamiliar, New Zealanders speak English and eat many dishes popular in the United States, Dimirack noted. Both she and Brodie commented that the easygoing, "no worries, mate" attitude prevalent among the natives made the trip especially enjoyable.

While most Institute Brass trips involve multiple concerts, the trip to New Zealand was a bit unusual because the group only performed twice. That, Brodie and the cadets explained, had to do with the season and the schedule: since the end-of-year holidays coincide with warm weather in New Zealand, nearly everyone takes a vacation.

Instead of performing in schools and at the U.S. embassy, as they had in Morocco, the group played for the general public at two outdoor concerts, one in Wellington, the nation's capital, and the other in Palmerston North, the home city of VMI rugby coach Wayne Howe. Proving that the VMI family is truly global, the group spent two nights at the home of Howe's sister.

At the concerts, attendance would often start out quite small but the numbers would grow quickly as the music drew people in,



Members of the Institute Brass pause in Palmerston in front of the World War I memorial to New Zealanders killed at Gallipoli. —Photo courtesy of Col. John Brodie.

with many listeners staying to talk to the cadets afterward. At one of those concerts, Dimirack found herself talking to an elderly lady who shared a piece of history that she'd never learned in school—that U.S. Marines had used New Zealand's beaches to practice amphibious landings during World War II.

"Since I'm in Marine Corps ROTC, I thought that was really cool to get some insight from some of the locals about the training," said Dimirack. "That was just something I never expected to learn about at a concert."

Outside of rehearsals and performances, the group had plenty of time to explore the countryside. It wasn't an agenda item when they arrived, but the group wound up visiting Kaituna Waterfall, the

highest commercially rafted waterfall in the world, where they went over the almost 23-foot drop in a whitewater raft. They didn't have swimsuits with them, so they took the plunge in their clothes—and came up soaked but smiling. It didn't hurt that it's summer in the Southern Hemisphere.

"For me, besides playing for the people, that was the coolest thing," said Brodie.

"That was a very cool experience," agreed Andrew Wang '20, a tuba player.

The cadets also traveled by boat through a cave where thousands of glow worms live, and went to Hamilton, where the movie *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* was filmed, and took a set tour there.

Thanks to the warm weather, the beautiful scenery, and the friendly people, "Part of me wanted to stay in New Zealand," admitted Wang.

Trips such as the ones to Morocco and New Zealand, Dimirack noted, have helped her learn to work with others in a way that family trips have not.

“Traveling with a group of people who’s not your family is definitely difficult because they get on your nerves after a while,” she stated. “But we’ve gotten to kind of see that everyone’s experiencing this differently.”

The group has to negotiate where to go next and what to play at the next concert, plus who will introduce the band at the next gig, she explained.



Cadets enjoy a whitewater rafting excursion down the Kaituna River that included a plunge over the river’s famed 23-foot waterfall. —Photo courtesy of Col. John Brodie.

“Things like that, you really get to know what people in the group are good at and what interests them,” she said.

The Institute Brass’s next international destination is still undecided, but Brodie is leaning toward a trip to Paris, where the group might perform at the L’ecole Polytechnique over the 2019-20 winter furlough.

In addition to Wang and Dimirack, cadets making the trip to New Zealand were John Dickenson ’20, MacGregor Baxter ’20, MacKenzie Haley ’20, and Tim Stallings ’20. ✱

Safety, Security Focus of Infrastructure Improvements

By Mary Price

The post infrastructure project, a \$33.2 million initiative centered around a wide variety of infrastructure upgrades, will soon kick off across post, bringing enhanced safety and easier access from Jordan’s Point. And while some aspects of the project, such as constructing a new building to house the VMI Police Department, will be easily noticed, others will be unseen but just as vital.

Housed in the Bachelor Officers’ Quarters, a building that dates to approximately 1870, the VMI Police Department has long been in need of a more secure and modern home. The BOQ is structurally unsound, explained Col. Keith Jarvis ’82, director of construction, and thus the Virginia Department of Historic Resources has given permission for its demolition.

“Our research on the history of the building’s architecture showed it to be an old building but not necessarily a historically significant building,” said Jarvis.

A new facility, designed to match the historic faculty houses on officer’s row, will be built on the site of the Bachelor Officers’ Quarters. While demolition and construction are ongoing, the police department will be housed in trailers on the gravel lot across Main Street, immediately adjacent to the Corps Physical Training Facility.



This rendering depicts the building that will replace the current Bachelor Officers’ Quarters, home of the Post Police. —Image courtesy of Col. Keith Jarvis.

Also enhancing safety will be a widening of Anderson Drive, which forms the back entrance to post via Jordan’s Point. The one-lane bridge that passes over Woods’ Creek will be replaced by a two-lane bridge with a higher weight limit, and a sidewalk will be added to facilitate pedestrian access.

“VMI needs that access through Jordan’s Point,” said Lt. Col. Daren Payne ’90, construction project manager. “We already use it quite heavily for special events and home football games. ... Upgrading that road and bridge is pretty key.”

Less visible items are also part of the post infrastructure project. Renovations to the heat plant behind barracks are on tap, along

with repairs and upgrades to the underground steam distribution network.

There will also be upgrades to the building automation system, which is the computer network system that manages the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system in each building on post. Replacing the water line loop around the Parade Ground and upgrading the storm water management system is another item. The final item is making repairs to stairs and sidewalks across post and repairing the retaining walls on Stono Lane, all of which have degraded over time.

Ninety percent of the funds for the post infrastructure project will come from the state, with the remainder to be supplied by VMI. Work on the project will begin in mid-March, with completion scheduled for the fall of 2020. Anderson Drive will be closed in the winter and spring of 2020 to allow for the road to be widened and the bridge replaced.

Members of the VMI community should expect such disruptions, both Jarvis and Payne noted, but they will pass in time.

“There is going to be pain, but pain is only temporary, and we are doing all that we can to minimize that pain for the general public, the alumni, and cadets,” said Payne. ✱

VMI Hosts Army Combat Fitness Test Trials

By H. Lockwood McLaughlin

On Dec. 13 and 14, approximately 50 representatives from all the ROTC brigades across the country descended upon VMI to learn the details of what will one day become the Army's standard for evaluating the physical fitness of soldiers.

For close to 40 years, the Army Physical Fitness Test, or APFT, has essentially been the same. Since 1980, the requirements set forth by the Army to test strength and endurance has consisted of three parts: push-ups, sit-ups, and a two-mile run.

Depending on one's age group and sex, parameters are set to determine passing and maximum scores for each of the three tests. For push-ups and sit-ups, participants are given two minutes for each challenge and the two-mile run is timed on a flat track.

In recent years, however, there have been moves to update that test to better reflect the physical fitness needed by a soldier in combat. That initiative has resulted in a new standard, the Army Combat Fitness Test, or ACFT.

"I think the number one goal is to find a better assessment of the combat readiness of a soldier," said Maj. Cory Lindsey, an ROTC instructor at VMI.

As one of the final parts of the refining process towards making the ACFT official, the Army has chosen select test groups from a wide range of units within its structure. This includes everyone in the Army from special forces to administrative units. Included too in the test group are ROTC members, and in December VMI had the chance to play an important role in fielding the new test.



Participants learn the standing power throw, in which they throw a 10-pound medicine ball as far as possible. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

"We're the only ROTC unit in the nation to be picked," said Lindsey. "VMI hosted it since we had the most cadre and we were initially the main focus for the training."

Approximately 50 representatives from all the brigades within Cadet Command from across the country came to VMI to learn and experience the new six-part test.

"We were able to learn how those six events are done," said Lindsey. "...how to set it up to standard, how to administer it, how to grade each event. And then also on top of that, we took it ourselves to know how to take it."

The six parts of the test include deadlifts, a standing power throw, pushups, a sprint-drag-carry exercise, leg tucks, and a two-mile run. Each part has parameters and guidelines for proper execution.

"This will be the test for record in some fashion or form," added Lindsey. "The Army's looking at our results and the way we did it to help shape how they roll this thing out next year."

Along with its large Army ROTC presence, VMI also happened to be particularly well suited to host a training session because of the facilities available. The training session was originally planned to be held outside, but the weather pushed the exercises indoors to the Corps Physical Training Facility.

"It has training rooms and plenty of seating and just everything we needed," Lindsey said.

This spring, the Army department will administer the new test to VMI's Army ROTC cadets and the results will be a part of the evaluation process towards making the new test official. For those cadets though, the old 3-part APFT remains the official test of record.

"This spring and this fall is going to be an exciting time," added Lindsey. 🍀



ACFT instructors and future test administrators go over proper execution of the pull-up portion of the test. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Giving Sets Strong Pace in Fiscal Year 2019

By Scott Belliveau '83, VMI Alumni Agencies

At the midpoint of fiscal year 2019, which came on Dec. 31, giving by alumni, parents, and friends had provided a total of \$16.2 million in gifts and commitments to VMI.

Most of this money—\$12.3 million, to be precise—has come in the form of restricted gifts. Some of these gifts have been directed to existing endowments that support need-based, athletic, and merit scholarships, along with professorships. Some of these endowments generate unrestricted funds as well. A good number of these gifts are in the form of commitments that, when realized, will support all aspects of the VMI education and ensure an ever brighter future for VMI.

Gifts to the Foundation Fund, the Keydet Club Scholarship Fund, and the Athletic Operations Fund also provide vital support to the Institute's mission. Since the beginning of the fiscal year in July 2018, just under 2,000 alumni, parents, and friends have supported the Corps of Cadets through annual giving, with gifts to all three funds totaling \$2.6 million.

Reunion campaigns always figure prominently in any year's fundraising totals, and fiscal year 2019 is no exception. During the first half of the

current fiscal year, the Class of 1993's 25th reunion campaign and the Class of 2008's 10th reunion campaign have together raised \$1.2 million in gifts and commitments. The Class of 1969 will present the initial proceeds of its 50th reunion campaign in April 2019, and it is shaping up to be a strong effort. ✪



Blackfriars Playhouse

Fourth Class cadets pause on the stage of the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton after seeing William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* Jan. 27. Just under 40 cadets and faculty attended the American Shakespeare Center production during a trip arranged by assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies Maj. Steven Knepper.—Photo courtesy of Maj. Michelle Iten.



Rat Fundraiser Benefits Veterans

Rats join with members of Operation Enduring Warrior to participate in competitions and team building exercises Jan. 26 on North Post. Over the past several months, they raised over \$14,000 to benefit the organization. OEW is a nonprofit organization that offers support and motivation to wounded veterans.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



'Holistic, Mutual Benefit' Seen With African Partnership

By Mary Price

A soon-to-be signed memorandum of understanding between VMI and Ashesi University in Berekuso, Ghana, will allow a variety of collaborative projects to flourish between the two schools.

In mid-January, representatives of Ashesi, a private liberal arts school, traveled to post to meet with Brig. Gen. Bob Moreschi, deputy superintendent for academics and dean of the faculty, along with representatives of several academic departments. The schools plan a collaboration that will include a student exchange program, faculty exchanges, an exchange of publications, and collaborative research projects. Ashesi, the only African university with an honor code, also plans to study the implementation and impact of VMI's honor code.

Further plans call for a summer study abroad program involving not only VMI but also the College of William & Mary (see sidebar).

The collaboration with Ashesi has come about through the efforts of Dr. Dekuwmini Mornah, associate professor of economics and business. Mornah, a native of Ghana who settled in the United States

after earning his doctorate at the University of Mississippi, has long made giving back to his native land a priority.

Most summers, he and his family travel to Ghana, where Mornah has developed relationships with university faculty aimed at spurring entrepreneurship in the first African nation to gain post-colonial independence. And while travel to Ghana is long and arduous, communication is easy, as Ghana is a former British colony and English is its common language.

A partnership with VMI should bring "a holistic, mutual benefit to both institutions, students, staff, and faculty," said Millicent Adjei, director of international programs for Ashesi, during the January meeting with Moreschi.

"We take [our students] out of their comfort zone so they can see how things are done elsewhere," she commented, speaking of the possibility of Ashesi students coming to VMI. "It's not just our students who we are hoping will benefit, but institutionally also, it helps us to benchmark, to see that with the skill set we give them in

VMI Partners with William and Mary on Study Abroad Course

In the summer of 2020, it's quite possible that VMI's first large-scale study abroad program in Africa could take place—with participants also coming from the College of William & Mary.

Plans for the study abroad program at Ashesi University began when Ghanaian native Dr. Dekuwmini Mornah, associate professor of economics and business, began to think about two things: providing more learning opportunities for cadets interested in entrepreneurship and giving back to his native country. His interest kicked into even higher gear when he discovered that a distant cousin of his was serving as dean of the faculty at Ashesi.

With this knowledge and goals in mind, Mornah set to work immediately on collaboration with a school he calls "the best university in Africa." Ashesi, he noted, is modeled on Swarthmore College, a liberal arts school in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, with consistently high rankings by organizations such as *U.S. News & World Report*.

"[Ashesi] is essentially an American university," said Mornah. "Most of the faculty were trained in the U.S."

As currently planned, the study abroad experience will run for approximately four weeks and be open to cadets of all majors, with the most important prerequisite being an entrepreneurial spirit.

There will be three components to the experience: an African business and entrepreneurship (ABE) module, to be taught by Mornah and Dr. Sena Agyepong of Ashesi University; an entrepreneurship practicum, also taught by Mornah and Agyepong; and a Ghanaian history

and culture module, to be taught by Maj. Jochen Arndt, assistant professor of history.

Because each course would carry three academic credits, cadets would earn nine credits upon completion of the program. Much of the classroom work would take place on the Ashesi campus, with some travel off campus to culturally significant locations within Ghana.

At first, Mornah had hoped to get the study abroad program organized in time for the summer of 2019, but when he learned that colleagues in the Department of Economics and Business were planning on offering a trip to Slovenia, Germany, and Belgium this summer, he postponed the Ghana program a year.

— Mary Price



Dr. Dee Mornah poses with students from Ashesi University during his visit as a guest lecturer there in 2017.—Photo courtesy of Dr. Dee Mornah.

the classroom, that they will still be able to come here and do well.”

According to Adjei, Ashesi students already do well, as 94 percent find employment within six months of graduation, versus 10 percent for many of their African peers.

As Ashesi would be the first non-military school to participate in an exchange program with VMI, details about the student exchange program are still being worked out.

During their time on post, the Ashesi visitors met with Col. Merce Brooke '94, one of three superintendent's representatives to the Honor Court, and a group of Honor Court cadet representatives to learn more about VMI's honor code. Ashesi has had an honor code since 2008, and its wording is very similar to VMI's. The Ashesi honor code reads, "I will not lie, cheat, or steal, neither will I tolerate others who do." Like that at VMI, the honor code at Ashesi is student-run.

Honor, explained Mornah, is desperately needed in Africa as nations there struggle to break the shackles of their colonial pasts.



Representatives from Ashesi University in Berekuso, Ghana meet with Brig. Gen. Bob Moreschi to discuss a summer study abroad exchange program between the two schools Jan. 17.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

“The biggest need in Africa is leadership,” he noted. “There’s a lack of accountable, honorable leadership.”

The Ghanaian university, both Mornah and the Ashesi representatives stated, is trying to produce a new generation of African leaders, ready to step out onto not just a national but also a global stage.

“[Ashesi is] trying to build a leadership school,” said Mornah.

Ashesi's student-driven honor code, explained

Sena Agbodjiah Agyepong, Ashesi professor of entrepreneurship, is part of that initiative—and thus the interest in studying how the Institute's honor code has shaped its nearly 180-year history. “An honor code, like wine, gets better with age,” she commented. “There's a lot we can learn from a system that's older than ours.”

Mornah noted that the Ashesi-VMI collaboration could get underway as soon as the 2019-20 academic year. Lt. Col. Wakeel Idewu, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, has expressed an interest in participating in the first faculty exchange, and a professor from Ashesi has already said she'd like to come to VMI. ❄



Bracket Load Competition

Civil engineering cadets face off against Washington and Lee students in the structure load competition Dec. 5 in Nichols Engineering Building. The competitors were assessed on an accurately predicted failure load and the most efficient design. The test phase of the competition was later followed by a report and presentation phase. The two groups were brought together by Lt. Col. Matt Swenty and Washington and Lee's assistant professor of physics and engineering Kacie D'Alessandro.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.

ATHLETICS

Wrestling

VMI placed fifth of eight teams at the All-Academy Championships Saturday, Jan. 26, at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont, but Neal Richards '19 found himself standing at the top by tournament's end. Richards won three matches at the annual tournament to take the title at 174 pounds.

Richards was named the event's Most Outstanding Wrestler and, in February, earned the title of Southern Conference Wrestler of the Month.

Included among his victories was a pin of Navy's Spencer Carey, who entered the tournament ranked in the top 25 nationally, in the

championship match. Richards also pinned Brad Laughlin of Army and scored an 11-4 decision over Randy Mereweather of Air Force.

With his three victories, Richards ran his winning streak to 15 straight matches and boasts a 22-3 record this season.

Dom Gallo '19 (141) and Darren Ostrander '19 (157) both earned fourth-place finishes for the Keydets at the tournament.

VMI was on the road for its next three bouts before closing out the regular season against The Citadel Saturday, Feb. 23, in Lexington. The Southern Conference tournament is slated to begin Sunday, March 10, in Boone, N.C.

Basketball



Donald Parham '21 dribbles past Western Carolina players during the Jan. 19 game in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

The Keydets enter the last leg of the 2018-19 regular season on a three-game losing streak, which follows their only Southern Conference victory of the year, a 91-83 win over Western Carolina Saturday, Jan. 19, in Cameron Hall. That win ended a seven-game skid for VMI, which stands 7-15 overall, 1-9 in the SoCon.

Bubba Parham '21, who leads the SoCon in scoring, averaging 20.7 points per game, did much of the damage for VMI against the Catamounts, tallying 33 points. He wasn't alone in his efforts, however, as three other players reached double figures in scoring for the Keydets. Sarju Patel '21 netted 17 points; Jake Stephens '22 poured in 16; and Myles Lewis '21 chipped in with 13.

The game featured 18 lead changes, but the Keydets went on top for good with just over five minutes to play and sealed the victory by hitting seven of eight free throws down the stretch.

VMI returned to action Thursday, Feb. 7, taking on Chattanooga in Cameron Hall. The Keydets play five of their last eight games in Lexington, where they sport a 6-4 mark this year.

Indoor Track

Playing host to its first scored meet of the indoor track season, the VMI men placed fifth and the Keydet women took eighth in the VMI Team Challenge held Saturday, Jan. 26, in the Corps Physical Training Facility.

The distance medley relay team of Gavin Jenkins '22, Dylan Haines '22, Ian Irizzarry-Negron '22 and Jahanzib Shahbaz '20 turned in the top finish for the VMI men, taking first place in a time of 10 minutes and 44.72 seconds. Right on their heels was the DMR team of Zach Lauster '22, Jack Ryan '22, Kyle Sabourin '19, and Andre Jordan '22, which finished second just one second behind.

Griffin Kowal '21 was third in the pole vault, followed by Andrew Arlint '19, who placed fourth. Blaine Ashton '22 took fourth place in



Eliza Brooks '22 runs the 200 meter dash during the Keydet Invitational in the Corps Physical Training Facility Jan. 19.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

the triple jump, and Johnnie Walker '22 placed fifth in the 400-meter run.

On the women's side, McKenna Dunn '22 and Sarah Leckman '21 turned in VMI's top finishes, placing third in the pole vault and shot put, respectively. Arianna Ruffin '21 was fifth in the 200 and eight in the 400, while Logan Luckett '20 placed fifth in the mile run. Sydney Hays '19 rounded out the Keydet scoring with her eighth-place finish in the weight throw.

VMI's last regular-season home meet of the season will be Feb. 8-9 when the Keydets play host to the VMI Winter Relays.

Swimming and Diving

Members of the Keydet swimming and diving teams have been putting in strong performances and breaking school records this winter. On Jan. 12 at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Stephen Hopta '22 set a new Institute record in the 200-meter freestyle with a time of 1:43:95. Also at ODU, the Keydet 400-free relay team of Hopta, Nick Palmieri '21, Brady Gannon '19 and Ryan Schmitz '20 won the race in 3:12.51. Other top finishes came from Ryan Cooper '22, who won the 200-individual medley in 2:01.63, and John Reed '19, who won both diving competitions, the 1-meter with a score of 190.20, and the 3-meter with a score of 177.80.



Keydet swimmers face off against the Washington and Lee University Generals Jan. 19 in the Washington and Lee Natatorium.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

On Jan. 26, Keydet swimmers traveled a short distance to a meet at neighboring Washington & Lee University. There, Hopta broke two more records, swimming a 9:53.82 in the 1,000-yard freestyle to win the event and break his own school record. He set the VMI freshman record and won the 200-backstroke with a time of 1:53.28. Brady Gannon '19 won two events, including swimming his lifetime best in the 50-meter freestyle with a time of 21.38. On the women's side, Morgan Davis '20 broke her own school record in the women's 200-meter butterfly, placing second in 2:15.16. Sophie Svoboda '22 broke VMI's freshmen record in the 100-meter freestyle, taking second in 54.80. 🌸



December Graduation, Commissioning

Thirty-six graduates crossed the stage in Jackson Memorial Hall Dec. 19 following an address in which VMI chief of staff Col. James P. Inman '86 spoke to the graduates about living extraordinary lives. The previous evening, five commissioned into the Army. Maj. Gen. John Epperly, commander of the 29th Infantry Division, addressed the audience and administered the commissioning oath to the new officers.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.





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December, January Bring Snowy Start to Winter

Snow covers post just in time for the start of second semester. Several inches fell on Jan. 12-13, causing a two-hour delay for administrative offices on Jan. 14. Another inch or two fell again on Jan. 18.—VMI Photos by Maj. John Robertson IV and Kelly Nye.

