

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

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28 November 2016

MEMORANDUM OF INSTRUCTION

SUBJECT: Institute Publication Standards

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish standards for publications produced by and on behalf of the Institute.
2. **REQUIRED REFERENCES:**
 - a. VMI Editorial Style Guide.
 - b. Associated Press Stylebook.
 - c. VMI Visual Identity Standards.
 - d. VMI Social Media Guidelines.
3. **APPLICABILITY:** This guidance applies to any print publication, website, video, social media site, or other communications product intended for external audiences developed by any Institute office or department, affiliated agency, or vendor employed by the Institute or affiliated agency.
4. The standards enumerated in Attachments 1 and 2 are required. Exceptions to these standards will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests for exceptions should be directed to the undersigned.

5. DISCUSSION:

The Institute is often publicly judged by its ability to fulfill its mission to educate young men and women in a unique and demanding environment, through its adherence to the ideals and values it espouses, and through the high professional standards it has set for itself. The deliberate act of presenting itself to the public through publications has the potential to affect the institutional image that has been carefully nurtured through the years.

The Institute leverages its image to support cadet recruitment efforts. Recruiting is essential to the Institute's business model in that tuition and fees account for more than 60 percent of VMI's operating budget. While only recruiting materials are expected to consciously



reflect the recruiting image, developers of all publications should have an awareness of the image to ensure their publications complement rather than compete with this vital effort. Another important source of revenue is through the funds raised and managed by the VMI Foundation. A strong institutional image is vital to these fundraising efforts.

Publications – whether printed, online, or video – convey not only information that we want to relay to important audiences, but also an impression about the Institute through the professionalism with which they are produced. When executed properly, a publication enhances the positive message the Institute is trying to convey through its many communications efforts. The standards enumerated in this document are set to ensure publications are produced with the level of professionalism expected from the Institute.

This document establishes standards (Attachment 1) that every publication produced by and in the name of the Institute must meet. To the extent possible, these standards have been developed as objective criteria; however, some standards require judgment in their application. Whether the standards of brevity and clarity, for example, are accomplished or are not accomplished is largely in the eye of the beholder. The beholder of most consequence is the reader or viewer of our efforts, so it is important that they are foremost in our minds as we work our craft. Writing is an art that involves style, rhythm, word choice, and pacing; designing a publication is an art that involves consideration of graphics, text, white space, and many other elements; and producing a video is an art that requires the careful melding of visual, audio, and graphical elements. Even effective posting to social media is a form of art unto itself. These standards do not attempt to prescribe how the text of a publication is written or how a publication is designed or how a video is produced or how a Facebook or other social media post is made. These standards, rather, address fundamental matters that are common to all publications.

The following overarching principles should inform decisions concerning publication development:

- The Institute, by its nature as a military college, has a conservative persona. Publications should not offer a departure from that persona. This does not mean drab and predictable; rather, it means tasteful and appropriate. The intention is that we remain creative, but that we do so in consonance with the Institute's established image.
- There should be consistency among all publications in the standards outlined here. This demonstrates coherence, professionalism, and discipline in the preparation of publications, and therefore reflects the coherence, professionalism, and discipline that is embodied in the Institute generally.
- Everybody needs an editor or a reviewer. Text should not be presented to the public until it has been closely reviewed by someone other than the writer; a printed or online publication's design should be checked by someone other than the designer;

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videos must be reviewed; and, when practical, social media posts should be reviewed before the post is made.

The 20 standards presented here are organized under three major headings: content, presentation, and required elements. These standards apply to print publications, Web pages, social media, and videos. Certain exceptions or special usage for social media are indicated in the notes.

6. Contact this office for assistance in interpreting or implementing these instructions.

Stewart D. MacInnis
Colonel, Virginia Militia
Director

Attachments:

1. Publications Standards
2. Non-discrimination statement
3. Policies and Guidelines

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Attachment 1

VMI Publication Standards

I. CONTENT
1. Accuracy – all information is factually correct and free from bias.
2. Policy – the information presented does not violate Institute policies, laws, or C&M publication policies. No advertising, no politics, FERPA respected, etc. ¹
3. Propriety – the material does not embarrass individuals, is not unseemly or gratuitous.
4. Coordination – all details as to place, time, and date have been thoroughly coordinated with all affected offices and necessary agreements or approvals have been obtained.
5. Review – everybody needs an editor. Establish a process to ensure review at the appropriate level.
6. Style Manual – adhere to the VMI Style Guide and the Associated Press Stylebook.
7. Copyright – All copyrighted materials meet fair use standards or permission has been obtained and documented for their use.
8. Grammar and spelling – no mistakes. ²
9. Clarity – Text and graphics should be clear in communicating the information.
10. Brevity – Shorter is usually better; length should be appropriate to the purpose of the publication.
11. Purpose – is the purpose of the publication clear, are the material and writing appropriate for the intended audience, does the publication accomplish its purpose?
II. PRESENTATION
12. Graphics and images – standard as to size, dpi, presentation, etc.
13. Links – make sure links work. Request and use friendly URLs if needed.
14. Sponsorships – acknowledgments and logos used in an appropriate manner.
15. Formatting – fonts, spacing, paragraphing, heads, subheads, cutlines, etc. are appropriate and consistent within the publication. ³
16. Branding – meets all requirements of the VMI Identity Standards.

III. REQUIRED ELEMENTS
17. Instructions to obtain additional information – phone, physical address, email, web. ⁴
18. Non-discrimination statement, when needed. ⁵
19. Date of publication - required for both print and web. Should show specific date of publication, the month and year of publication, the season or term of publication, or the year of publication, depending on the purpose of the publication. The year can be calendar year, shown as the four-digit year; an academic year shown as “2016-17 Academic Year”; or a fiscal year shown as “2016-17 Fiscal Year”. ⁶
20. Publisher information – All authorized publications – official and unofficial – are published by the Institute; however, the proponent office or department for the publication should be listed as well.

Notes:

1. See Attachment 3.
2. For social media with strict character counts standard abbreviations are permitted.
3. This standard is dependent on the capabilities of the social media platform.
4. For specific social media posts this may not be needed or may be accomplished through a link to a web page with this information.
5. The non-discrimination statement is at Attachment 2. Most social media sites provide an “about” section that can contain this information. This item can be a link to the non-discrimination page on the VMI website at <http://www.vmi.edu/about/administration/non-discrimination-statement/>.
6. This is not needed on social media as posts are timestamped.

Attachment 2

Non-discrimination Statement

VMI's counsel with the Virginia Attorney General's Office has developed legally sufficient language that must be used as presented below in publications developed for student recruiting. Counsel has indicated that this statement should also be included in non-recruiting publications to the maximum extent possible. If in doubt, include this statement in the publication design.

Print Publications: This text may be used in any type size, but no smaller than agate (5.5 points).

Online and Social Media: It is preferable to link to <http://www.vmi.edu/about/administration/non-discrimination-statement/> as this statement will be updated as required.

The statement below is current as of the date of this memorandum. An electronic version of this statement is available from the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Non-discrimination Statement

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. Every VMI staff member, faculty member and cadet has the right to work and study in an environment free from discrimination and should be treated with dignity and respect. VMI complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and cadets with the means for resolving complaints when this Statement has been violated. VMI is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Anyone having questions concerning discrimination or the application of Title IX regulations should contact 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 Infirmery, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7667. For employment-related disability services, contact the Employee Disability Services Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7322.

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Attachment 3

Policies and Guidelines

Political Activities

As a taxpayer-supported agency, VMI does not take a position on any political candidate, party, or issue. As an educational institution, however, VMI does have an interest in educating cadets in political matters. Because of this tension, any VMI involvement in political activity must be carefully calibrated.

Refer requests to: Director, C&M
Approval authority: Superintendent

Commercial Activity

As a taxpayer-supported agency, VMI does not endorse any commercial enterprise, product, or service. At times, commercial enterprises may rent space on post or may want to conduct photography or videography for commercials. These should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Refer advertising production requests to: Director, C&M

Sponsorships

A sponsorship is an agreement between VMI and an outside organization in which roughly equal benefits accrue to each party. Financial support or support in kind to an athletic event or to a conference are examples of sponsorships that are appropriate. VMI receives support from the sponsoring organization; in return, the sponsoring organization receives recognition for having helped make the event or program possible. Recognition is often in the form of publicity. It is appropriate in these cases to publicly recognize the organization through publicity, public announcements, placement of the organization's logo on a VMI publication, or in other manners.

Any sponsorship request that involves a political candidate, political party, or public policy advocacy falls under the Political Activities policy, and must be approved by the Superintendent.

Refer request for sponsorship of athletic events to: Associate Athletic Director
Refer requests for sponsorships of conferences to: Director, CLE
Refer all other requests to: Director, C&M

Commercial and Charitable Solicitation

As a taxpayer-supported agency, VMI does not promote the products or services of commercial enterprises or of charitable organizations. These entities, however, often want to market to our cadets and employees or through VMI assets. These activities must be approved to take place (General Order 44, Solicitation Policy), and any support of them through VMI-controlled media must be approved separately.

Refer requests for solicitation to: Deputy Superintendent, Finance, Administration and Support
Approval authority for use in any VMI publications and media: Director, C&M

FERPA and Privacy

Federal and state statutes require VMI to protect the privacy of individuals. Different rules apply to different categories of people:

Cadets fall under the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act. C&M maintains on file waivers signed by cadets acknowledging VMI can release directory information without future clearance from them. The same form allows VMI to use photos and videos of cadets. These forms are in force for all VMI organizations. The elements of directory information that may be released are name, enrollment status, dates of enrollment, academic major, academic year and year of matriculation, VMI email address, VMI box number, home address and phone number, degrees received or anticipated degree date, honors received, athletic and other activity participation, weight and height of members of athletic teams, and cadet photos. Please note that this list DOES NOT INCLUDE GRADE POINT AVERAGE. The writer must obtain the cadet's consent (verbal is sufficient, but it should be documented, such as in a Memorandum for Record) before using a cadet's GPA in a publication or release.

Employees fall under various state and federal laws. An adult employee's consent to publicity is implied if the employee participates in an interview or a photo session and he or she is informed of the intended or potential use of the material gathered. No written release is required in this case. For a minor employee, a consent form signed by a parent or guardian is required.

Adults who are not cadets and not employees may be photographed in any public venue without the need for a release. This includes speakers and attendees to public events, fans at sporting events, visitors to a museum, and viewers of parades, among others. Any objection by a person pictured to the use of the photo should be

honored. Any adult may be interviewed for news stories or releases. The person's participation in the interview implies his or her consent.

Minors – Use of photos or videos of minors in most cases requires a release signed by a parent or guardian. If the minor is recognizable, ask a parent or guardian to sign a release form. An exception is for minors who are photographed as part of a crowd at a public event (for example, as part of the crowd watching a parade), in which case no release form is needed.

Refer questions to: Director, News and Editorial Services