



Start your future now....

## Four Year Plan for Cadets

Office of Career Services: Carroll Hall, Room 311

Phone: 540-464-7560

Website: <http://www.vmi.edu/careerservices>

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### Why a Four-Year Plan?

VMI is rich in opportunities for cadets to achieve their goals, and cadets choose to complete their undergraduate career at VMI because they can accomplish these goals in many arenas.

In the classroom, cadets pursue academic and intellectual growth. Through co-curricular activities, they develop interactive social and leadership skills. As their experiences expand through internships and study abroad, cadets encounter the world and anticipate their place in the larger, global arena. And cadets become contributing citizens through service to their community.

Across these diverse experiences, cadets learn about themselves; intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially. These opportunities encourage responsible decision-making from the first year at VMI and well into the future.

### A Plan Designed for you

The four-year plan is designed for the VMI cadet so you can make the most of your four years as you prepare for your life's career. It provides you with benchmarks for planning your undergraduate career and for sharing your achievements with your advisor, professors, friends, parents, and prospective employers or graduate school admissions committees.

The plan will help you assess your accomplishments – and determine what your next steps should be. In other words, the Four-Year Plan is intended to provide a roadmap for maximizing opportunities in your curricular and co-curricular life. By fully utilizing this plan, you will:

1. Rise to academic challenges and excel in your course work.
2. Be an active and collaborative learner and participate fully in your education.
3. Seek enriching experiences by pursuing activities that integrate your classroom education with community-based learning such as internships, service, study abroad, co-curricular activities, leadership opportunities, and/or a culminating senior experience.
4. Utilize fully VMI's resources (Staff, faculty, services and facilities) that support your success.
5. Identify and apply the skills acquired from all of your experiences, especially from the school curriculum.

**Rat/4<sup>th</sup> Class Year:** During your first year at VMI, you will start to build the foundation for a successful college experience. This is a time to Explore Majors and Careers. Following are some goals for all freshmen:

- Establish a successful academic foundation by completing course work with a quality grade point average (GPA). It's difficult to make the GPA high, if you start too low. Most employers are looking for a 3.0 GPA minimum.
- Visit the Office of Career Services in Carroll Hall, Room 311 and/or the OCS Website at [www.vmi.edu/careerservices](http://www.vmi.edu/careerservices)
- Set personal goals for individual success during your freshmen year and beyond
- Explore and declare a major
- Actively engage at least one faculty or staff member in knowing you well and becoming a resource for you, they can greatly assist in the career search
- Begin personal evaluations by using the MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory, or other assessment resources available through the Office of Career Services.
- Create a time management plan that balances academic, leadership, wellness, and spiritual aspects of personal growth and college life
- Commit to at least one VMI-sponsored activity or organization
- Begin progressive work / service experiences
- Broaden your perspective by attending VMI sponsored academic and cultural events.
- Explore the Lexington community and surrounding area.
- Become knowledgeable about and utilize the resources available in the Office of Career Services.
- Begin Resume development and complete a resume for summer employment.
- Save noteworthy projects, papers and assignments to include in a portfolio.
- Attend a KeydetConnect workshop
- Set up an account on KeydetConnect

**3<sup>rd</sup> Class Year:** Avoid the “sophomore slump” by expanding your self-awareness and involvement in programs and activities. This is a time to Explore opportunities to gain career experiences. These goals for all sophomores encourage focused exploration and preparation for the next two years of your VMI career.

- Continue to build a solid academic foundation by successfully completing general education, major/minor and elective courses.
- Consider Informational Interviews of alumni or employers you're interested in.
- Update personal goals for 3<sup>rd</sup> Class year and beyond.
- Visit the OCS website or office to explore SIG3 to help determine your work values, career interests and career choices for the future beyond VMI.
- Adjust time management plan to incorporate expanding responsibilities in the academic, leadership, wellness, and spiritual aspects of VMI life.
- Discuss career and graduate school plans, and other post-VMI goals with your academic advisor; develop a career action plan.
- Confirm your declared major.
- Plan and apply for study abroad and internship experiences to be completed in the summer before or during your junior year.
- Commit to co-curricular activities related to your major and academic interests.
- Focus and prioritize participation in other co-curricular activities; move into positions of leadership.
- Continue progressive work / service experiences.
- Obtain one recommendation from a faculty or staff member.
- Prepare / update your resume by the end of each semester.
- Continue to save noteworthy projects, papers, and assignments to include in your portfolio.
- Update your KeydetConnect Account

**2<sup>nd</sup> Class Year:** This will be a critical year in your academic program and related activities – a time to evaluate your decisions and recommit to future goals. These goals are designed for 2<sup>nd</sup> Class cadets:

- Continue to achieve excellence and prepare for recognition of academic accomplishments.
- Refine personal goals and plans for 2<sup>nd</sup> Class year and beyond.
- Define career path(s) and /or emphasis within a major.
- Declare minor and/or double major.
- Consider Mock Interviews to refine your interview skills.
- Complete application for graduation (spring)
- Participate in study abroad.
- Complete at least one internship or similar experience.
- Get involved; take at least one leadership role in academic or co-curricular organization.
- Explore career trends related to your interests, skills, values, and goals.
- Continue progressive work/service experiences
- Develop specific graduate school plans and begin application process.
- Refine and update resume; obtain two recommendations from faculty, staff or employers.
- Organize and assemble noteworthy projects, papers, and assignments in your portfolio
- Attend the fall Challenge Internship/Job Fair
- Attend a Resume Writing workshop and interview appointment for final review.
- Update your KeydetConnect Account
- There are 3 things employers look for in prospective employees: communications skills, a solid academic record, and experience.

**1<sup>st</sup> Class Year:** Your fourth year at VMI is as significant a time of transition as your first year; planning carefully for your future will be as essential to your success as a VMI graduate as it was when you were a Rat. Your focused goals are now very specific, bound by time and cumulative. This is a time to prepare for the transition to your first career. Seniors should expect to accomplish the following:

- Fall
  - Schedule a career counseling appointment to review your job search strategies.
  - Explore employment opportunities on KeydetConnect for fall and spring on-post recruitment.
  - Develop and implement commissioning, employment and/or graduate school plans.
  - Attend the Challenge Job Fair and other career fairs, on-post interviewing, employer information sessions, and other job-seeking activities.
  - Complete culminating internship and/or service activity.
  - Request a free copy of *Job Choices* at the Office of Career Services. This is a guide to employment nationwide.
  - Consider joining an appropriate professional or trade association.
  - Maintain involvement in co-curricular, service and leadership activities.
  - Obtain three recommendations from faculty, staff or employers.
  - Update your resume and cover letters.
  - Network; put your resume in the hands of friends and family members. They might have the connections you need.
  - Create a portfolio outlining undergraduate accomplishments to be used in job and/or graduate school search.
  - Write letters to employers accepting or declining job offers. Don't burn bridges!
  - Make sure your cell phone voice message is proper for prospective employers who might call.
  - Watch your email carefully (junk mail filter as well) for job opportunities or career-related announcements from OCS.
  - Update your KeydetConnect Account
- Spring
  - Achieve recognition for academic and leadership accomplishments
  - Complete internship experiences.
  - Participate in transition activities out of the Institute.
  - Finalize resume; secure all recommendations.
  - Network with VMI alumni in the community you plan to enter following graduation.
  - Finalize employment/graduate school plans.
  - Update your KeydetConnect Account and report hiring results.

## **HOW THIS OFFICE ASSISTS CADETS: CAREER COUNSELING AND TESTING FOR DECISION-MAKING**

You can meet one-on-one with a career counselor to discuss your academic and career options and explore your career-related values, interests, and abilities. Career Services' counselors are professionally trained and are aware of the concerns that you face in exploring your future. During career counseling, you will:

- Identify your interests, work values, academic strengths and weaknesses, work-related skills, and personal goals.
- Determine the best course of action to help you achieve your goals
- Discuss what you can do to resolve your concerns
- Become familiar with useful resources
- Complete career-related exercises and assignments
- Take interest and/or personality tests
- Arrange appointments to speak with people knowledgeable about majors and careers

### **Help Yourself During the Career Counseling Process**

Career counseling will only be successful if you:

- Attend all appointments that you and your counselor decide are necessary
- Be open about issues that are relevant to your career concerns
- Conduct career research and complete other tasks between appointments
- Provide feedback about what is and isn't helpful in the process

### **A Note about Career Testing**

Many cadets approach Career Services in order to "take the test that will tell me what career to choose." While career tests may be helpful in the decision-making process, no single test will tell you what career to choose. The primary goal of testing is to develop a deeper understanding of your interests, work values, and personality traits and how they relate to the world of work. Not all students who seek career counseling will need testing. We require you to discuss your concerns with a career counselor prior to taking career tests. Talk with your career counselor for more information.

## **WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR:**

College students learn many skills while they are in college, including the ones listed below. Employers prefer to hire people who have these qualities\*:

- Communications Skills (verbal and written)
- Teamwork Skills
- Initiative
- Interpersonal Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Analytical Skills
- Flexibility / Adaptability
- Computer Skills
- Technical Skills
- Detail Oriented
- Organizational Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Self-Confidence

\*Source: Job Outlook 2008, National Associate of College and Employers

## **HOW EMPLOYERS FIND YOU**

Employers work through a number of means to connect with prospective candidates for hire. They often work through Alumni channels, Faculty contacts, Career Centers and/or Web-based systems. The Office of Career Services encourages employers to use all means possible, but guides them into KeydetConnect when announcing Internships and Full-Time Employment opportunities. There are 3 ways employers find cadets in KeydetConnect:

1. Resume Referrals
2. Resume Collections
3. On-Post Interviews