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A VMI Guide to Leadership & Ethics:

*Preparing for a Life of Honor
in the U.S. Naval Service*

**Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps Unit,
Virginia Military Institute**

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Table of Contents

Foreword.....	v
Authors: Sean Kim, Steven Munn	
Chapter I: Honor.....	1
Authors: Kevin Andres, Dylan Barao, Ryan Bess, Calle Biles, Kao-Pu Chang, Morgan Davis, Jackson Freischlag, Krystal Graves, Madeline Moger, Wyatt Novak, Steven Parrish	
Chapter II: Courage.....	9
Authors: Matthew Agnew, Alec Berry, Thomas Callahan, Colin Kearney, Aaron Kubat, Colton Richardson, Logan Sawyer	
Chapter III: Commitment.....	17
Authors: MacGregor Baxter, Chad Brown, Sean Carroll, Abigail Dimirack, Madeline Hassler, Jacob Keith, Alexander Oshirak, Kyle Pearson, William Pierce, Andrew Sekerak, Annie Wilson, Abigail Zyk	
Chapter IV: Professionalism.....	25
Authors: Michelangelo Cao, Pamela Gandolfo, Ashley Kassolis, Logan Luckett, Isabela Melendez, Fred Salerno	
Chapter V: Leadership.....	37
Authors: Joshua Austin, Thomas Berge, Skylar Birdie, Breslin, Colby Burke, Bernesha Dothard, Maxwell	

Gallahan, William Kelly, Zachary Shaffer, William Soldow, Stewart Spurry, Maxwell Stuart

Chapter VI: Morals and Ethics..... 53

Authors: Zachary Albano, Thomas Baham, Douglas Burkhart, Cole Childress, Dolan Delaney, James Granderson, David Hansen, Logan Hill, Dakota Kurtz, Jeffrey Whitney

Chapter VII: Duty..... 65

Authors: Christopher Beck, Seanhenry Brown, William Davidson, Wilson George, Ethan Mahoney, James Monroe, Mark Peake, Sam Trepp, Robert Zinsman

Chapter VIII: Integrity..... 71

Authors: John Daniel, Noah Enix, Matthew Gottlieb, Jake Hardin, Patrick Nott, Jeremy Pascucci, Zachary Reid, James Zecchini

Chapter IX: Loyalty..... 77

Authors: Frank Barksdale, Taylor Batte, Matthew Byrd, Hayden Faust, Benjamin Jeon, Alfonso Krstulovic, Kenneth Krstulovic, Andrew Monckton, Shane O'Connor, Andrew Raciti, Davis Rowady, Karl Skerry

Chapter X: Academics..... 85

Authors: Cassin Fearnow, Sumner Griffith, David Jones, Andrew Polson, Joshua Strelow, Samuel Trepp, Braxton Wilkinson, Stephen Wolf

Chapter XI: Physical Fitness..... 91

Authors: Owen Carney, Francis Celentano, William Hostetler, Cade Kiely, Julianne Knoblett, Carisa Kunkle, Douglas McClure, Rhiannon Moore, Chan Park, Nicholas Reynolds, Bryant Smilie

Chapter XII: Military Aptitude..... 101

Authors: Zachary Anderson, Aaron Barraclough, Rebecca Browning, Stephen Clark, Alexander Dragan, William Hart, Elizabeth Jackson, Erik Jorstad, Ryan McHugh, Christopher Milliken

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FOREWORD

15 May 2020

To all future VMI Cadets and NROTC Midshipmen:

The guidebook you are about to read was written by the highly successful men and women of the VMI Class of 2020 for the purpose of better preparing you for the challenges that you will experience as a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute and as a midshipman in VMI's Naval ROTC program. The information found in the following pages will help you better understand the requirements that will be placed upon you by both institutions. More importantly, this guidebook contains a variety of different leadership philosophies, experiences, perspectives, instructions, and words of advice that are designed to help you excel as VMI Cadets and future Naval Officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

In the years to come, your mind, body, and character will be tested like they have never been tested before. Although reading this guidebook will give you rare and valuable insight into the NROTC program and life at “The Institute”, you will never truly grasp the demands that will be placed upon you until you experience them for yourself. Every VMI Cadet who is enrolled in the NROTC program will be exposed to different aspects of leadership and personal development on a regular basis. These aspects—which you will read and learn about in detail—have been compiled into short chapters that address the following topics: honor, courage, commitment, professionalism, leadership, ethical and moral behavior, duty, integrity, loyalty, academics, physical fitness, and military aptitude. We trust that you will find these chapters to be enlightening, relevant, and useful.

We take great pride in passing four years of experience, learning, and wisdom on to you; we hope that you gain valuable insight about what you are about to experience and learn. At times, there will be conflicting priorities and no easy choices about what to do next. You will be pulled in several different directions at once and pushed to the breaking point. Sometimes you will fail. But those who are able to persevere through these hardships and learn from their mistakes will succeed in the end.

At VMI NROTC and in life, you must continue moving forward and strive to become better every single day. With that end state in mind, we trust that this guidebook will help prepare you for one of the toughest, but most rewarding journeys that you will ever experience.

--The VMI NROTC Class of 2020



Chapter I

Honor

“Mine honor is my life; both grow as one. Take honor from me, and my life is done.”

--William Shakespeare

“I would prefer even to lose with honor than win by cheating.”

--Sophocles

“Ability without honor is useless.”

--Marcus Tullius Cicero

“He has honor if he holds himself to an ideal of conduct though it is inconvenient, unprofitable, or dangerous to do so.”

--Walter Lippmann

The mission of the Virginia Military Institute is to produce honorable men and women. Honor is the foundational value upon which the VMI System is built, and every cadet must commit themselves to honorable conduct. If they don't, their cadetship will come to an abrupt and unpleasant end. In this chapter we will attempt to define honor. We will also discuss the VMI Honor System and provide some examples of what acting with honor looks like. Finally, we will discuss why honor is important at VMI and to leadership as a whole.

Honor Defined

Honor is a concept that has long been highly esteemed by societies all around the world. From King Arthur and the

NSP-1 ----- Honor

Knights of the Round Table to the Code of the Samurai, warriors have prided themselves on possessing this special virtue. Today's Navy-Marine Corps team includes honor as a fundamental Core Value, and Naval Service members are expected to exemplify honor by their personal and professional conduct. Despite the collective emphasis and importance that has been placed on honor, there is no one universally recognized definition. Honor may be described as the commitment to a set of moral beliefs; the strict adherence to an extremely high standard of personal conduct; and the moral obligation to "do what is right" according to principled values.

The fact that there are many different ways of defining honor does not mean that it is a frivolous concept. Honor is a complex, abstract notion that varies among different cultures and involves a wide range of morals, values, beliefs, and opinions. Despite the lack of a universal characterization, there seems to be a collective understanding of what it means to be honorable. Honor is often thought to be synonymous with character; it is best demonstrated by those who perpetually live their lives according to high ideals and moral principles.

Honorable Traits

Honor is often associated with the concept of chivalry, and honorable individuals are recognized as people of exceptional character and integrity. They are often described as "real standup guys/gals" who distinguish themselves from others by their upright behavior and moral conduct. Honorable people can be counted on to do the right thing even when no one is watching.

To a certain extent, what honor looks like in practice depends upon the moral values of a particular culture or society. However, there is a great deal of consensus concerning honorable behaviors, traits and qualities. “The Golden Rule” (i.e. always treat others the way you would like to be treated) is one universally recognized example of honorable behavior. In most cultures and societies, honesty and truthfulness are regarded as honorable qualities. An honorable person tells the truth even when it hurts. Conversely, telling lies and being deceitful are examples of dishonorable behavior. Honorable people are courteous, fair, and respectful; they always treat others with dignity. They would never cheat or steal from another person. Honorable people would treat a pauper with the same dignity as a prince.

Generally speaking, this is the U.S. military interpretation of honorable behavior. All VMI Cadets and future Naval Officers are expected to demonstrate these outstanding traits and attributes.

The VMI Honor System

VMI has a culture of honor that dates back to the founding of the Institute in 1839. The VMI Honor System is a single sanction system. The Honor System makes no attempt to establish degrees of honorable behavior, which means that there is only penalty for any breach of honor—dismissal. Some may label this Honor System “severe” or “antiquated”, but the strict interpretation of honor and the firm enforcement of the Honor Code are traditions steeped in history. They are enforced and jealously guarded by all cadets.

The VMI Honor Code

All cadets live their lives according to the VMI Honor Code. The code is simple, “A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do.” These few, powerful words guide the behavior and actions of all cadets throughout their time at VMI. Hundreds of copies of the Honor Code are posted in every room on Post. They serve as a constant reminder for cadets to uphold these noble standards. Cadets are challenged to adopt the Honor Code as a part of their lifestyle and abide by it at all times—not just when they are at VMI. The Honor Code is instilled in cadets with the goal that they adopt this mindset and continue to live honorably in the years following graduation.

The Honor Court

The Honor Court is comprised of 2nd and 1st Class cadets who are elected by their classmates. The Honor Court is charged with educating and enforcing the Honor Code, and investigating and adjudicating all possible infractions by their fellow cadets. Cadets who are found guilty of Honor Code



NSP-1 ----- Honor

infractions are dismissed from VMI. Honor Court proceedings leading up to dismissal are conducted in secrecy, and all cadets who are involved the investigations are sworn to secrecy and nondisclosure.

Living with Honor at VMI

Living by the Honor Code seems fairly simple. However, simple adherence to the four stipulations is only the bare minimum of what is expected of an honorable cadet. Abiding by the Honor Code requires that cadets zealously protect their honor in every situation. While many college students would be tempted to look for loopholes in the code, VMI Cadets are taught to remain faithful to the spirit and intent of the Honor Code in order to preserve their personal character, and integrity. Cadets who live by the Honor Code can always be trusted to be honest and truthful. If a cadet gives you his/her word that a statement is true, it is accepted in good faith, and without reservation. These are just a few of the reasons why VMI Cadets are held in such high regard.



The “Help Received Statement” is an everyday example of how honor is an integral part of VMI culture. This statement is written on every academic assignment that a cadet submits for a grade. The Help Received Statement lists all sources of help (or assistance) that the cadet received to complete a specific assignment. Sources of help may include any research assistance that was given to the cadet by a professor or peer, as well as any information obtained online or in texts, etc. In every graded academic assignment, cadets are required to give credit where credit is due. While the Help Received Statement may seem tedious or trivial, it is embraced by all cadets. It is a certified statement of truth, and thus carries the full weight of the cadet’s honor with it. Affirmations of a cadet’s honor are commonplace in cadet life and are indicative of VMI’s culture of honor.

Approaching Moral Dilemmas with an Honorable Mindset

The world that we live in is filled with situations that can challenge even the most morally upright person. Morally dubious ideas and influences are everywhere. Issues involving personal honor are often complicated and rarely black and white. In a world made up of various shades of gray, it can be difficult for a cadet to know right from wrong and maintain an honorable mindset.

When faced with moral dilemmas involving honor or integrity, making the right decisions can be very difficult. Unfortunately, the four main tenets of the VMI Honor Code don’t always address moral dilemmas, and advice like “listen to your conscience” is rarely helpful. In times like these, the following steps may help you make honorable decisions:

NSP-1 ----- Honor

- **Objectively analyze the situation.** If you are faced with making a decision that involves your honor, the first thing you should do is objectively analyze the situation. This involves the careful gathering and studying of all pertinent facts. This inventory should include the actions of individuals who are involved in the situation, as well as any points of contention. The intent is to become fully aware of the problem at hand. Once the problem is understood, you can begin weighing various decisions (and their consequences).

- **Identify any personal bias or self-interests.** As you contemplate your situation and weigh your decisions, you must make a concerted effort to honestly identify any personal bias or self-interest that could cloud your judgement. For example, you would never want your decision to be based upon a known “like or dislike” of one of the individuals involved. And you should never make a decision motivated by personal gain, or solely for the purposes of receiving a reward or avoiding punishment. The cadet who is honest about his/her own personal bias, and who can resist the temptation of self-interest is on track to make an honorable decision.

- **Identify and Remove Negative Outside Influences.** An objective, self-aware cadet must separate himself/herself from negative outside influences in order to resolve the problem honorably. As you weigh your decision, you must be aware of anyone involved in the situation who may be trying to manipulate or persuade you. Be especially wary of anyone who offers you advice, and who also has a vested interest in your decision. Their advice could actually be an attempt to influence your decision in way that benefits themselves. All outside influences that could potentially cause you to make a dishonorable decision should be identified and discarded.

- **Request Advice from an Honorable Person.** Before making any decision that involves your character, honor, or integrity, you may want to discuss it with an honorable person who you trust. He/she can affirm the work you've done to analyze the situation, identify self-bias and remove negative influences. In short, they can help you sort out your thoughts and guide you towards an honorable decision. Good advice is like an anchor in a storm.

- **Litmus Test.** Before you make your final decision, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- "By my actions/inactions, or by my words/silence, am I trying to mislead, manipulate, or take from someone else?" These are all *lesser degrees* of lying, cheating, and stealing, respectively. All are dishonorable.

- "By my actions/inactions, or by my words/silence, am I trying to hide something?" This is a common sign of dishonorable behavior.

- "If I were discovered, would I be ashamed?" If the answer is 'yes', your words and/or actions are almost certainly dishonorable.

If you are currently facing a moral dilemma, we hope that these steps will help guide you toward making an honorable decision and preserve your honor and integrity as a VMI Cadet.

Chapter II

Courage

“It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.”

--Mark Twain

“Courage is grace under pressure.”

--Ernest Hemingway

Courage serves as the foundation for many other leadership traits and principles. For example, integrity requires the courage to tell the truth; justice requires the courage to stand up for what is right; and loyalty requires the courage to stand by a friend during times of trouble. No leader can look out for the welfare of his/her subordinates without courage. It is no accident that courage is one of the Department of the Navy’s principal Core Values.

As you read this chapter, you will notice a lack of anecdotes about courage displayed by VMI Cadets or alumni on the battlefield. This is done purposefully. While courage in the heat of battle is very important and interesting to read about, it is unlikely that these heroics would have much relevance to your cadetship. Instead, we will discuss courage as it pertains to truthfulness, everyday life at VMI, service in the Fleet, and life in the civilian world. We will begin with a historical example of courage and character, as demonstrated by the Institute’s most famous alumnus, George C. Marshall, VMI Class of 1901.

Courage, Honesty and Truth

George C. Marshall is the model of citizen soldiery, outstanding leadership, and courage for all VMI Cadets. He served as the U.S. Army Chief of Staff during WWII and as the Secretary of State during the post-war period. During the early part of his career as a Major during WWI, he showed exemplary courage by standing up to General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces. During their first encounter, Pershing had voiced his immense displeasure with Marshall’s commander, Major General William L. Silbert. At the risk of jeopardizing his own professional career, Marshall directly confronted Pershing and vigorously defended his commander. Marshall gained the respect of Pershing for being courageous, straight-forward, and truthful, with little regard for the consequences.

Just like Marshall, cadets are taught to uphold the VMI Honor Code and to speak truthfully and honestly in any situation. Always telling the truth requires exceptionally strong moral courage. In the world today, honesty often offends others. People with the courage to speak the truth often face criticism or even retribution. However, VMI teaches you that honorable behavior is worth any penalty or price that you may pay, as a result. VMI Cadets maintain their honor and integrity by having the courage to speak honestly and truthfully, even when it is unpopular. Doing so will earn you the respect and trust of your Brother Rats, other cadets, senior officers, and subordinates.

Courage at VMI

Cadets need courage to survive and thrive at the Virginia Military Institute. This is especially true for New

NSP-1 ----- Courage

Cadets as they experience the fears and uncertainties associated with a strange new environment and conforming to the strict military discipline of the Ratline. Make no mistake, the Ratline can be very scary at times; you will need courage to endure it until Breakout. The first, and perhaps most intimidating aspect of the Ratline comes in the form of your Cadre. Your Cadre is responsible for training you and transforming you into a VMI Cadet. They will be tough and uncompromising. Your Cadre will confront you—sometimes aggressively—whenever and wherever you fail to perform well or meet their expectations. You must find the courage to overcome the fear and anxiety associated with this confrontation and keep your composure while being “grilled” by your Cadre.



Secondly, Rats must find the courage to overcome the fear of failure. Despite your best efforts, you will fail many times during the Ratline. Your Cadre will instruct you to perform an infinite number of tasks. Some will seem

NSP-1 ----- Courage

impossible. Under these circumstances, the fear of failure (and the predictable response by your Cadre) can be paralyzing and you may be tempted to give up or not even try. But you must find the courage to keep going and give your best effort. Remember: failure is not fatal. Having the courage to carry on is half the battle. With time and effort, you will succeed. This is a lesson that you will learn early on as a Rat, and one that will serve you well throughout your cadetship.

Third, Rats must exhibit physical courage. This is an absolute requirement during Rat Challenge, when you will be required to perform a variety of difficult and strenuous activities such as rock climbing, repelling, and obstacle courses. Although your Cadre will ensure your safety, all these events involve an element of physical danger and it takes a great deal of courage to successfully perform many of them. In fact, overcoming a fear of heights is an absolute must. The courage that it takes to overcome your fears and complete these Rat Challenge activities will give you the confidence to overcome similar challenges in the future. This confidence born from physical courage will stay with you for the rest of your life.

Lastly, you must develop moral courage, or the obligation to accept justice and/or do the right thing in the face of difficult moral dilemmas. In many ways, moral courage is much more difficult and important than the courage that you need to get through the Ratline. Cadets demonstrate moral courage when they own up to mistakes that they have made and willfully take full responsibility for them. Cadets have the opportunity to practice moral courage whenever they have to answer a Special Report to a member of the Commandant's staff. This can be a scary experience, but cadets who are guilty

NSP-1 ----- Courage

of a Blue Book infraction are expected to have the moral courage to stand before a senior officer, admit their mistake(s), and accept their punishment without question. Any attempt to avoid justice by deflecting blame or making excuses is unacceptable.

Moral courage is never more important for a cadet than when it applies to the VMI Honor System. Any cadet who witnesses another violate the Honor Code is obliged to report it to a member of the Honor Court. We hope that you never experience this situation when you are a cadet, but if you do, you must have the moral courage to do what is required by the Honor Code. This is especially difficult in light of the fact that there will be serious consequences for any cadet who is found guilty of an honor offense, but you must find the moral courage to do your duty, nonetheless.

Courage in the Fleet

The lessons that you learn about courage at VMI will serve you well in the Fleet as a Junior Officer in the Navy or Marine Corps. In times of war and peace, you will need courage to overcome uncertainty, adversity, confrontation, and the fear of failure. Your duties and responsibilities as a Junior Officer will require both physical and moral courage in order to effectively lead your Sailors or Marines. Similar to your VMI experience, you must:

- overcome your fears when faced with physical obstacles and barriers;
- speak up when you see something that you know is morally wrong;
- support and defend your subordinates when they are being treated unfairly;

NSP-1 ----- Courage

- have the courage to stand up to a senior officer when he/she gives orders that are unethical or you know will end in disaster.



While VMI does not require the kind of courage that you will need to overcome the fear of combat, years of experience with physical and moral courage as a cadet at VMI will be a source of strength to you as an officer, and help you to remain courageous in times of war when lives are at stake and it matters the most.

Courage as a Civilian

VMI lessons in courage will also serve you well in the civilian sector. Leaders in business, for example, must have the courage to overcome the status quo and affect change in the workplace. Leaders with the courage to try new management practices or production methods can dramatically improve the workplace environment, increase company profits, and grow the business.

Just like their counterparts in the military, leaders in the civilian world require moral courage in order to effectively manage their work force. They must be intolerant of unethical business practices; they must protect their employees when they are treated unfairly; and they must have the courage to speak truth to senior executives if their policies are unethical or harmful to the company. VMI and the civilian sector have this in common: courage is a stepping stone to future success.

We want to encourage you before you begin your VMI journey. We realize that you could have chosen a much easier path to earn a bachelor’s degree and a commission in the military. But the fact that you chose to go to college at the Virginia Military Institute and committed yourself to pursuing a commission in the Naval Service indicates that you already possess the intimations of the physical and moral courage needed to excel as a VMI Cadet and NROTC Midshipman. But make no mistake, your courage will be severely tested in the years to come. However, you can take great comfort in knowing that thousands of VMI Cadets have gone before you. Their courage grew as a result of the VMI System, and we are confident that yours will, as well.

NSP-1



Chapter III

Commitment

“Commitment means staying loyal to what you said you were going to do long after the mood you said it in has left you.”

--Anonymous

“Most people fail not because of a lack of desire but because of a lack of commitment.”

--Vince Lombardi

“Partial commitment changes everything — it reduces the sense that the mission comes first. From my first days, I had been taught that the Marines were satisfied only with 100 percent commitment from us and were completely dissatisfied with 99 percent.”

-- General James Mattis

You will soon make a commitment to VMI by signing the Matriculation Book just as every cadet has done before you. Later, some of you may commit yourselves to serving as officers in the United States military after graduation. This level of commitment requires tremendous effort. Without total commitment, any attempt to lead others will be ineffectual and fail. A good leader is committed to improving themselves, their organization, and to the people who follow them.

Commitment Defined

Commitment is defined as “the state or quality of being dedicated to a person, group, activity or cause.” You likely understand the first forms of commitment instinctively, since you have spent your life to this point committed to your family

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

and friends. If you've ever performed community service or been part of a team or troop, then you will also understand what it means to be committed to a group or activity. Commitment to a cause may be the most difficult to understand, as it entails personal dedication to a set of internal moral principles and abstract ideas like "honor" which are of paramount importance at VMI and in NROTC.

To be successful at VMI, you must remain committed in everything you do. This is a mindset that becomes a way of life. You must stay focused and not allow yourself to get sidetracked by things that distract you from accomplishing your goals. For example, you cannot show up on time, be in the right uniform, and be prepared for your classes three days out of the week and then slack off the other four. Inconsistency in your personal or professional conduct reflects a lack of commitment. A cadet who lacks commitment will soon develop a reputation for unreliability and low standards.



Commitment at VMI looks different for every cadet. One cadet may demonstrate commitment as the captain and leader of a NCAA athletics team; another could display commitment by devoting him/herself to keeping a perfect 4.0 GPA; and still another might decide to commit to serving

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

other cadets as a Cadet Chaplain. In each of these examples, the common thread is that the cadets remain focused on achieving a goal and put their whole effort into it. Achieving goals is more than just wanting to succeed. It will require responsibility and your complete devotion, dedication, and attentiveness. These traits are the foundation of commitment and sound leadership.

Responsibility

As mentioned earlier, when you sign your name in the Matriculation Book, you are making a personal commitment to adhere to the VMI System and uphold the legacy of every VMI Cadet who has gone before you. Hopefully, when you look at the hundreds of names listed in the Matriculation Book, you will begin to understand the magnitude of this commitment. Your signature means that you will dedicate yourself completely to supporting your Brother Rats, and that you will remain loyal to the men and women in your company and the entire Corps of Cadets, in general. With this commitment, comes great responsibility. A Rat at VMI has many responsibilities. A few of the most important Rat responsibilities include:

- living a life of honor and integrity; becoming a person of character.
- maintaining excellence in academics, physical fitness, and military aptitude.
- faithfully adhering to the Ratline and conforming to VMI's unique system of discipline.
- looking out for the welfare of your Brother Rats and helping those who struggle or fall behind.
- studying your Rat Bible and acquiring in-depth knowledge about VMI and its history and traditions.

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

- maintaining the highest degree of personal appearance and military bearing.
- respecting, supporting, and assisting your Dyke at all times.
- performing all duties that you will receive as a member of the Corps of Cadets to the best of your ability.

Apart from the VMI System, all cadets in NROTC are responsible for seeking out leadership responsibilities within the NROTC Midshipman Battalion and performing them to the best of their ability. Traditionally, Rats within the VMI Corps of Cadets are taught how to be good followers before they are taught how to lead others. NROTC, however, will provide you with several leadership opportunities during your first year at VMI. For example, NROTC will assign you small unit leadership roles, such as Fire Team Leader or Squad Leader within the Navy and Marine Corps companies of the NROTC Midshipman Battalion. A Fire Team Leader is responsible for the performance of three-to-five other midshipmen. At first, these responsibilities may seem small, but over time, your influence and responsibilities will become significant. In short, the commitment you learn and demonstrate in NROTC will be a stepping stone to greater responsibilities in the future within the Midshipman Battalion, as well as the VMI Corps of Cadets.

Devotion

No discussion about commitment would be complete without examining the meaning of devotion. Devotion means that you have “love, loyalty, or enthusiasm for a person, activity, or cause.” You demonstrate devotion through your actions, thoughts, and words. As a Rat, you will become very close to your classmates, or Brother Rats (BRs). As you

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

progress through the Ratline, the bond that you form with them will become stronger and more meaningful, and you will soon develop a strong sense of belonging to them—especially to the BRs in your company. Over time, you will find yourself becoming fully devoted to them and their success at VMI. This feeling of devotion reflects a special relationship that only VMI Cadets will understand.

In the years that follow, you will develop many friendships with BRs outside of your company’s inner circle. Before you know it, you will know everyone in your Class, and you will begin to develop a new, yet equally strong, sense of devotion to all of your BRs. You will want to be the very best that you can be, and do whatever it takes to not let them down. It is this devotion to your BRs that promotes mutual success and self-regulation within the Corps of Cadets. You will be hard-pressed to find this level of devotion and commitment to your classmates at any other higher learning institution in the country.

Dedication

Dedication is the willingness make sacrifices to reach a goal or objective. Dedication also entails putting forth maximum effort, which is an essential aspect of the entire VMI experience. At VMI, nothing is given freely. Succeeding at VMI and NROTC requires the right attitude, perseverance, and persistence.

Everything that is important and worthwhile at VMI will require time and effort. During your Rat year, for example, you will work hard to improve your physical fitness, learn your Rat Bible, master military drill, and improve your study habits. Your lessons will be quick and intense, and it

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

will be a constant battle to keep up with everything you are taught. From time-to-time, you will be tempted to relax your standards or take breaks in an effort to decompress from everything that is being thrown at you. This is when dedication matters the most. During these difficult times when you're tired, uncomfortable, and stressed, you must remember that you chose VMI and enrolled in the NROTC program for a reason. You must remind yourself that you are working towards a goal; every day that passes is one day closer to achieving it. In the end, you must dig deep, find the will to continue, and press on.

If you think that you can take the easy road at VMI, think again. You must accept the fact that you will need to make daily sacrifices to reach your goal. For example, if you need to raise your GPA in order to earn a NROTC scholarship, you might need to spend more time studying, less time with friends, get a few less hours of sleep each night, and take fewer weekends away from VMI. Dedication is a “never say die” attitude that enables you to persevere and persist when things get challenging. Dedication is that little voice inside that pushes you and prevents you from taking shortcuts. Dedication helps you keep your eye on the prize in pursuit of long-term dreams, rather than succumbing to short-term comforts or pleasures.

Attentiveness

Attentiveness is “the action of paying close attention” to things that are important, such as tasks, assignments, goals, or other people. Attentiveness is synonymous with being alert and acutely aware of your environment and/or the needs of others. Attention to detail is implied. For example, a cadet who is mindful of the smallest of details in a given task, and

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

diligent in doing them correctly, demonstrates attentiveness. Attentiveness positively impacts your military bearing and performance in the classroom. It shows you care. Cadets who are attentive to their studies and who ask questions, both in-and-out of class, perform better academically than those who do not. Asking your professor for clarification on an assignment will make a good impression; he/she will be inclined to help you even more. On a more personal level, a cadet leader who notices a subtle change in the behavior of one of his/her subordinates and takes positive steps to find out why also demonstrates attentiveness.

Attentiveness is more than just “sweating the small stuff.” It plays a part in the bigger picture, as well. No matter the task, it is important for you to strike the proper balance between accomplishing the overarching mission while remaining attentive to the finer points, as well. There is never enough time at VMI for you to complete every task to perfection. You cannot allow yourself to get bogged down with minutia and lose sight of the larger goal. That is another important lesson that will be taught to you at VMI. You have to do your best with the time that you are given to be meticulous while still accomplishing the greater objective. Tailor your time and energy accordingly. Learning to be attentive, maintaining the proper balance, and remaining focused on your goals can mean the difference between graduating on time and/or earning a commission or not.

Attentiveness demonstrates commitment. It is the act of paying close attention and diligently following through with your actions. Understanding the importance of attentiveness will help you as a leader—your subordinates will observe your actions and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you care

NSP-1 ----- Commitment

deeply about performing well, accomplishing the mission, and taking care of them as individuals.

As you prepare for matriculation, ask yourself this: Are you ready to learn how to follow wholeheartedly? Are you willing to give your very best effort and learn to lead others selflessly? If so, you must pay attention to all details, both big and small, because every single one is important. Attentiveness, along with responsibility, devotion, and dedication are traits of commitment that VMI Cadets learn and practice on a daily basis. They will help you overcome any challenge that comes your way and lead to success in every aspect of your life.



Chapter IV

Professionalism

“Professionalism is not a label you give yourself - it’s a description you hope others give to you.”

--David Maister

“The notion that I do my work here, now, like this, even when I do not feel like it, and especially when I do not feel like it, it is very important. Because lots and lots of people are creative when they feel like it, but you are only going to become a professional if you do it when you don’t feel like it. And that emotional waiver is why this is your work and not your hobby.”

--Seth Godin

Matriculation is the commencement of your VMI self-development journey. Throughout this journey, you will be tested and challenged in ways that will develop the skills that you will need to succeed and thrive at VMI. As a Rat, your initial development is focused on followership, or learning how to follow well. The training that you will receive in the Ratline is similar to Navy and Marine Corps recruit training in this regard. Recruits and Rats must both learn to follow instructions and to obey the orders that they receive instantly and willingly before more advanced training can be accomplished. Learning to follow is an important first step toward learning to lead. During your journey from followership to leadership—from Rat to upperclassman—you must adhere to the fundamentals of professional conduct. These fundamentals are outlined in the following pages.

General Expectations

Professional conduct requires that you present yourself in a manner that is fitting of a VMI Cadet and future Naval Officer. During the Ratline and throughout your VMI Cadetship, you must be polite, respectful, and display tact. You must maintain a polished appearance at all times. As a Rat, you must show your Cadre respect since they have dedicated themselves to the mission of training you well. You must respect the fact that your Cadre members are spending time both before and after your training sessions discussing ways that they can improve as instructors and teach you how to be a VMI Cadet.

The Ratline cannot be mastered alone. You and your BRs are in this together. In order to navigate the Ratline and master the VMI System, you will need to work together, help one another, and look out for each other's welfare. You must succeed together as you transition from a "mass" to a Class. Focus on teamwork and do not seek personal gain. It goes without saying that you should never undermine or betray your Brother Rats in an effort to personally succeed. Professional conduct means that you must resist the urge to gossip or slander your Brother Rats, as this is just about the lowest and most shameful thing that you can do to your classmates.

One piece of advice as you begin your journey through VMI: consider writing a personal mission statement with goals you want to achieve during your cadetship. This will give you something positive to refer to when things become difficult and will help you push through in the worst of times. It can get hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel, especially during the Ratline. However, armed with the

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

support of your Brother Rats and your own internal self-motivation, you will make it to the end.

Midshipmen Class System

NROTC maintains a unique Class System to differentiate between student freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The NROTC Class System and nomenclature is depicted below:

- Freshmen: 4th Class, or 4/C Midshipmen
- Sophomores: 3rd Class, or 3/C Midshipmen
- Juniors: 2nd Class, or 2/C Midshipmen
- Seniors: 1st Class, or 1/C Midshipmen

Cadet Class System

VMI maintains a unique Class System to differentiate between student freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The VMI Class System and nomenclature is depicted below:

- Freshmen prior to Breakout: Rats
- Freshmen following Breakout: 4th Class, or 4/C Cadet
- Sophomores: 3rd Class, or 3/C Cadet
- Juniors: 2nd Class, or 2/C Cadet
- Seniors: 1st Class, or 1/C Cadet

When you matriculate and first enter into the VMI System, you and your classmates will be referred to as the “Rat Mass of (1/C graduating year) + 3”. For example, if you matriculate during the academic year when the seniors will graduate in 2021, the incoming freshmen class would be referred to as the “Rat Mass of 2021+3.” The reason for this is rooted in VMI tradition. Your Rat Mass won’t be formally recognized as a Class by the rest of the Corps of Cadets until you and your Brother Rats “break out” of the Ratline and have proven yourselves worthy of the title, VMI Cadet.

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

The VMI Class System bestows more and more privileges to each Class with every passing academic year. These privileges are awarded on the basis of “time served” at The Institute. They are given sparingly and judiciously, and each Class jealously guards privileges that are theirs alone. Examples of some of these privileges include: the privilege to grow your hair as 4/C; the privilege to wear a bathrobe in barracks as a 3/C; the privilege to use your phone in the mess hall as a 2/C; and the privilege to keep a car on post as a 1/C.

Following Breakout, your newly formed Class will elect three of your Brother Rats to serve as your Class Historian, Vice President, and President. This is no small honor, for they will proudly represent your Class for the rest of your cadetship and beyond, as VMI Alumni. During your cadetship, it is their responsibility to uphold the VMI Class system and ensure that no members from other Classes are taking privileges that rightfully belong to you and your Brother Rats.



Cadet Rank System

The rank system for the VMI Corps of Cadets differs significantly from the professional military and Virginia Militia. For example, any 3/C cadet with rank is a corporal; any 2/C cadet with rank is a sergeant. 1/C cadets with rank are either lieutenants or captains. The basic insignias are:

- Corporal- Single brass chevron worn on Class Dyke collars, and a double chevron worn at the base of the sleeve on all other uniforms and the duty jacket.
- Sergeant- Double brass chevron worn on Class Dyke collars, and a double chevron worn at the top of the sleeve on all other uniforms and the duty jacket.
- Lieutenant- Triple brass chevron worn on Class Dyke collars, and a triple chevron worn at the top of the sleeve on all other uniforms and the duty jacket.
- Captain- Four-or-more brass chevrons worn on Class Dyke collars, and four-or-more chevrons worn at the top of the sleeve on all other uniforms and the duty jacket.

The Dyke System

Every Rat will be assigned a senior mentor, or Dyke. Your Dyke will explain the VMI System to you, watch over you, and help you succeed during your tumultuous first year at VMI. But this relationship is a privilege that you will have to earn. As a Rat, you will have to perform a number of chores for your Dyke, like rolling their “hay” (mattress), shining their brass, polishing their shoes, and cleaning their room. In return, your Dyke will provide you with some luxuries and a safe haven from the Ratline. For example, your Dyke may allow you to use their phone, or extend some of their privileges to you-privileges that you normally would not have until you were a 1st Classman yourself. More importantly, they will also teach you how to correctly answer Special Reports, give

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

you advice about classes and NROTC, and how to conduct yourself as a VMI Cadet, in general. Respecting your Dyke is a must. Not only have they successfully completed three years at VMI, but they have years of military training and/or experience away from the Institute that can benefit you greatly if you are willing to learn from them.

You must remember that your Dyke is also a VMI Cadet. He or she must deal with many of the same challenges that you do. And although they do not have to worry about the Ratline, they will have the pressures of advanced classes, senior research projects, graduating on time, and figuring out what they will do after VMI if they are not commissioning, just to name a few. Also, remember that your Dyke will sometimes make mistakes. Their only previous experience with the Dyke System was when they were a Rat themselves, so there is a learning curve on their part, too. Be respectful and professional to your Dyke even when they mess up, knowing that they are trying their best to help you. In spite of any mistakes they may make, they are doing their best to establish a bond with you that will last long after VMI.



Academic Classes

Never forget that you are a student at VMI. As a student, you must perform in the classroom. Cadets who are unable or unwilling to dedicate themselves to the task of learning and earning passing grades will not make it through the VMI System. It is a harsh reality that many of your Brother Rats will be forced to leave VMI because of poor grades.

Attending classes is one of your many duties as a VMI Cadet. VMI maintains a very strict attendance policy for all cadets and if you miss class, you will get “boned”, or placed on report. This will likely result in punishment. In class, you are expected to act in a professional manner and give your professors your undivided attention to honor them and the time they put into preparing the lessons. You will develop an amazing relationship with your professors in large part because of the mutual respect that you show them by taking the time that they give you seriously.

You may have friends at other colleges who have difficulty waking up for their morning classes or who sleep through lectures. But that is not the life you chose. You chose to be a cadet at VMI. You are expected to honor your duties and obligations, and respect your professors at all times, but especially in the classroom. Shirking these duties or missing classes may be tolerated elsewhere, but here (or in any other work environment outside of college), this behavior would be considered unprofessional.

Physical Fitness

All VMI Cadets are expected to be physically fit. Apart from the obvious health benefits, good physical fitness is a reflection of professionalism and leadership potential. Good

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

physical fitness can improve your standing within NROTC and even help you get a NROTC scholarship. Physical fitness is also a requirement for all Rats and any upperclassman who wants to hold rank within the VMI Corps of Cadets. Regardless of the motivation, leaders should maintain their physical fitness at a high level to set a good example for their peers and subordinates to emulate.

All cadets must be able to pass the physical fitness test for VMI, as well as the physical fitness test for their particular NROTC Naval Service. VMI's physical fitness test is known as the VMI Fitness Test, or VFT. The physical fitness test for the Navy is the Physical Readiness Test (PRT). The Marine Corps has two tests for physical fitness: the Combat Fitness Test (CFT) and the Physical Fitness Test (PFT). Anyone aspiring to be a VMI Cadet and an officer in the Naval Service should familiarize themselves with these tests and condition themselves prior to matriculation. If you want additional details about these tests, refer to Chapter XI.

In our eyes, outstanding physical fitness is indicative of professionalism, and poor physical fitness is a sign of unprofessionalism. In many cases, a poor score on a physical fitness test is a tangible measurement of someone who is unwilling to better themselves. A cadet such as this has limited leadership potential.

Classroom Etiquette

Regardless of their rank, Rats shall address all upperclassmen as "Sir" or "Ma'am". Although you are required to extend this greeting (and many other professional courtesies) to upperclassmen, it is their obligation to act professionally towards you, as well. This is especially true in

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

the classroom, where all cadets are considered equal, each striving to become better leaders. You are in class to learn and the VMI Class System and Rank System are temporarily placed on hold. Even so, upperclassmen will avoid fraternization with Rats and will not interact with you unless they absolutely have to. This serves to maintain the professional relationship between the upperclassman serving as the mentor, and the Rat serving as the mentee. Honoring the VMI Class System, respecting privileges, and rendering the proper courtesies to all upperclassmen and cadets in leadership positions are all signs of professionalism.

Faculty Etiquette

When you encounter an officer in the military, you will render a salute and the greeting of the day as a sign of respect. This includes all officers in the Virginia Militia, such as your professors. You do not salute enlisted military personnel, but it is still appropriate to render them the greeting of the day. A general rule of thumb for saluting: if you see a rank with chevrons, do not salute; if you see silver or gold on the rank and no chevrons, then you salute. You should become familiar with military ranks prior to matriculation.

You must address every VMI faculty member that you encounter by their proper military rank. For example, in class you will refer to your professors as “Sir” or “Ma’am” and/or by the rank they wear on their uniform (ex. Colonel Smith, Major Brown, etc). For members of the Virginia Militia, rank signifies the length of time that they have served the Institute as a professor and whether or not they hold tenure. Although you will undoubtedly develop a strong working relationship with your professors and your academic advisor, it is

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

important that you maintain the proper etiquette throughout your cadetship. Anything less would be unprofessional.

Email Etiquette

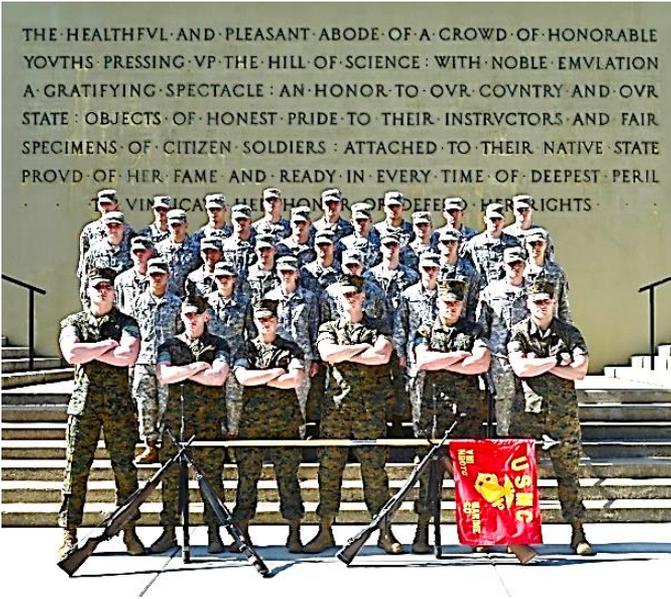
Email etiquette consists of beginning all emails with the greeting of the day, followed by the recipient's rank and title, such as, "Good morning Corporal Jones," or "Good evening COL Smith". Until you become familiar with the person you are emailing, you should compose your message in a formal or neutral tone. Be sure to thank the recipient for their time, understanding, etc. Finally, close your email with "Very respectfully" or "Respectfully sent" or the like, and then include your rank (Rat), first name, last name, and/or initials. For example, "Rat Doe, Jane A."

As a Rat, email will become your lifeline and only consistent form of external communication. When emailing your VMI professors, upperclassmen, or other senior officials, being professional in the way you get your point across becomes a crucial skill. Be especially careful about what you say and how you say it because once you hit send, you can't get it back and your email can be shared by the recipient with anyone.

When emailing, it is important to remember that people are not interested in a lot of extra fluff. When you write an email, be as direct and clear as possible while still being respectful. The recipient will appreciate it if you don't waste their time with a paragraph of what could have been said in one sentence. Learning how to communicate efficiently in emails will not only serve you well during your VMI Cadetship, but also later in life as a professional Naval Officer.

NSP-1 ----- Professionalism

Finally, when responding to any email, be careful not to “reply all” in a message meant for only one person. In those instances, you should respond simply by selecting “reply”. Double checking “reply” vs. “reply all” before you hit send will prevent others on the email chain from reading a private conversation and help you avoid a potentially embarrassing situation.



NSP-1



Chapter V

Leadership

“Leadership is the sum of those qualities of intellect, human understanding, and moral character that enables a person to inspire and control a group of people successfully.”

--General John A. Lejeune

“Soldiers watch what their leaders do. You can give them classes and lecture them forever, but it is your personal example they will follow.”

--General Colin Powell

Leadership in its most basic form involves helping a group of people achieve a common goal. As a student of leadership, you are encouraged to observe successful leaders at VMI, learn from them, and to continue developing and refining your own personal leadership style. While there is no one universally applicable leadership model, there are several traits and behaviors that contribute to sound leadership. In fact, the Marine Corps recognizes several leadership principles that form a solid foundation for leadership. We have taken a few editorial liberties with these Marine Corps principles in the following pages to better reflect the VMI experience. Examples of these principles are also provided to demonstrate their practical application for VMI and the NROTC program.

Know Yourself and Seek Self-improvement

VMI will provide you with many opportunities to lead. However, it is often up to you whether or not you take advantage of these opportunities when they arise. VMI is a

leadership laboratory—a controlled environment where you are free to make mistakes, examine why you failed, and then fix the issues without any serious consequences. While it is okay to make leadership mistakes at VMI, life after VMI will not be as forgiving. The hard truth is you simply cannot afford to make serious leadership mistakes as a professional Naval Officer. Therefore, it is in your best interest to seize as many leadership opportunities that you can and hone your leadership skills while you are still at VMI. You will further build your foundation and discover your leadership style as a member of the NROTC Midshipman Battalion.

Before you can know who you are as a leader, you must first know who you are as a person. Begin by asking yourself a few fundamental questions: What is important to me? What do I believe (in)? Do I follow a moral code? What is my ethos? What am I willing to tolerate? Each of these questions must be answered as you build your own personal leadership profile. If you know where you stand and what you believe in, then it will be easier to identify (and build upon) a particular leadership style that suits you.

During the course of your VMI Cadetship, you are going to experience a lot of different leaders and leadership styles. You will be led by great leaders. Take note and learn from them, incorporating what they do well to fit your own personal style. Alternatively, you will also be led by some poor leaders. This is not necessarily a bad thing, for you will learn what not to do. Borrowing leadership techniques and styles from others and molding them into your own profile is a skill that is difficult to incorporate at first, but it will become second nature to you during your VMI journey.

You must constantly seek self-improvement. This occurs when you apply a particular leadership skill or trait in a leadership situation, and then do a self-assessment. Ask yourself: What worked? What didn't? What could I have done better? What do I need to do to prepare for the next opportunity? Remember—it is okay to fail and make mistakes. What isn't okay is not learning from the experience.

By asking yourself these basic questions, you will begin to analyze your personal leadership style. Armed with this analysis, you can start implementing changes during your next leadership opportunity. It may also be a good idea to ask others what you can do to improve as a leader. If you ask for constructive criticism, be sure not to take it too personally. If it's valid, take note and fix it. If it isn't valid, move on. Remember: This refinement process is never done. You are never done growing or improving upon your leadership style. By keeping this positive attitude, your leadership skills will get stronger with time.

Be Technically and Tactically Proficient

As a NROTC Midshipman, technical and tactical proficiency will enable you to provide sound leadership to your fellow midshipmen. As a leader, you must seek the knowledge and skills that will enable you to set a positive example for those around you. Midshipmen who fail to dedicate themselves to learning as much as they possibly can about their Naval Service will lack overall proficiency and professional competence. A lack of knowledge will cause a midshipman to quickly lose credibility. Ultimately, a lack of knowledge limits a midshipman's ability to lead, advise, and positively influence others.

The importance of technical and tactical proficiency is illustrated in the following example:

As a VMI student athlete, I am not always present during NROTC events. However, I continue to make my presence felt by staying up-to-date on developments in the unit and the other midshipmen. During Saturday NROTC control times, for example, I take pride in my knowledge and ability to take charge of any given SULE station or other OCS prep activity. By continually demonstrating my knowledge and military competence to my peers and the younger midshipmen, I am able to serve as an effective leader and mentor in the unit.

Know Your Fellow Midshipmen and Look Out for their Welfare

Leadership requires constant effort towards ensuring troop welfare. Ensuring the welfare of subordinates dramatically increases mission readiness and the chances of success. Just as an individual must take inventory of his/her own equipment, a strong leader must take inventory of the people in the unit. A leader who chalks his/her unit's shortcomings up to the incompetence of the people in it without a deeper examination of the causes is failing the organization. Why are the troops missing the mark? Could there be trouble at home? Are they injured? A good leader should make it a habit to regularly check up on their people on a deeper level than a casual "how's it going?" In short, leaders must care deeply about their subordinates because their well-being, and in some cases their lives, are in their hands.

The importance of knowing your fellow midshipmen and looking out for their welfare is illustrated in the following example:

As the president of a cadet-led organization, I got the opportunity to practice peer leadership at VMI over the course of the year. During a few briefs, meetings, and after-action reports (AARs), I began to notice that one of my BRs was often showing up late, leaving early, and looking very distant. Rather than confront him about it in front of everyone, I went by his room later that night to ask how he was doing. He is a very tough guy and said that he was fine, so I continued to hang out and talk a little more. As he began to open up, I found out that he was going through a very rough time at home. He apologized for being removed from his duties and we decided that he should take it easy the next couple of weeks. This gave him the opportunity to get his personal life together without our busy schedule weighing him down. When he got back in the fight, he was the same consummate professional that he was before, and in a much better frame of mind. This goes to show that troop welfare and mission accomplishment go hand-in-hand.

Keep Your fellow Midshipmen Informed

Keeping your fellow midshipmen informed means exactly that! Leaders must communicate effectively with each other and their subordinates. As simple as it may seem, good communication is often a neglected leadership principle, especially at VMI. The life of a VMI Cadet can be very busy as you try to balance every aspect of your cadetship- from academics, to extracurricular activities, to NROTC obligations, etc. Important things can easily get thrown on the back burner, and all too often good communication is one of them. As a cadet, you may find yourself with competing priorities, where time becomes scarce and you simply get carried away with everything that's vying for your attention. A breakdown in communication with your Brother Rats and fellow Midshipmen can negatively affect everyone around you and result in an undesired outcome to your training.

NSP-1 ----- Leadership

Be proactive and persistent about communication. With your busy cadet lifestyle, you will experience times when multiple things are going on and you may forget about something. So, when you are in a leadership position with the responsibility of communicating with others, be proactive and send your message sooner rather than later. Make it a constant habit to take care of things as they come up and fight the urge to say “I will do it later”. That “later” is an ever-present trap. Remember: mission accomplishment dies in the realm of “later”. Being persistent also applies in this case because even if you communicate a message immediately, it doesn’t mean that everyone else will, too. You may have to remind subordinates and others around you to stay focused on a certain deadline. This will maintain a sense of accountability between your peers and others in your chain of command.

In a rapidly changing world like VMI, you must stay up to date with current events. To accomplish this, you should establish a routine and standard platform of communication (email, text, etc.) between everyone in the unit. While you are here at VMI, you will be given a vmi.edu email address, and it will be your responsibility to ensure that you have read—and responded to—all communications. Establishing group chats is another tool to communicate effectively. Using your phone to pass on information not only makes it easier for you to communicate with your unit, but it will allow you to reach everyone quickly at a place you know they look at regularly.

Set the Example

VMI is built on the ideals of sound leadership. Setting the example is arguably the most important aspect of leadership at VMI. You can be a leader in your Cadre role, as part of a cadet government organization, as an athlete on a

NSP-1 ----- Leadership

sports team or club, or even something as simple as being a Dyke during your 1st Class year. In the years to come, it doesn't make a difference if you are in a department on a warship, a platoon of Marines, or even a squad of VMI Cadets, being a leader means that you will have men and women that follow you and depend upon you. Your subordinates will look up to you as not only their leader, but as the real-life example of what they should strive to be. They will observe the way you present yourself, the way you talk, and most importantly how you act. Exemplary leaders are physically fit, properly groomed and dressed, and competent in their abilities. These men and women display an infectious positive attitude and can be counted on to continually show their subordinates that they will give 100% to accomplish the mission at hand.



In the very near future, the legacy and future success of VMI will be in your hands. You will be tasked with training and molding the next generation of Rats until they are worthy of the title, VMI Cadet. These young men and women will look to you to see how they should behave and who they should strive to become. As a future leader, you must do your

very best to set a high standard not just for the Rats, but also for yourself and VMI. Ultimately, you will be responsible for teaching them the skills and the lessons they will need to succeed at VMI and in the years to come.

This process does not occur overnight. Rather, it occurs through practice and consistent repetition. Like all things at VMI, sometimes you will fail. But in the end, if you set a good example, teach them how to behave, and develop in them the skills they need to thrive, it will be a testament not only to their resilience, but also your hard work and dedication.

Ensure the Task is Understood, Supervised, and Accomplished

When assigning tasks to subordinates, leaders must ensure that their orders are clearly understood by all. Tasks should address: who, what, when, where, and why. Oftentimes, the issue of “how” can be addressed by the leader through general guidance. As a rule of thumb, leaders should consider giving subordinates the liberty to determine how a task should be accomplished, as this will empower your subordinates and ensure their buy-in and active participation. Leaders who insist on telling subordinates exactly how a task is to be executed risk falling into the trap of micromanagement. Micromanagement by leaders stifles initiative in subordinates, and teamwork suffers as a result.

Once a task has been communicated, leaders should provide their subordinates with the opportunity to ask questions. Soliciting questions at the onset increases understanding among your subordinates and has the additional benefits of further refining the task and identifying potential issues before action is taken. These techniques will ensure that

NSP-1 ----- Leadership

there is no doubt about what is expected by the leader and increase the likelihood of success.

Once a task has been assigned, leaders must supervise its execution. Supervision differs from micromanagement in that the leader maintains a degree of separation from those who are performing the task. In order to supervise effectively, leaders must make themselves available to their subordinates during execution to motivate them, answer any questions they may have, or to give additional guidance, as needed. More than anything else, leaders must resist the urge to insert themselves into every aspect of the task. Supervision ensures that a leader remains engaged during execution and further reinforces a feeling of teamwork among every member of the unit. More importantly, supervision ensures that a task proceeds on track and is successfully accomplished in a manner that is consistent with the leader's intent.

Finally, leaders should consider meeting with subordinates to conduct a debrief once a task has been completed. Tools like After Action Reports (AARs) can be an effective way for leaders to debrief their subordinates, assess their performance, evaluate what went right and what went wrong during execution, and to discuss how the unit might improve in the future. Effective debriefs foster teamwork, increase unit confidence and effectiveness, and prevent the same mistakes from being repeated in the future.

Train your Fellow Midshipmen as a Team

Learning the value of teamwork is one of the greatest benefits of the VMI System. From the very first day of the Ratline until the last moments before graduation, VMI men and women are subjected to a unique form of discipline and

NSP-1 ----- Leadership

instruction that are designed to lessen the individual and increase the importance of the group. As a cadet and a midshipman, you will learn to work with your Brother Rats and fellow students to accomplish things as a team that you would never be able to achieve by acting alone. Moreover, teamwork allows for the meshing of many different perspectives and ideas, and learning how to listen to other points of view is a critical leadership skill. Other advantages include learning how to leverage other people's talents and abilities to overcome your own personal weaknesses to accomplish a challenging task. When times get tough—and you will experience tough times during your VMI Cadetship—having a team in your corner will help you endure and weather the storm. As the old adage goes, “A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

As a cadet and midshipman, there will be many times when you will either be part of a team or leading one. As the leader, you must understand that strength does not come with numbers alone, but only when the numbers are collectively working together to achieve a common goal or purpose. That's the goal of teamwork.

The importance of teamwork is illustrated in the following example:

In my time as a VMI Cadet and a NROTC Midshipman, I experienced the importance of teamwork firsthand. On one occasion, I was the midshipman in charge of implementing the NROTC Plan of the Day and collecting the fitness reports of my fellow midshipmen. My Platoon Leaders were required to work with the members of their platoons in order to submit their reports before the deadline. As the deadline arrived, one thing

NSP-1 ----- Leadership

became evident: the platoons that worked together as a single unit were able to submit their fitness reports on time. But the platoons that did not work together as a team failed to meet the mandatory deadline which slowed down the entire NROTC department. The lesson is clear: effective teamwork always outperforms individual effort and contributes to greater mission accomplishment.

No matter what you do as a leader, whether you are in charge of leading a platoon of Marines into battle or managing a group of civilian coworkers, teamwork is essential to success. Ultimately, it is the leader's responsibility to teach and train his/her subordinates to work together as a team.



Make Sound and Timely Decisions

One of the most important leadership skills is the ability to make sound and timely decisions. As a VMI Cadet, you will be given many leadership opportunities to practice and hone this skill. In the military, sound decision making is critical to unit efficiency and safety. During peacetime operations, making a poorly informed decision or waiting too long to make a decision will lead to poor unit performance, a rapid decline in morale, and could even affect the welfare and safety of the men and women under your supervision. In combat, bad decision-making skills by the leader could spell disaster for the unit and easily be the difference between life and death for you and your troops.

The importance of making sound and timely decisions is illustrated in the following example:

I was fortunate to have a few large leadership roles during my four years at VMI. One of my roles allowed me to conduct and supervise the training of New Cadets, or Rats. Their well-being was in my hands every day, and I knew that I needed to constantly evaluate the current situation and make good decisions in order to keep the cadets under my authority safe and healthy so that they could continue to train.

Another role allowed me to oversee high-level disciplinary hearings of my fellow cadets. It was my responsibility to establish and maintain fair and just hearings for all parties involved. I knew that the decisions I made were final, and that one wrong decision by me could have resulted in serious repercussions for the cadets and VMI as an institution.

As a future leader, if decision-making is a weakness for you, then that is the area that you must work on the most. VMI and NROTC gave me the chance to strengthen my skills in this area and they will provide you with plenty of opportunities to turn your weaknesses into strengths, as well. VMI and NROTC will prepare you for the rigors of your future life as a military officer and a leader.

Develop a Sense of Responsibility among your Subordinates

Developing a sense of responsibility among your subordinates is important for three reasons. First, it promotes individual growth; second, it helps produce the next generation of leaders; and third, it frees you up as a leader to focus on bigger, more pressing issues. As a leader, you can't hold your subordinates' hands all the time, nor should you want to. Even if you did, you won't always be present to tell them what to do or to correct them. Keeping responsibility for yourself, or keeping it from your subordinates will stunt their development. Unless they are given responsibility and the chance to shoulder it for themselves, they will never be able to operate effectively as future leaders, themselves. It's important to remember that responsibility is nothing without accountability. Once leaders assign responsibility, they must hold subordinates accountable for how well they handle it. Finally, leaders who learn to assign responsibilities to their subordinates are free to tackle other essential tasks like long-term planning, liaising with other organizations, and analyzing commander's intent.

The importance of developing a sense of responsibility among subordinates is illustrated in the following example:

As an Old Corps Platoon Lieutenant in the VMI Regimental System, I knew I couldn't (and shouldn't) inspect everyone else in the platoon by myself. Instead, I delegated this responsibility to my corporals and sergeants. As their leader, I helped develop them as future leaders by scrutinizing their appearance, observing them execute, and counseling them on their performance following each inspection. Assigning responsibility to my subordinates and holding them accountable for their actions helped improve the leadership, personal appearance, and performance of every cadet in my

platoon. As my platoon improved, the need for inspections decreased.

Employ your Unit in Accordance with its Capabilities

There is no substitute for sound training to increase the capabilities of any military organization. Leaders must train the individuals in their unit in order to increase their personal strengths and improve upon their weaknesses. Leaders should then leverage the collective strength of each individual to improve the overall capabilities of the unit. It will be the leader's responsibility to employ his/her unit in a manner that capitalizes on the unique capabilities of its individual members to accomplish the mission.

The importance of employing your unit in accordance with its capabilities is illustrated in the following example:

Every VMI NCAA athlete possesses outstanding skills and abilities. It is the responsibility of the coaches to increase and improve the skills and abilities of every athlete through rigorous training and practice. But because every athlete has unique gifts and talents, it is the responsibility of the coaches to match the athlete to a particular position. To use a football analogy, some athletes are tall and have outstanding speed and agility; they are well-suited for playing the position of receiver. Some athletes are extremely strong and powerful; they are well-suited for playing the position of lineman. Still other athletes are gifted with agility, poise and leadership; they are well-suited for playing the position of quarterback. Once the athletes have been assigned to their positions, the coaches must train the athletes to play the positions to the best of their ability and to work together with their fellow athletes as a team. The better the training, the better the teamwork. This synergy will give the team increased power, quickness, and determination

when/where it is needed most during the game. The better the teamwork, the better the chances for victory.

Seek Responsibility and Take Responsibility for your Actions

Responsibility, as it pertains to leadership and leaders, means much more than simply being a responsible person. A leader at VMI and in the military is responsible for all his/her unit does or fails to do. This form of responsibility includes—but is not limited to—the proper inventory, maintenance, and security of every weapon and piece of equipment, as well as the accountability, performance, and well-being of every member of the unit, to include him/herself. At VMI and in NROTC, you will hear cadets and midshipmen refer to this type of responsibility as taking ownership of a group or unit. Taking ownership as a leader is difficult to master and it takes time and effort to achieve. But a leader who truly takes ownership realizes and accepts the fact that he/she (and no one else) is responsible and accountable for the unit’s successes and failures.

There are many cadets at VMI with the talent to lead, but most are unwilling to accept this level of responsibility. However, there are a few cadets who embrace the responsibility that comes with leadership. They are a rare breed. They seek increased responsibility at VMI and in NROTC because they know it will help them become stronger and more capable leaders after they graduate.

On an individual level, every cadet needs to learn how to take responsibility for their own actions. This is especially important when they make mistakes. Rather than shift blame or point fingers at others, VMI Cadets are expected to “own”

their own failures. This is harder for some more than others, especially when the punishment (or the threat of punishment) is involved, but learning to accept responsibility for your actions and holding yourself accountable for your failures are essential to your growth as a leader and a person of integrity.

The importance of seeking responsibility and taking responsibility for your actions is illustrated in the following example:

I have had many opportunities during my time at VMI to learn about ownership and taking responsibility as a leader. The first time that my responsibility was tested took place during my Second-Class year when I was Bravo Company's First Sergeant. As First Sergeant, I was directly responsible for five corporals on our Cadre team who helped train the newly matriculated Rats.

Early in the year, a couple of these corporals made a mistake and did something they were not supposed to do while carrying out a task that I had trained them to perform. I did not see them make the mistake and I was not present when it happened, but as their First Sergeant, I knew that I was ultimately responsible. Although the mistake was minor, our company Tactical Officer decided to punish the corporals by removing them from our training plan. It wasn't long before the performance of our team started to suffer- the Rats were not performing as well as they did before, and I realized that the fault was mine.

I decided to talk to our company Tactical Officer and explain to him that the corporals' mistake was my fault, and not theirs. I told him that I didn't train them as well as I should have and that I would make sure that the mistake never happened again. I asked him to reduce their punishment. After I took ownership of the situation and accepted responsibility for my corporals' mistake, the Tactical Officer responded by dropping the punishment on the spot.

Chapter VI

Morals and Ethics

“War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling that thinks nothing is worth war is much worse. A man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight; nothing he cares more about than his own personal safety; is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free.”

--John Stuart Mill

“Ethics, too, are nothing but reverence for life. This is what gives me the fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, promoting, and enhancing life, and that destroying, injuring, and limiting life are evil.”

--Albert Schweitzer

It is often challenging to distinguish the difference between morals and ethics. Morals and ethics may overlap in certain situations, but that does not mean the two are the same. The distinction between morals and ethics is often blurred, but important when justifying your actions. The key difference lies in who determines whether or not an action or decision is acceptable.

Generally speaking, morals are decided by the individual. For example, if you personally feel that executing a lawful order is unjust, that is a moral dilemma for *you*. Ethics, on the other hand, are determined by a society or a group of people. For example, the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) governs what is/is not acceptable conduct by all service members in times of war. Guidelines within the LOAC

NSP-1 ----- Morals and Ethics

ensure that all warfighters behave in ways that are deemed to be ethical *by the international community*.

Morals

Morals are a personal directive of what is right or wrong. Morals are unique to each individual; no two people's morals are exactly the same. Morals influence how different people see themselves and the world around them. Morals play an important part role in leadership environments like VMI, the military, and the civilian workplace. They influence every human interaction, and decision. The influence of morals is evident in justice, especially when it comes to determining appropriate punishments and rewards.

To better define morals, you must take a closer look at many of their origins. Moral convictions may be based upon a person's education, religion, personal beliefs, and upbringing. Morals can be deeply rooted in one's own personal experiences and in the way they were raised. Two people with different backgrounds are sure to have differences in morals, as well. Likewise, when you look at morals based upon religion, Christianity has a different set of moral beliefs than Hinduism and Islam. It's also important to note that there are moral differences between different Christian denominations.

Morals at VMI

In addition to the morals of each individual cadet, VMI has its own unique set of morals that guide cadets to a life of honor and integrity. The VMI Honor Code and the Class System are the essence of this moral foundation. The Honor Court and the General Committee ensure that the morals of VMI are instilled into the minds of each and every cadet, in

NSP-1 ----- Morals and Ethics

addition to the morals that they reserve for themselves. This combination of personal and institutional morals establishes an extremely high moral standard for every VMI Cadet. Over time, this moral standard becomes a way of life. It is ingrained so effectively and completely that it often remains long after graduation. Most alumni strive to maintain this high moral standard for the rest of their lives.

Morals as a Midshipman

Most midshipmen are not going to experience moral dilemmas at VMI that would compare to what they will encounter as a commissioned officer in the Fleet. However, you should spend time as a midshipman reflecting upon your own personal morals and those you learn at VMI in an attempt to better prepare you for your future career as a Naval Officer. You must seek to understand your own moral limits and where you are willing to draw the line between right and wrong. NROTC Naval Science classes will help you in this effort. You will be exposed to a wide variety of moral dilemmas that are directly based off of the real-life experiences of Navy and Marine Corps Officers. You will be asked what YOU would do as a leader in these scenarios. Your answers to these lessons will help spur your moral growth and prepare you for the leadership challenges that you will soon face.

One of the most common tests of your moral growth as a leader will be how you treat your subordinates on a daily basis. The NROTC Midshipman Battalion will expose you to many different leaders and leadership styles in a myriad of different military situations. Every leader will have a unique way of leading subordinates. Their leadership styles are often a reflection of their personalities and morals. Some will lead effectively, others will struggle. As you interact with your

NSP-1 ----- Morals and Ethics

peers and the Midshipmen from other Classes, you will gain a new appreciation for the best leaders that you've had. Hopefully, you will emulate them and adapt their unique leadership styles and morals to match your own. By the time you commission, you will be able to lead subordinates effectively and morally; placing performance over popularity.

Another effective way for leaders to morally prepare themselves for the Naval Service is to study military history and religious scripture. Both sources contain countless lessons in leadership and morality that can help you overcome moral dilemmas when your time comes. Finally, VMI offers many classes in liberal arts that may be helpful to you as you seek to shape your own personal morals based upon the actions and thoughts of important historical figures.



Morals in the Fleet

As an officer in the Naval Service, you will need a strong moral foundation in order to perform your job

NSP-1 ----- Morals and Ethics

effectively. Before you give any order, you must be sure that it is aligned with your moral compass. The killing power of modern weapons is great. So too is the moral responsibility that you will have to ensure that they are used in ways that are consistent with the LOAC. In today's world of real-time information sharing, bad news travels fast. An immoral officer has the capability to cause death and destruction, sacrifice the mission, and inflict civilian, military and political harm of strategic proportions.

One such officer was U.S. Army Lieutenant William Calley who ordered his men to open fire on innocent civilians in the village of My Lai, South Vietnam on 16 March 1968. More than 500 people were slaughtered, including young girls and women who had been raped by the men of Charlie Company prior to their execution. Once news of the "My Lai Massacre" broke, the American people were shocked and outraged by the soldiers' immoral behavior. The senseless murder by Calley and his men humiliated the United States on the world stage and turned American public opinion against the war in Vietnam.

As an officer in the Naval Service, you also have a moral responsibility to look out for the welfare of your Sailors or Marines. This responsibility includes ensuring that they are properly trained and equipped to accomplish whatever mission they are given. Just as important, you will be responsible for ensuring that they receive the help and support they need with a host of personal problems, like financial issues, marital issues, health issues, run-ins with the law, etc. Some of these hardships will be entirely the fault of your subordinates. But before you take action, you must remember that you have a moral obligation as an officer to serve your

NSP-1 ----- Morals and Ethics

Sailors and Marines, even when you disagree with some of their personal choices.

Additionally, a strong moral foundation will be required when it comes time to counsel your subordinates. You must also be able to deal with situations where your moral values may not always align perfectly with what the Naval Service defines as ethical. Marines or Sailors may conduct themselves in ways that you may find to be immoral. Regardless, you must be able to help them determine right from wrong for themselves. Your moral compass will ensure that you make good decisions and demonstrate empathy when your subordinates need you the most. Immoral leaders, on the other hand, struggle to give sound advice. Even worse, they may become apathetic to the needs of the very Sailors or Marines they are responsible for.

Finally, it doesn't matter if you are leading a platoon of Marines or serving in a warship's Combat Information Center (CIC), there may be times when you are given an order that is legal but conflicts with your personal moral code. As an officer, you must be able to face this moral dilemma and make difficult choices about what actions to take. Sometimes, you may choose to set aside your personal beliefs and execute the order. If your moral code dictates that you cannot follow the order that you are given, you must find a way to remove yourself from the situation. This may require you to offer your resignation or request a reassignment. Whatever your decision, you must be able to justify it on moral grounds. You must have the moral courage to stand firm and do what you feel is right and be prepared to face the consequences.

Ethics

Ethics are a set of standards and beliefs that are instilled by a group or society. Ethics are based upon what they collectively determine to be right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Warriors and businesses often have ethical codes or standards. These codes vary from group to group, but they all aim to establish ethical guidelines to govern its members on how to conduct themselves while representing their organization. Most ethical codes stress virtues such as honesty, integrity, fairness, and respect.

Ethics are driven by moral principles. The more you study the subject of ethics, the more you realize how complex it is. Right and wrong are not always easy to determine in a given situation. Phenomena such as stress, time, emotions, and personal beliefs all play a pivotal role in the decision-making process. Luckily, the individual with a firm understanding of their own moral beliefs can work through these factors easier than someone without. They are better equipped to determine the boundaries of ethical behavior no matter the circumstances.

Ethics at VMI

As a New Cadet at VMI, you find yourself in a unique situation in terms of ethics. The boundaries of ethical behavior are better-defined here than at any other college and university setting. By your matriculation, you have agreed to follow the nation's most explicitly stated, well-enforced Honor Code. "A Cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do," is as black and white as it can get. You will live the next four years of your life following this simple, but demanding code of ethical behavior. Although challenging, the Honor Code

NSP-1 ----- **Morals and Ethics**

should not scare or intimidate you. Rather, you should respect the Honor Code and be thankful for its unambiguous nature.

By coming to VMI, you have provided yourself with the opportunity to be transformed by a tried and true ethical standard. Though only one sentence, the Honor Code encompasses a system of beliefs that truly sets a cadet up for success in every facet of life and future occupation, whether that be in the Department of the Navy or the private sector. With the Honor Code serving as the foundation, you will adopt an ethical belief system that will help you navigate the various ethical dilemmas that you will face throughout your life.

The ethical problems that you will face in life are complex; solutions are difficult to see from the outset. But you will find that the Honor Code is particularly beneficial because it teaches cadets what they *cannot* do or *cannot* accept as a right/good solution. By eliminating certain choices or actions from the realm of possibilities, your field of possible solutions or choices become clearer. When a situation is evident, the path to the right choice becomes easier to navigate.

You are likely to be placed in a number of tough situations over the course of the next four years. Some situations may even be deemed ethical dilemmas. By standing firm on the foundational ethical principles that you have adopted from the Honor Code, you will be better suited than the vast majority of your peers to withstand the trials of such dilemmas. Adapting to, and embracing the VMI System is a sure step towards establishing a sound ethical foundation that will allow you to think clearly and act appropriately when you are placed in an ethically demanding situation.

Ethics as a Midshipman

Midshipman also require a strong ethical framework to base decisions on. In addition to the VMI System, you will adopt the ethical standards of an officer in the Naval Service. These are evident in the Navy and Marine Corps Core Values of honor, courage, and commitment. Leadership traits and principles of the Naval Service will enhance your character, add strength to your ethical foundation, and better prepare you for the challenges of being a Naval Officer. Like VMI, military service requires you to adopt a demanding new standard of ethical behavior. Keep in mind that the military is often referred to as a “society within a society.” The society that is the Navy and Marine Corps will be very clear about what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior by members of the officer corps.

You likely already possess a personal standard of ethics. These were probably shaped by your VMI experience, as well as the society of your family members and friends from home. Your home town/city and geographical setting where you were raised may also be a significant influence. Regardless, as a midshipman you must evaluate the ethics that you learned from sources outside of the military to determine which ones are compatible with the Naval Service. Those that are incompatible with the “warrior’s code” of a Naval Officer must be discarded.

Ethics in the Fleet

As an officer in either the Navy or Marine Corps, you will be confronted with many ethical dilemmas. Make the wrong (unethical) decision and you could find yourself relieved of command, reduced in rank, or punished in accordance with the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. At

NSP-1 ----- Morals and Ethics

the very least, you'll probably regret it for the rest of your life. Although it might seem harsh, this is the reality of life in the military. It is of the utmost importance that you continually ask yourself the question: Is this ethical?

One of the biggest problems associated with ethical dilemmas is that in the heat of the moment, you may be faced with a situation in which all viable options seem unethical. Sometimes, there will be no easy answer to a pressing problem and every choice you make will result in some degree of pain or loss. It may seem difficult to fathom now, but one day you may be faced with an ethical dilemma where lives are on the line and your mistakes are paid for in blood.

Religion may be helpful when faced with ethical dilemmas. Scripture can provide comfort and guidance to you when easy answers are hard to come by. A word of caution: You should avoid basing your decisions solely upon your religious convictions. Instead, you must find common ground between the ethics found in religion and the secular ethics of the Naval Service. If you find that your religious beliefs come into direct conflict with military orders and no compromise can be found, you should seek religious counseling or speak directly to your Commanding Officer to determine the next course of action.

Four “Right vs. Right” Ethical Dilemmas

There are four common “right versus right” ethical dilemmas:

- Truth vs. Loyalty pits one's honesty and integrity against their commitment to those around them and promises they have made to various people;

NSP-1 ----- **Morals and Ethics**

- Individual vs. Community refers to the benefits or consequences a decision will have on those intimately involved against the benefits or consequences that will be experienced by the larger organization;
- Short-term vs. Long-term looks at the timeframe that will be impacted by the choice at hand and the value of said impact; and
- Justice vs. Mercy draws on the fairness and equity of a choice and juxtaposes it with the compassion an individual can show towards their fellow man or woman.

Three Ethical Approaches

There are three accepted courses of action for approaching an ethical dilemma:

- In the principles-based approach, a Kantian view is utilized and the decision maker must act according to established values and principles as opposed to the consequences of the action. This approach promotes an emphasis on moral worth and decrees that a human knows what the right and moral action is in any situation, and they must choose to do what is right. Established laws are also valued in this approach, and they should be followed.
- The utilitarian-based approach focuses on promoting the greatest good for the greatest number of people. When acting according to this principle, the consequences of an action is the primary focus, as well as who will “win” and “lose” from the decision. This approach sees the concepts of right and wrong being rooted solely in the outcome of the action.
- The virtues-based approach abides by the age old “Golden Rule”: do unto others what you would have them do unto you. When following this approach, one must act according to what they believe a virtuous person would do.

Simplified versions of this approach would be: What would Jesus do? Or, what would my mom think?

The Ethical Triangle

When the dilemmas and approaches are combined, it creates the “Ethical Triangle” decision making model. When applying this model, there are multiple steps to follow:

- The first step is identifying the “right versus right” ethical dilemma at hand.
- The next step is to determine all possible courses of action. This enables the decision-maker to decide whether or not they should/should not do a certain action and to create alternatives to the immediate responses.
- The third step is to look at the most obvious course of action for the dilemma through the three ethical approaches, applying each to the situation.
- The fourth step is to see if an alternate course of action has emerged after applying each of the approaches above. This will make sure the initial proposed course of action is viable or if a better option exists.
- In the fifth step, a course of action is selected from the possible options and has been proven to be the best possible approach to the dilemma.
- The final step is that of implementation, where the selected course of action is executed and the consequences of this action can be witnessed.

Chapter VII

Duty

“One painful duty fulfilled makes the next plainer and easier.”

--Helen Keller

“Never mind your happiness; do your duty.”

--Peter Drucker

“Duty is the most sublime word in our language. Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more. You should never wish to do less.”

--General Robert E. Lee

All aspiring VMI Cadets and Midshipmen must develop an unwavering sense of duty in order to successfully complete their personal and organizational obligations at VMI. In essence, you will be obligated to do your duty by upholding and adhering to the rules, regulations, standards, and traditions of The Institute. Duty will require you to place responsibilities and commitments above personal desires. Duty requires discipline and it will compel you to “keep your honor clean”. A keen sense of duty is a unique character attribute that reaches far beyond the rigors of daily life at VMI, and lasts well after graduation. It is invaluable to all professionals in the military and the civilian workforce.

Military and Academic Duty

Duty may be defined as “an action or task assigned by a higher authority that you are obliged, or required to perform or complete.” Throughout your VMI Cadetship, you will be

NSP-1 ----- Duty

required to attend and/or perform various drills, formations, parades, inspections, and physical training events. These are all forms of military duty. Examples include the requirement for New Cadets to perform Ratline activities and to serve as a member of the Guard Team, from time-to-time. Similarly, you will be required to attend and participate in your assigned classes and complete all academic assignments that are given to you by your professors as part of your academic duty. The overarching goal of military and academic duty is to produce leaders who are dedicated, disciplined, and willing to make personal sacrifices to accomplish the task at hand.

The VMI Superintendent and the Commandant's Office have the authority to assign military duties to the VMI Corps of Cadets. The Dean has the authority over academic duties. The military and academic duties that you are assigned are obligatory. You **MUST** do them. Cadets who fail to perform their duties are placed on report and punished—each according to the nature of the offense.

Duty and Discipline

Over time, doing your duty will instill a heightened sense of discipline in you. You will learn to conform to the VMI System, and place tasks, commitments, and responsibilities above your personal desires. You will learn to make personal sacrifices in order to do what is required. Small, everyday examples of discipline include setting your alarm, keeping your barracks room inspection-ready, cleaning and pressing your uniforms, maintaining your haircut within grooming standards, and keeping your rifle clean, just to name a few. Additionally, you will learn to do more than just complete a given task. Soon, your growing internal sense of duty will compel you to do the task to the best of your ability,

and see it all the way through to successful completion. Once a cadet knows and understands the essence of duty, there is no room for half-heartedness or indifference. The mission will be accomplished, no matter what... and *that* takes discipline.



Duty and Honor

Duty may also be viewed as “a morally binding or obligatory force.” The authority (or force) that obliges you to do your duty may be your own personal sense of honor. In this case, your own heightened sense of right and wrong will require that you take action because you know that it is the honorable and morally correct thing to do. You must learn to place honor over your own personal feelings, self-interests and selfish desires. The best example of this form of duty is the requirement of all cadets to adhere to the Honor System. If you know that a fellow cadet has violated the VMI Honor Code, your honor requires that you do your duty and report the offense to a member of the Honor Court. This is very

NSP-1 ----- Duty

difficult to do and requires a great deal of discipline, especially if the offender is a Brother Rat or personal friend, but you will do it out of a keen sense of moral duty.

Another, more personal example of this form of duty is the requirement to place yourself on report, or “bone” yourself when you know that you have violated a VMI rule or regulation. Even though no other cadet may be aware of this violation, you are obliged by your honor to turn yourself in and accept the consequences. Penalties may include restriction, confinement to barracks, and marching Penalty Tours. Although personal self-interest may tempt you avoid these penalties, your honor will override your feelings and compel you to do your duty by placing yourself on report and accepting responsibility for your actions.

Duty and Accountability

A similar form of duty is the requirement for all cadets to uphold the high standards of The Institute and to hold each other accountable. This may require you to place another cadet on report if the latter is guilty of conduct unbecoming of a VMI Cadet. Examples of ‘conduct unbecoming’ include public drunkenness, profanity, or inappropriate behavior in front of civilians. Rather than honor, cadets in these situations are compelled to do their duty and report an offender out of their obligation to maintain high standards within the Corps of Cadets, hold each other accountable, and to protect VMI from shame or embarrassment.

Duty and the VMI Class System

Discipline, honor, and accountability are not the only obligatory forces that will compel you to do your duty as a cadet. The VMI Class system is another powerful influence.

NSP-1 ----- Duty

As mentioned earlier in the chapter on Professionalism, the VMI Class System bestows unique privileges to each Class. These privileges increase with every passing year, and every cadet is expected to jealously guard the privileges that their Class has earned. Therefore, if you witness a cadet from a more junior Class taking a privilege that rightfully belongs to you and your Brother Rats, you are duty bound to report the violation to the General Committee.

The General Committee is responsible for protecting the Class System, and it is their job to make sure that all cadets respect it and adhere to it. The General Committee consists of Class officers of the upper three Classes who have the authority to levy punishments on their fellow cadets. Although nobody likes to get another cadet in trouble, your duty requires you to report Class System-related offenses to the General Committee out of a sense of loyalty to your Brother Rats, respect for the Class System, and reverence for the traditions of The Institute.

NSP-1



Chapter VIII

Integrity

“Integrity is doing the right thing. Even when no one is watching.”

--C.S. Lewis

“Integrity, the choice between what's convenient and what's right.”

--Tony Dungy

“I cannot trust a man to control others who cannot control himself.”

--General Robert E. Lee

In this chapter, we will discuss the meaning and importance of integrity as it pertains to your VMI Cadetship and your future as a Naval Officer. Integrity is an essential part of a leader's personal moral code. Integrity is a fundamental character trait that helps guide a person and keep them morally secure as they journey through life.

Definition of Integrity

The meaning of integrity is two-fold. It is most often defined as “uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles.” Integrity is often associated with the virtue of honesty. However, integrity goes beyond simply telling the truth. It involves doing the right thing even when it's difficult and when there are no witnesses. As William Sparrow put it, integrity requires that you “seek the truth, come whence it may, cost what it will.” The second definition of integrity is “a state of being whole or undivided.” A person of integrity is

NSP-1 ----- Integrity

inseparable of—and defined by—their moral code. Therefore, a person with integrity is someone who is fundamentally honest because it is woven into their character. He/she remains truthful even at times when they could benefit from, or could get away with, deceit. Integrity guides their everyday decisions and keeps them true to their principles.

Why Integrity is Important

Integrity is an invaluable asset to any leader. You will face moral and ethical challenges and dilemmas throughout your cadetship and in the Fleet. If you become a Second Lieutenant or Ensign, you will be personally responsible for the well-being of the Marines and Sailors under your command. Because of this, it is important that you demonstrate unwavering integrity and character. Integrity applies to a broad number of situations and circumstances, but the intrinsic value of integrity remains the same: a man or woman of integrity does not allow outside influences to change their morals and principles. They can be counted on to stand firm and do what is right.

The importance of integrity is illustrated in the following example:

As the captain of my lacrosse team, I was accustomed to dealing with difficult issues. But on one occasion, I was faced with a particularly challenging situation that involved a dispute between three members of my lacrosse team. Two sophomores on the team had been picking on another player over the course of a year-and-a-half. Our team's brotherhood was something I jealously guarded; it was something that I had invested countless hours of effort into creating and preserving. After learning that the victimized player had been severely bullied, my integrity was tested—I had to decide whether to keep the two toxic players on the team or cut them. Although one was a

talented player who provided consistent, effective value on the field, his toxic attitude off the field was something I was not prepared to tolerate for the sake of his abilities. After consulting with some of the other leaders on the team, I took it upon myself to brief our head coach. I told him that our team could not have him or the other bully on the team any longer. No more than ten minutes later, our coach cut them both. This decision aligned with my integrity and maintained the standard of our team culture: We were to be brothers for one another, and could not tolerate any exceptions.

This real-life testimonial highlights the importance of integrity at VMI. This cadet's integrity guided him through a difficult situation. It gave him the clarity he needed to make the right call and do the morally right thing.

Integrity at VMI

Before you step foot into VMI for the first time as a New Cadet, you have proven, to some degree, that your personal integrity and moral values are somewhat aligned with the VMI Honor System. That being said, it's likely that your notion of integrity is relatively underdeveloped, as it pertains to the ideals of VMI. However, your four-year journey through VMI will help you develop and enhance your own personal integrity, among other positive character traits.

Integrity can often be confused with honor. Integrity reflects internal individualized morals that are intrinsic to a person. Honor, on the other hand reflects an agreement by a person or group to uphold a mutually agreed upon moral standard. The VMI Honor Code is instilled in every cadet from the very beginning. However, integrity at VMI is more than just not lying, cheating, or stealing. Integrity is the expectation that you will do what you know is right, even when no one is watching. This mindset is achieved not

NSP-1 ----- Integrity

through fear of punishment, but through your own internal conviction and personal commitment. The personal aspect of integrity makes it very much like a muscle that has to be exercised and developed through repetition before it can be solidified as a part of an individual's character.

Even something as simple as finding a dollar bill on the ground, while it may seem insignificant to most, is a matter of integrity for cadets. The dollar bill does not belong to them, so a cadet with integrity will not to pick it up. The cadet's integrity motivates him/her to follow the Honor Code, even when there is something to gain.



Academic Integrity

Integrity is a reflection of a person's values, principles, and moral character. This is especially true in the classroom setting. At VMI, you will be required to demonstrate personal integrity with every academic assignment. Most of the time, your professors will leave the classroom after handing out an exam. There will be no one watching to make sure that you

NSP-1 ----- Integrity

are not cheating as you take your tests. The same is true of homework assignments and projects. You will be given homework assignments and you are expected to complete them on their own. Professors will make no attempt to monitor you to ensure that your work is your own. This method of teaching would not be possible at any other college or university, but the strength of the Honor Code and the personal integrity of every cadet make this possible at VMI. The trust that professors have in their students is based upon the cadets' well-deserved reputation for integrity and honor. Professors at VMI know that cadets are bound by their moral code and would never betray their trust.

Integrity in NROTC

NROTC will give you many opportunities develop and enhance your own personal integrity. Challenges will come in many ways, shapes, and forms. It may be something as simple as completely finishing a workout that was given to you during PTT. Or it may be something humbling like owning up to a personal leadership failure. Tests of your integrity will appear simple at first, but they will grow more serious with time. Completing Fitness Reports on your fellow midshipman will be an advanced exercise of your integrity. Will your evaluation reflect his/her performance or popularity? No one will give you a pat on the back, but you should feel a sense of pride knowing that every NROTC lesson has further developed your personal integrity.

The most difficult tests of your integrity will come when you have failed a task that has been given to you. Your Navy and Marine Corps instructors will closely watch how you handle failure. Will you come up with some excuse, or will you own up to your mistake and fix it? The Naval Service

NSP-1 ----- Integrity

requires officers with integrity, so when you make mistakes (and you will), you must have the integrity to admit your failures. Just as important, you must learn from them so you won't make the same, or more serious mistakes later. Through it all, you must remain committed to building your integrity in the NROTC setting.



Integrity in the Military

As a Navy or Marine Corps Officer, you will have responsibility over expensive equipment and the livelihood of the Sailors or Marines under your command. You will be charged with completing mission essential tasks based on guidance from your superior. You will be expected to take charge of personnel and complete difficult tasks. In the absence of orders, you must make critical decisions that affect the lives of your Shipmates and fellow Marines. Men and women will live or die based upon your actions, so you must have the integrity to make the right decisions under strenuous circumstances.

Chapter IX

Loyalty

“Base yourself in loyalty and trust.”

--Confucius

“You’ve got to give loyalty down, if you want loyalty up.”

--Donald Regan

“Don’t do anything as an individual that will make you stand out from your teammates.”

--Coach Krzyzewski

In this chapter, we will define loyalty, determine how loyalty is learned, and discuss the pitfalls associated with misplaced loyalty. In addition, we will discuss the importance of judgement as it pertains to loyalty, as well as the relationship between loyalty and honor. Finally, we will examine defining moments in naval history when loyalty played a key role. This will give you a better understanding of what loyalty is and the importance that loyalty will have on your cadetship and military career.

Loyalty Defined

Loyalty may be defined as a strong feeling of support or allegiance to something or someone. Loyalty is the quality of unwavering devotion or faithfulness to a cause, philosophy, code, country, group, person, etc. VMI Cadets and NROTC Midshipmen commonly demonstrate loyalty to their God, the United States of America, the Constitution, VMI, their Brother Rats, and the cadets in their individual companies.

NSP-1 ----- Loyalty

Over the course of the next four years, your sense of loyalty will be heightened; and you will demonstrate loyalty in ways that you never previously thought possible.



Learning Loyalty

Loyalty is a learned character trait. Education begins at an early age and children typically learn loyalty through the influences of parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, and relatives. Over time, the depth and breadth of loyalty grows. Adolescents may extend loyalty to friends, teammates, and classmates. Young adults may learn more about loyalty from history, politics, or religion—they may extend loyalty to a state, country, or cause. Generally speaking, a person’s loyalty indicates the kind of person they are and determines the kind of person they will become. Well-placed loyalty leads to support and success; misplaced loyalty leads to difficulties and failure.

Pitfalls of Misplaced Loyalty

Misplaced loyalty leads to trouble. When we support ideas, people, or things that turn out to be morally questionable, problems occur. Misplaced loyalty can cloud your judgement and make it difficult to choose between right and wrong. Even worse, it can place pressure on you to do things that you know are unethical or morally wrong. Peer pressure is an example where a person with misplaced loyalty to a group may be compelled into doing the will of the group rather than doing what he/she knows is right. Misplaced loyalty will lead you to places that you do not want to go. Judgement is required to avoid the pitfalls of misplaced loyalty. We must use our judgement to determine who and what we should be loyal to as we age and mature.

Loyalty and Judgement

Loyalty is universally recognized as a noble military leadership trait. You will be loyal to many people and entities throughout your military career, such as your commanding

NSP-1 ----- Loyalty

officer, individual Sailors and Marines, warships, and military units. Military leaders are required to exercise sound judgement before extending their loyalty. Judgement requires that you consider your honor and integrity at all times. It guides your loyalty and keeps you from placing yours in something or someone who isn't worthy of it. As a future officer in the Naval Service, you have the responsibility to evaluate your actions and motives to ensure that your loyalty is honorable and justified. Misplaced loyalty can be detrimental to your career and bring shame to the Naval Service.

The events surrounding CAPT Heedong Choi from 2001-2008 are a good example of misplaced loyalty by a Navy leader. Rather than remaining loyal to his Navy Core Values, CAPT Choi chose instead to be loyal to a powerful, charismatic ship support contractor. CAPT Choi provided the contractor with classified information and access to senior Navy leaders in exchange for money, gifts, and special favors. Poor judgement caused CAPT Choi to misplace his loyalty and place personal gain above personal honor.

Loyalty and Honor

Honor is the moral obligation to do what is right and adhere to an extremely high standard of personal conduct. Loyalty is a virtue of honorable behavior. Honor and loyalty are meant to build each other up. However, problems with honor arise when separate loyalties are tested against one another. Competing loyalties can cloud a person's judgement and make it very difficult to determine right from wrong. Understanding how to resolve conflicts between loyalties can help you maintain your honor.

NSP-1 ----- Loyalty

What should cadets do if their loyalty to an individual or group conflicts with their loyalty to uphold the Honor Code? Cadets are taught never to lie, steal, cheat, or tolerate those who do. But they are also taught to be loyal to their Brother Rats. So if a cadet witnesses a violation of the Honor Code by a Brother Rat, loyalty to one will result in disloyalty to the other. This unfortunate example highlights the priority of loyalties that all cadets must recognize and live by.

Simply stated, at VMI your loyalty to the Honor Code comes before everyone and everything else. Therefore, if you witness another cadet violating the Honor Code, you are obligated to report him/her to a member of the Honor Court. At first glance, this may seem like a treacherous act. After all, every cadet knows that violators will be dismissed from VMI, and nobody wants to be responsible for getting a Brother Rat kicked out of the Corps. However, at times like these, it's important for you to remember that the cadet in question was well-aware of the Honor Code's toleration clause before he/she committed the act. In other words, not only was the cadet willing to place his/her own cadetship in jeopardy, but he/she was also willing to jeopardize the cadetships of all potential witnesses; knowing full-well that their honor would be put to the test, as well. You do not owe loyalty to such a selfish person. Your loyalty to the Honor Code must prevail.

One final note: We are all human, and therefore imperfect. You may witness a fellow cadet making a mistake in a scenario not much different than this one. When you do, your loyalty and your honor will be tested; you must let your internal moral compass guide your decisions about what is right and wrong. We trust that you will remember this chapter

and make the right (and honorable) decision when that time comes.

Defining Cases of Loyalty at VMI

There is no better place than VMI to see true loyalty in action. In the previous section, we concluded that tolerating an honor violation to protect a Brother Rat from dismissal is not a form of loyalty. Which begs the question, what does loyalty to your Brother Rats look like? To answer this, we must return to the quote by Coach Krzyzewski at the beginning of the Chapter. Loyalty to your Brother Rats means being a good teammate; it means resisting the urge to call attention to yourself or be a “showboat”; and it means helping out your Brother Rats when they need it. You demonstrate loyalty when you put others before yourself, and use your strengths to help others' weaknesses in every aspect of your VMI education. VMI is all about the evolution of a “Rat Mass” into a VMI Class. That requires your personal loyalty to five-hundred other individuals; loyalty to the VMI System; and most importantly, loyalty to the Honor Code.

Loyalty in the Naval Service

Loyalty is essential to any organization. This is especially true in the Naval Service—it’s established through realistic training and a common experience in the profession of arms. Loyalty begins with trust. As a future Naval Officer, loyalty is established once your subordinates trust your judgement and know that you will lead wisely and not put them in unnecessary danger. Your subordinates will trust you once they are absolutely confident in your ability to lead and that you can be counted on to make choices that are best for them and the unit. As trust increases, loyalty becomes stronger and stronger.

NSP-1 ----- Loyalty

Loyalty is based upon a mutual understanding that the entire team will make sacrifices in order to accomplish the mission. It will help alleviate any tension between you and your Shipmates.

Fire Watch is a common, every-day demonstration of loyalty in the Naval Service. Men and women on Fire Watch are awake and alert as they maintain watch over their Shipmates 24/7/365. In doing so, they demonstrate faithfulness and loyalty to their comrades. Those not on duty are able to rest and attend to other needs because they trust that the Fire Watch has their back.

Loyalty is one of the fourteen Marine Corps leadership traits for good reason. Leadership within the Naval Service tends to elicit strong feelings of loyalty up and down the chain of command, but it should not be taken for granted. In addition to sound judgment, leaders must exhibit grit through thick-and-thin in order to prove themselves worthy of the loyalty of their subordinates. Loyalty involves a great deal of sacrifice. Naval Officers must remain accountable to their subordinates in good times and bad. They must be willing and able to “take the heat” instead of pointing fingers. The true test of loyalty comes not when the going is good, but when you (and your Shipmates) are in a pinch. For that reason, true loyalty is an uncommon virtue. It must be continually earned, nurtured, and fought for in order to remain intact.

NSP-1



Chapter X

Academics

“The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.”

--Aristotle

“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

--Benjamin Franklin

The three major pillars of a VMI education are academics, physical fitness, and military training. Collectively, these are often referred to as the VMI “three-legged stool” since all three are required to maintain a stable and well-balanced cadetship. The purpose of this chapter is to educate and inform you about the academics pillar of the VMI experience.

Course Load

The typical cadet academic course load is between 14 and 20 credit hours per semester, although the minimum is 12 and the maximum is 22. The number of credits that a cadet takes per semester is dependent on many factors, such as previous college credit hours or the decision to pursue a minor or double major. For most New Cadets, this course load requirement will seem overwhelming at first; it may take you a few months before you learn to properly manage your time and adjust to your new academic responsibilities.

Registration Day

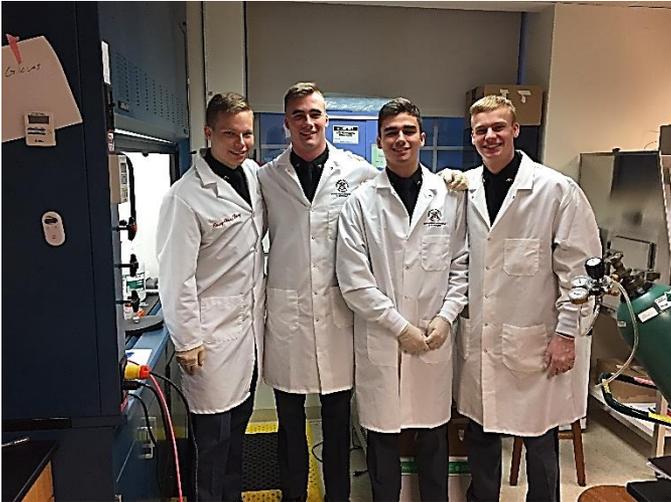
Registration Day is the first day of each academic semester at VMI. Registration Day provides cadets with the

NSP-1 ----- Academics

opportunity to sign up for classes and resolve any scheduling issues. In addition to finalizing their class schedule, many cadets use this time to gather supplies, order textbooks, and mentally prepare for the semester ahead.

Class Schedule

VMI class schedules are divided into two separate groups: three 50-minute classes that occur on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and two 75-minute classes that occur on Tuesdays, and Thursdays. This unique system allows for a combined total of two hours and thirty minutes per class, per week no matter what day the class is on. Labs, physical education, ROTC, and other specialized classes have varying schedules. Most do not meet as often or as long as regular classes; they are worth less credits but are still included in graduation requirements.



Changing Majors

All majors offered by VMI are designed to be completed within the span eight semesters. Summer classes are also an option for cadets who want to get ahead, re-take classes, or catch up academically. Changing majors is also an option for cadets who discover that they do not like their classes or who decide to pursue other academic interests. There is no shame in switching majors; VMI is very efficient at re-aligning cadets with majors that better suit their interests and needs. It is important to find a major that is best for you. The optimum times for cadets to change majors is after the completion of their first semester or at the end of the first academic year.

Summer Classes

Two separate summer session are offered at VMI between the months of May and July. During summer sessions, five 2-hour classes are scheduled each week to cover a semester's worth of material in one month. The maximum course load is seven credit hours per session. Summer session classes are more relaxed than those during the normal school year. Additionally, cadets enjoy privileges during summer sessions that they wouldn't have during the normal school year, such as wearing civilian clothes in class and keeping a car parked on post. Cadets taking summer session classes typically live in barracks. This is one disadvantage since barracks is not air conditioned and Virginia summers are hot and humid. Finding off-campus housing is difficult, but not impossible for any cadet who does not want to weather the summer heat in barracks. Overall, summer sessions are a good option for cadets who want to lighten their course load and who don't have Navy or Marine Corps NROTC summer training obligations.

Miller Academic Center

The Miller Academic Center is the hub of VMI academic assistance to all cadets. Services provided by the Miller Academic Center include identifying cadet peer tutors and coordinating Group Study Sessions (GSS's). GSS's are informal meetings designed to assist cadets with their study habits and/or their homework. GSS's take place outside of normal class hours and are usually led by other cadets. The Miller Academic Center also provides New Cadets with lectures about available resources, tips for studying, and other important academic advice.

Registrar's Office

The Registrar's Office is where cadets can take any academic concerns or problems with their class schedules to be corrected or changed. The Registrar's Office also offers paperwork related to switching majors, declaring a minor, changing ROTC affiliations, studying abroad, dropping or adding classes, overloading credit hours, or any other actions pertaining to VMI academics.

Math Lab

The Math Lab is located on the top floor of Preston Library. Cadets needing assistance with mathematics can get help at the Math Lab from VMI professors or cadet tutors. The Math Lab is free for all cadets.

Writing Center

The Writing Center pairs VMI professors and cadet tutors with cadets who need assistance with writing assignments. Liberal Arts courses at VMI are writing-intensive and include many essays and written assignments as part of the curriculum. The primary purpose of the Writing

NSP-1 ----- Academics

Center is to help cadets find their “voice” in written assignments and to assist cadets with the tone and flow of their papers. The Writing Center is available to all cadets by appointment.

Time Management

Your ability to effectively manage your time could mean the difference between academic success and failure at VMI. New Cadets, in particular must quickly learn to manage their time. This is especially true during the Ratline, since this is generally the lightest academic period of your cadetship. In order to be successful, cadets should try to organize their assignments and complete them ahead of schedule, if possible. Cadets with strong time management skills have more free time to PT, read, play games, socialize, or catch up on sleep. Perhaps most importantly, cadets must resist the urge to procrastinate. VMI is notorious for levying unexpected requirements on cadets, and those who procrastinate on their academics will quickly fall behind, experience extra stress, and receive lower grades in the long run.

Asking for Help

VMI has a very small cadet-to-professor ratio. On average, there are about 12-14 cadets per class and it’s not uncommon to have multiple classes with each of the professors in your department. This means that you will get to know your professors (and they will know you) in a short period of time. All professors are very experienced and knowledgeable and can help you plan your semesters and your future beyond VMI. If you don’t understand something in your classes, do not hesitate to ask your professors for help. It is important to take advantage of every opportunity to meet with your professors, as it is difficult to get through college

alone. Asking your professors for help can be the difference between success and failure at VMI.

Academic Advisors

You will be assigned an academic advisor who is also a professor from your major. Your academic advisor is dedicated to helping you grow as a student, a cadet, and a person. Many are also VMI alumni, so they understand what you are going through. You will have mandatory meetings with your academic advisor each semester, but they are more than willing to advise you more frequently, if needed. Your academic advisor can help you construct your class schedule, fill out forms, and assist with schoolwork. The relationship you build with your academic advisor is crucial for your academic success at VMI. Speaking to your academic advisor on a regular basis will cultivate this relationship and help them determine how they can best help you. Finally, your academic advisor can help you find opportunities to grow and learn outside of VMI, such as summer research opportunities and internships.

Fifth-Year Cadets

About five-to-ten percent of 1/C Cadets fail to satisfy the academic requirements needed to graduate in eight semesters. 1/C Cadets who find themselves in this situation have several options to complete the required academics, to include taking Summer Session classes or courses at other colleges or universities. Some 1/C Cadets make the decision to return to VMI for one or two additional semesters and are known as fifth-year cadets.

Chapter XI

Physical Fitness

“Physical fitness is not a hobby or a habit- it is a matter of self-respect.”

--Dr. Nandi

“Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. In order to achieve happiness, it is imperative to gain mastery of your body.”

--Joseph Pilates

“Physical Fitness is the basis for all other forms of excellence.”

--John F. Kennedy

In the months prior to Matriculation Day, you must take stock of your physical fitness, and evaluate your strengths and weaknesses. For example, if you know that you cannot run very far or fast, you should focus on improving your cardiovascular endurance. If you know that you have trouble doing pull-ups or push-ups, you should focus on increasing your strength. Regardless of your current condition, you must ensure that you are physically fit *before* you matriculate.

During the Ratline, you will be required to perform many physically demanding activities, and most New Cadets achieve a high level of physical fitness as a result. However, in the years that follow, it will generally be your responsibility to take advantage of the many opportunities at VMI to maintain or increase your endurance and strength. Physical

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

fitness will improve your health and well-being, and enhance your overall VMI experience. Additionally, it will improve your chances of commissioning if that is your goal, and contribute to your success no matter what career that you choose to pursue following graduation.

Physical Fitness Program at VMI

All cadets are expected to keep themselves in a high state of physical preparedness at all times. To accomplish this goal, the Physical Training Program (PTP) was established under VMI General Order 31. The PTP has four components: Physical Training Time (PTT), Individual Training Time (ITT), the Virginia Military Institute Fitness Test (VFT), and Remedial Physical Training (RPT). While these VMI physical conditioning events are mandatory for all cadets, they will not be sufficient to keep you in peak physical condition. Therefore, you must make an individual effort and discipline yourself to exercise regularly on your own. Not only is this necessary to uphold the standards expected of all VMI Cadets, but it will be required of you as a future leader of Sailors and Marines. Leaders who are confident in their physical capabilities will consistently outperform their counterparts and provide a better example for their subordinates to emulate. An educated mind can only go so far without a conditioned body.

PTT

PTT takes place from 1605-1800 on Mondays and from 1105-1215 on Fridays. During these hours, all cadets are required to conduct physical exercises in order to improve their well-being and enhance their physical readiness. All 3/C and 4/C Cadets, as well as upperclassmen who are on track to commission, will execute PTT with their respective ROTC

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

departments. Upperclassmen not pursuing a commission will conduct PTT with their respective VMI companies. Cadets who are NCAA athletes are allowed to train with their teams during PTT.

VFT

Every cadet will take the VFT at least once each semester. The table below outlines the events and minimum/maximum scores of the VFT:

Event	Minimum/Max Scores	
	Male	Female
Pull-ups	5/20	1/8
Sit-ups	60/92	60/92
2400-meter run	12:30/8:30	14:20/9:46

New Cadets will take a diagnostic VFT during their first week at VMI to be used as a baseline for improvement. You must pass the VFT if you want to hold rank in the Corps of Cadets. Cadets in leadership positions who fail the VFT will be allowed one re-test before being reduced in rank and/or relieved of command. All cadets who fail the VFT are placed in the Remedial Physical Training (RPT) program.

RPT

RPT is a punitive physical fitness program that is conducted on Wednesdays from 1605-1800 and Saturdays from 0600-0700. Upperclassmen who are not on track to commission or seeking a commission will conduct RPT during PTT. Cadets should avoid RPT if they want to succeed

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

at VMI and in the NROTC program. When it comes to physical fitness, achieving the minimum standard should not be the goal of any VMI Cadet, and it is not conducive to achieving your goal of becoming a future leader.

NROTC Fitness Tests

The Navy Physical Readiness Test (PRT) consists of pushups, curl-ups*, and 1.5-mile run. Standards are based on gender and age, and are listed below:

Event	Male, 17-19		Female, 17-19	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Push-Ups (2 minutes)	46	92	20	51
Curl-Ups (2 minutes)	54	109	54	109
1.5 Mile run	12:15	8:15	14:45	9:29

(* Curl-Ups will be replaced with planks in the near future, but standards have not yet been established)

The Marine Corps Physical Fitness Test (PFT) consists of pull-ups, crunches (2 minutes), and 3-mile run. Standards are based on gender and age, and are listed below:

Event	Male, 17-20		Female, 17-20	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Pull-Ups	4	20	1	7
Crunches	70	105	50	100
3 Mile run	27:40	18:00	30:50	21:00

It is important to remember that although attaining minimum scores on these Navy and Marine Corps physical fitness tests will make you eligible for a NROTC scholarship, higher scores will make you much more competitive and dramatically improve your chances of earning a commission.

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

NROTC Midshipmen should always strive to achieve the maximum scores for every event.



Physical Fitness after Commissioning

If you earn a commission in the Naval Service following graduation, physical fitness will continue to be a priority and contribute to your future success in the military. All officers are required to take the PRT or PFT on a regular basis; your scores will be reflected on your Navy performance evaluations or Marine Corps fitness reports. Your physical fitness scores are a reflection of your overall job performance, and while the physical demands of your future profession may not be consistently high, you do not want to put yourself in a situation where you are unable to physically perform your

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

duties, especially when the lives of your Sailors or Marines are at stake. Therefore, you must continue to find time to exercise outside of scheduled workouts. A steady fitness regime not only improves your strength and endurance, but it provides an outlet for stress, thereby increasing your resilience and improving your mental health.

NCAA Athletes

Physical fitness is a way of life for NCAA athletes. If you are a cadet athlete, exercise will be part of your daily routine, especially when your sport is in-season. During these times, you will practice every day and compete during the week. Needless to say, your VMI schedule will become very hectic. Your coaches will ensure that you are in outstanding physical condition for your sport (and the other VMI physical fitness requirements such as PTP), but it will be up to you to create a personalized schedule for balancing your other commitments as a cadet and midshipman.

Being a NCAA athlete is demanding, but it is not an excuse to slack off on your other VMI duties and responsibilities. On the contrary, you must meet (or exceed) the discipline required of VMI cadets who are not athletes. If you are a NCAA athlete, you must find a way to eat regularly; maintain a proper diet; practice, condition and compete in NCAA athletic events; fulfill your military and/or NROTC training requirements; complete your studies; and still get enough rest. In essence, you must learn to balance yourself atop of VMI's three-legged stool. To do this well, you will need to recognize how much you can accomplish in a day before becoming succumbing to mental and physical exhaustion. You must learn to take a few moments each day

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

to conduct a self-assessment, or “wellness check” to ensure that you are functioning at your peak performance.

Club Sports

Physical fitness contributes to the development of the whole person. With that notion in mind, all cadets are highly encouraged to compete in club sports after the Ratline. Club sports teams compete against neighboring colleges and universities, and there is a wide variety of club sports teams to choose from, such as boxing, rugby, ice hockey, basketball, triathlons, powerlifting, soccer, and lacrosse to name a few. The number of active club sports teams fluctuates from year-to-year depending on cadet interest and participation. Typically, cadets participate in club sports on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1600-1800. Some club schedules may differ depending on the sport.

All club sports teams require a significant level of commitment, and cadets who decide to participate in club sports are expected to practice regularly with their teams. Missing practices is frowned upon and may cause problems with the team's coach. That said, academics takes precedence over any club sport, and cadets are not allowed to participate if they do not maintain a minimum GPA requirement, as defined by Institute policy. This means that cadets on any club sport team must alter their schedules so that their academic responsibilities are accomplished first. Cadets who fail to strike a balance between academics and club sports will quickly find themselves falling behind in their studies.

Weight Training

All officers in the Naval Service are expected to maintain a good balance of strength, endurance, and flexibility

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

so that they are always physically prepared for combat and the stress of their day-to-day routines. When duty calls, their bodies must be ready to perform a wide variety of physical tasks that are vital to mission success. Obviously, cardiovascular health and physical endurance are beneficial to military service. However, physical strength is equally as important. Weight training is an excellent way to increase muscle strength and better prepare yourself for future service in the Navy or Marine Corps.

In addition to increased muscle strength, the benefits of weight training include improved joint stability, higher bone density, and enhanced self-confidence. Working out with weights as little as three sessions a week can result in significant gains.

There are a multitude of weightlifting techniques and training methods. Beginners to weight training should consult Bodybuilding.com and Mark Rippetoe's book, *Starting Strength* to learn the basic fundamentals. More advanced weightlifters should build upon the basics when developing their own weight training routines.

Before beginning any weight training regimen, it's important to understand your goals, or the results that you want to achieve. Starting with the end in mind will assist you in developing a weightlifting routine that is right for you. For example, everyone in the Navy and Marine Corps is required to pass the PRT and PFT, respectively. Therefore, at a minimum, all future Naval Officers would be wise to develop a weight training regimen that better prepares them to pass these physical training events.

NSP-1 ----- Physical Fitness

No matter the regimen, you should always note the number of sets and repetitions that you complete for each exercise. You should also alternate your exercises each week to prevent your body from getting used to a set of exercises. This principle of “muscle confusion” will stimulate your muscles and promote increased growth and strength. Good form is essential whenever you are lifting weights, and you must be sure to lift with the proper intensity—pushing your body hard enough to tax your muscles without causing them damage or pain. Keeping these thoughts in mind will not only help your muscles recover quickly and prevent you from injuring your body, but it will also help you effectively and efficiently achieve your weightlifting goals.



NSP-1



Chapter XII

Military Aptitude

“Every day you should be working... to be technically and tactically skilled. You should be asking questions, reading, practicing, and training. You can be a super-nice dude or dudette who loves your troops, but if you don't know how to train them, lead them, and they aren't ready for combat, you are a colossal failure. If you look deep inside, you'll know the truth of where you are in this regard. Either fix it or quit.”

--Nick Palmisciano

“Passive inactivity, because you have not been given specific instructions to do this or to do that, is a serious deficiency.”

--General George C. Marshall

“If you can't do the little things right, you will never be able to do the big things right.”

--Admiral William H. McRaven

The purpose of this chapter is to educate and inform you about the importance of military aptitude as it pertains to Military Training at VMI and your future as a Naval Officer.

Definition

Aptitude is defined as a person's inclination, natural ability, or general suitability for something. A person with military aptitude is mentally, physically, and morally well-suited for military service. The implication is that a person with the right attitude, abilities, and character traits has the ability to thrive in a military environment. They possess the

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

skills they need to be an effective a follower and the capacity to become an effective leader.

Attitude

Military aptitude requires the right attitude. Generally speaking, cadets with the correct mindset and the proper outlook on their situation are able to adjust well to the demands of military service. The right attitude serves as a catalyst—it facilitates your development from a follower to a leader. The attributes listed below reflect the right attitude for military service:

- **Accountability**—an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility. Cadets in leadership positions are responsible for their unit’s performance. If the unit fails to perform as expected, leaders who are accountable take full responsibility for the failure and make no attempts to pass the buck or shift blame.

- **Accessibility**—the quality that makes one accessible, easy to speak to, or easy to deal with. You can’t lead effectively if you isolate yourself, or talk down to your subordinates. An “open door” policy is an effective tool that allows subordinates easy access to their leaders. Cadet leaders maintain accessibility by addressing subordinates in a friendly, but firm manner.

- **Desire**—to crave or long for something; the conscious impulse toward something that promises satisfaction in its attainment. No matter the motivation (i.e. brotherhood, pride, ring, diploma, etc.), cadets must have a strong desire to attend the Virginia Military Institute. This desire will make it easier for you to adjust to/accept VMI’s Spartan setting and handle the many ‘ups and downs’ that will occur during your cadetship. New Cadets who lack this desire seldom make it through the Ratline. Similarly, midshipmen must have a

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

burning desire to earn a commission in the Naval Service. This desire becomes a goal. It is a source of strength that motivates them to successfully complete all NROTC academic, physical fitness, and military training requirements.

- **Determination**—firmness of purpose; resoluteness. More than desire, determination is the quality that you show when you have decided to do something and you will not let anything or anyone stop you. Determination will help you persevere when things get tough. New Cadets need to exhibit a great degree of determination in order to successfully make it through the Ratline.

- **Excellence**—the quality or virtue of being excellent. The condition of being superior or outstanding. Excellence requires extremely high standards. Excellence is an attitude where you are always willing to give your very best effort. Cadets in pursuit of excellence are not satisfied with mere competence. Their quest for excellence and desire to be superior pushes them to the highest levels of proficiency in every aspect of their education and training.

- **Grit**—firmness of mind or spirit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger. More than determination, this attitude reflects passion and single-minded perseverance. A midshipman with grit will work diligently to accomplish a goal or accomplish a mission, even when confronted by significant obstacles.

- **Optimism**—reflecting a positive view of events and conditions, and a confident expectation of favorable or successful outcomes. Optimistic leaders are able to see a silver lining in every cloud. Their ability to rise above current conditions and envision a better future inspires and motivates others to work together to achieve a common goal. An optimistic attitude is a force-multiplier and can be the determining factor between success and failure.

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

- **Respect**—due regard (or esteem) for the feelings, wishes, rights, traditions, sacrifices, achievements, or abilities of others. A cadet is expected to show the proper respect to everyone he/she encounters. Showing respect to successful people or those in positions of power is common. Because it is expected, it is unpraiseworthy. New Cadets must learn to show respect to all people with no regard to their position or social status. Once you learn to recognize basic human dignity, respect follows.

- **Sacrifice**—a willingness to give up something you want for an important cause, ideal, or goal. You must make many personal sacrifices to earn a commission in the Naval Service. Generally speaking, choosing a military career means giving up your comfort, freedom, and self-determination. Officers in the Navy and Marine Corps are called upon to make incredible sacrifices for their Sailors and Marines, and to accomplish the mission. Those who have died in service to our Nation are said to have made the “ultimate sacrifice”.



Abilities

All people possess certain gifts, abilities, and talents. Some are natural; others are acquired. The following skills and qualities translate very well to military aptitude and are highly prized by members of the military:

- **Communication Skills.** Communication is the act of passing and receiving information. It may take place verbally, visually, or in writing. Communication involves listening, speaking, and observing other people. Leaders must be able to write with clarity and conciseness. They must also be cognizant of body language, as this is often a powerful non-verbal means of communication. Empathizing, asking questions, maintaining eye contact, remembering names, and matching the mood, body language, and voice tone of the person you are speaking with are all examples of effective communication skills.

- **Coordination Skills.** Coordination is the function of leadership which ensures that different groups or organizations work well together and remain in sync. Effective coordination creates unity of action. It fosters cohesion among individuals and promotes harmony across various groups while they execute different tasks and activities. Coordination skills help leaders of complex organizations achieve common goals and objectives.

- **Followership.** Followership is the ability to receive and follow directions, instructions, and orders. Followership also requires that you support those who are in leadership positions. New Cadets begin their VMI training by learning to be good followers. At first, this may be difficult, but you must learn to put aside your personal feelings and do what you are told to do. Over time, your followership skills will grow and your military aptitude will increase. Followership is a stepping stone to leadership. The lessons that you learn as a follower at

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

VMI will help you develop the skills you will need to be a good leader.

- **Health.** The military needs men and women who are physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. One should not take their health for granted. Success at VMI requires that all cadets make a concerted effort to take care of their bodies and their minds. This requires the knowledge and discipline to eat nutritious foods, exercise on a regular basis, and pursue activities that relieve stress and anxiety. In this regard, health is a skill that can be acquired. Good health is critical to sound military leadership; all military leaders are expected to make good choices to ensure that their minds, bodies, and emotions are prepared for the many hardships that accompany military service.

- **Intellect.** Intellect is the faculty to reason and understand objectively. It can be likened to a person's mental abilities or prowess. A person with keen intellect demonstrates mental strength and agility. He/she is able to grasp complicated concepts and effectively apply reason. Cadets with the gift of strong intellect must apply their mental abilities to assist their leaders and help accomplish the mission. The military needs leaders with strong intellect to solve difficult problems, make difficult decisions, guide the actions of their subordinates, and avoid preventable losses.

- **Leadership.** Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to achieve a common goal. Leadership requires vision, or a clear understanding of what you want the group to achieve. Leaders must have the ability to give clear directions; they must have the courage to issue orders and instructions to people and hold them accountable for their execution; and they must be willing to selflessly serve their subordinates and assist them to achieve their goals. Leadership is difficult and demanding. Many people discover that they do not possess the

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

natural ability to lead, especially when they first attempt it. However, leadership can be learned. Cadets who lack natural leadership abilities find that they are able to acquire leadership skills with experience and repetition, especially when they apply the lessons they learned through followership. Refer to Chapter V to learn more about leadership at VMI.

- **Problem Solving Skills.** In a general sense, problem solving is the process of understanding or defining a problem; determining the cause(s) of the problem; identifying and prioritizing various courses of action designed to resolve the problem; and selecting/implementing a course of action to arrive at a solution. Problem solving is something cadets do on a daily basis at VMI. You will be confronted with numerous dilemmas during your cadetship. In order to be successful, you must demonstrate the ability to analyze and solve problems when they arise. It is a skill that will help you lead your fellow cadets, navigate the VMI System, keep you out of trouble, and prepare you for the challenges of military service.

- **Panache.** Panache is akin to showmanship. A leader with panache conducts him/herself with flamboyance, confidence, and style. It is a unique and distinctive “wow factor” designed to attract and inspire subordinates and compel them to follow. It is not uncommon for charismatic military leaders to exhibit more than a little panache as they lead their troops. A word of caution: panache is a double-edged sword. While it can be an extremely effective leadership tool, a person who uses it inappropriately or too often may be seen as a self-serving leader who prioritizes style over substance.

Leadership and Character Traits

VMI seeks to instill every cadet with certain qualities, attributes, and characteristics that are conducive to military service and leadership development. Some of the most important are encompassed by the 14 Marine Corps leadership traits (included in the list below). Others reflect admirable character traits. All cadets and future Naval Officers should aspire to exhibit the following outstanding leadership and character traits:

- **Adaptability.** The ability to adjust to changing conditions. The ability to adapt and overcome is essential for all military leaders. It is a simple fact that operations seldom go exactly as planned. Leaders can't fall in love with their plans to the point of being inflexible. When the situation changes, leaders must be able to adapt to the conditions as they are (not what they hoped they would be) and modify their plans accordingly. Leaders who are unable to cope with rapidly changing events are doomed to failure.

- **Bearing.** The ability to look, talk, and act like a leader at all times. Your appearance should create a favorable impression, and the manner in which you conduct and carry yourself should reflect alertness, competence, confidence, and control. Cadets and midshipmen who demonstrate military bearing are "squared away". They are trim, physically fit, and well-groomed; they wear clean, properly fitted uniforms; their shoes and collar devices are polished; they are clear-headed and vigilant; and they avoid using profane and vulgar language, especially in public.

- **Confidence.** A feeling of self-assurance arising from an appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities. Confidence is not arrogance. It is based upon a realistic understanding of one's own capabilities. Midshipmen with confidence are sure of themselves. They are able to lead others effectively because

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

they know that they are prepared and equipped to handle a wide variety of challenges.

- **Courage.** A mental quality that enables a person to maintain composure and function effectively in the face of fear or danger. Courage also enables a person to have the strength to stand up for what is morally right in the face of public criticism. Cadets at VMI are expected to display both physical and moral courage. Refer to Chapter II to learn more about courage at VMI.

- **Decisiveness.** The ability to quickly analyze a situation, make sound decisions, and announce them in a direct and professional manner. A decisive midshipman does not waste time “waffling” over a problem—he/she makes decisions and issues orders in a timely manner and does not second-guess them in front of subordinates.

- **Dependability.** The certainty that one will perform duties properly and/or complete a job. A cadet who is dependable can be relied upon to correctly accomplish a task or mission with minimal supervision.

- **Diligence.** Careful and persistent work or effort. A leader who exhibits diligence performs his/her duties carefully, thoroughly, and well. They expend great effort to ensure that the job is done correctly. All midshipmen are expected to perform their military duties and responsibilities with diligence.

- **Discipline.** The ability adhere to a strict code of behavior. Disciplined people exhibit strong self-control and have no trouble following rules and regulations. They maintain very specific standards for proper conduct and hold themselves accountable for abiding by them.

- **Empathy.** The ability to understand the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of another person. Leaders with empathy are able to “put themselves in other people’s shoes”

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

and relate to what their subordinates may be going through in their daily lives, both good and bad. Leaders who lack empathy are often perceived to be detached or cold by their subordinates. Empathetic people often have high emotional intelligence.

- **Endurance.** The mental and/or physical stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, or hardship for extended periods of time. New Cadets must demonstrate endurance and stamina as they complete a multitude of physically challenging events during the Ratline.

- **Enthusiasm.** The sincere display of interest, excitement, and optimism in the performance of a duty. Enthusiasm serves to motivate and encourage others to persevere when challenges occur. A cadet who tackles a task with enthusiasm is more likely to complete it successfully.

- **Humility.** The quality of being humble. A person demonstrates humility when they place the needs of others above their own. Contrary to popular belief, humble leaders don't have a low opinion of themselves. It is more accurate to say that humble leaders don't overestimate their own importance. They don't have an inflated ego. Humble leaders are comfortable in their own skin; their humility allows them to deflect attention away from their own accomplishments and redirect it toward the accomplishments of their subordinates. Humility is the opposite of pride.

- **Initiative.** The practice of taking effective action in the absence of orders or specific direction. A midshipman who demonstrates initiative is proactive; a self-starter. He/she knows what needs to be done and takes decisive action without prompting.

- **Integrity.** Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. All midshipmen are expected to be men and women of integrity; they are honest and truthful at all times

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

and in all situations. Refer to Chapter VIII to learn more about integrity at VMI.

- **Judgement.** The ability to clearly think things through in a logical and orderly fashion so as to make wise and honorable decisions. A cadet who exercises good judgment considers facts and ethics, and weighs pros/cons before deciding on a course of action.

- **Justice.** The practice of being fair and consistent. A midshipman who exhibits justice gives careful consideration to each side of a situation, and gives out rewards or punishments based on merit. Justice requires equal treatment for all and avoids favoritism.

- **Knowledge.** The range of a person's understanding. Your own personal knowledge may encompass information pertaining to personal relationships, current events, science, history, art, religion, language, etc. Cadets are expected to have a deep understanding of the VMI System, to include terminology, rules and regulations. All midshipmen are expected to be knowledgeable about NROTC program requirements and the various ways they can earn a commission in the Naval Service. Additionally, they must possess extensive technical knowledge and be familiar with Navy and Marine Corps customs and courtesies.

- **Loyalty.** The quality of unwavering faithfulness and devotion to a something or someone. In a healthy military environment, loyalty exists between leaders and followers; it extends up and down the chain of command and unites seniors, peers, and subordinates. Cadets are expected to demonstrate loyalty to the VMI Corps of Cadets, their Brother Rats, and the Honor System. All midshipmen are expected to demonstrate loyalty to the Constitution of the United States and the Naval Service. Refer to Chapter IX to learn more about loyalty at VMI.

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

- **Patience.** The capacity to tolerate or withstand delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. A person with patience is steady and long-suffering—able to suppress restlessness or annoyance while they quietly persevere. Patience demands extraordinary self-control. Leaders who demand excellence will continually wrestle with patience during the time it takes for subordinates to improve performance and meet expectations.

- **Resourcefulness.** The ability to find quick and creative ways to overcome difficult situations or unusual problems. It is the ability to generate ideas and identify alternatives to the current course of action. When problems arise, a resourceful leader is able to innovate on the fly and use the tools that are at his/her disposal to come up with a solution.

- **Tact.** The quality and ability to consistently treat seniors, peers, and subordinates with respect and courtesy under all conditions, regardless of true feelings. Tact is the ability to say (and do) the right thing, the right way, and at the right time. It is a sign of maturity. A midshipman with tact has the ability to interact with others in a manner that will maintain good relations and avoid offense.

- **Transparency.** The quality of being honest and open. A transparent person does not attempt to hide or conceal his/her motives. A transparent leader tells it like it is. He/she is an “open book” who keeps no secrets and tells no lies to subordinates. Transparency creates trust and fosters communication between leaders and subordinates.

- **Unselfishness.** Avoidance of providing for one’s own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others. It is the quality of looking out for the needs of your subordinates before your own. For example, midshipmen in tactical leadership positions during Field Training Exercises should always ensure that their subordinates have eaten before they

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

do. If supplies are limited, they should share with others and encourage their subordinates to do the same.

Cadets and midshipmen who quickly learn and adopt these traits demonstrate exceptional military aptitude. They have the propensity to excel within the VMI Corps of Cadets, the NROTC Midshipman Battalion, and the United States Naval Service.

Application during your VMI Cadetship

Military aptitude is an asset at VMI. Cadets who display the right attitude, abilities and character traits have the potential to assume a wide variety of leadership roles and positions within the VMI Corps of Cadets. Some will hold rank and shoulder the responsibilities that go along with it. It should come as no surprise that all Cadre members possess outstanding military aptitude. Likewise, the Regimental Commander, the Battalion Commanders, and the Company Commanders are all chosen on the merits of their leadership abilities and military aptitude.

While rank and military leadership positions are important to some, many cadets who demonstrate these outstanding qualities choose to apply them in other ways. These cadets may use their talents and abilities to lead teams, clubs or committees. They may be elected by their peers to be Class President, Vice-President, or Historian; they may be chosen to serve as a member of the Honor Court. While not every cadet with military aptitude is in a leadership position, it's a sure bet that every leadership position is filled by a cadet with military aptitude. These cadets can be counted upon to uphold the finest traditions of VMI and do their duty to the best of their abilities.

Application in NROTC

Military aptitude is essential to your success as a Midshipman in NROTC. Midshipmen are expected to pursue a commission in the Naval Service, and must demonstrate excellence in academics, physical fitness, and in their military training. This requires a level of commitment that exceeds that of the average VMI Cadet. NROTC standards are the highest of the three ROTCs at VMI, and every midshipmen will be evaluated by active-duty Navy and Marine Corps Officers and Staff Non-commissioned Officers to ensure that they possess the proper attitude, abilities and leadership traits. All midshipmen who desire to become Naval Officers must excel in military aptitude in order to be competitive for a NROTC scholarship or a NROTC Advanced Standing contract. Midshipmen who have earned a NROTC scholarship or Advanced Standing contract will be commissioned as officers following graduation. As future officers, these midshipmen are expected to lead their peers and subordinates within the Midshipman Battalion with enthusiasm and skill.

The NROTC Midshipman Battalion is comprised of a combined (Navy and Marine Corps) battalion command element and two companies—one Navy; one Marine Corps. It is similar to the VMI Corps of Cadets in that the battalion commander and company commanders are chosen based upon the merits of their leadership abilities and military aptitude. However, unlike the Corps of Cadets, leaders in the Midshipman Battalion are expected to demonstrate their leadership skills and military aptitude during all Naval Science classes and labs, Control Times, PT events, and Field Training Exercises. NROTC instruction seeks to replicate the challenges that many midshipmen will face as future officers in the Naval Service. The training is intense and the demands

NSP-1 ----- Military Aptitude

placed upon the midshipmen during the school year (and during NROTC summer training) is designed to ensure that they will be prepared to lead Sailors and Marines after they receive their commissions.

Application after your VMI Cadetship

The qualities, attributes, and characteristics that comprise military aptitude will serve you well for the remainder of your lives. Those cadets and midshipmen who embrace them will succeed in the Naval Service and in civilian life. The world is desperate for educated and disciplined young men and women—“citizen soldiers” who have the courage to lead in combat and in the workplace. Now, more than ever, our society needs the services of confident, courageous, and determined VMI graduates who demonstrate selfless servant-leadership and integrity. The future of our great nation will depend on you. Your military aptitude is a solid foundation that will ensure victory on the battlefield and prosperity in your daily lives.

