



Executive Position Profile

Superintendent

2025



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The Board of Visitors of Virginia Military Institute (VMI), located in Lexington, VA, invites nominations and applications from individuals who wish to be considered for VMI's next superintendent. Building upon the Institute's historic success, the next superintendent will have the opportunity to help enhance and preserve the VMI experience for years to come. This superintendent will lead the Institute as it continues to deliver its unique method of education, in a constantly changing educational environment, while never wavering from the goal of producing leaders of character who will positively influence their communities.

About Virginia Military Institute

Founded in 1839, VMI is the oldest state-supported military college in the United States. Throughout its storied history, VMI has produced leaders and individuals whose daily lives reflect integrity, fairness, and appreciation for the value of hard work that is instilled at the Institute. For the individual who wants an undergraduate experience more complete and transformative than an ordinary college or university can provide, and more versatile in its applications than a military service academy affords, VMI offers a superb education.

U.S. News & World Report has ranked VMI among the nation's top undergraduate public liberal arts colleges since 2001. The Institute's efficacy is well demonstrated by generations of VMI graduates. Among the alumni of VMI are a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, 11 Rhodes Scholars, seven Medal of Honor recipients, a Pulitzer Prize winner, college presidents, and general and flag officers.

No other college in America is so attentive to and so proud of its product: citizen-soldiers prepared both for civilian leadership in their professions and for military leadership in times of national need. VMI graduates have made distinguished contributions both in the military and in fields as diverse as business, engineering, international affairs, medicine, and public policy, often at remarkably young ages. VMI's multi-faceted program is designed to instill in each cadet the lifelong values of integrity, devotion to duty, self-discipline, and self-reliance.



History of VMI

While advocating for the establishment of VMI, Col. J.T.L. Preston, one of the Institute's founders, envisioned "the healthful and pleasant abode of a crowd of honorable youths pressing up the hill of science with noble emulation, a gratifying spectacle, an honor to our country and our state. Objects of honest pride to their instructors and fair specimens of citizen soldiers, attached to their native state, proud of her fame and ready in every time of deepest peril to vindicate her honor and defend her rights." On Nov. 11, 1839, Col. Preston's vision was realized when 23 young Virginians were mustered into the service of the state and the first cadet sentry took his post. Today the duty of walking guard duty is the oldest tradition of the Institute, a tradition experienced by every cadet, and Col. Preston's statement is engraved on the Parapet. Alongside those first cadets, Professor (later Maj. Gen.) Francis H. Smith, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, was the first superintendent of VMI. During his 50-year tenure, the Corps increased in size, the curriculum broadened, and the faculty grew. The first president of the Board of Visitors was Col. Claudius Crozet, a graduate of Ecole Polytechnique in Paris and former faculty member at West Point, who was previously the state engineer of Virginia.

Since the Institute was founded, VMI alumni have fought in every war involving the United States, starting with the Mexican War just four years after VMI graduated its first class. During the Civil War, most VMI graduates served in the Southern armies. Thomas J. Jackson, a West Point graduate and Mexican War veteran who joined the VMI faculty in 1851, became a general of the Confederate forces and earned the name "Stonewall" Jackson.

On May 15, 1864, the VMI Cadet Corps engaged in a pitched battle at New Market, winning credit for helping turn the tide in favor of the Confederate forces. Ten cadets were killed and 47 wounded. Six of the dead are buried on the VMI grounds. The event remains the only time in American history in which the entire student body of an

American college fought in battle as a unit. The Corps of Cadets pays tribute to the courage and valor of the New Market Cadets, as well as all former cadets who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country over the years, in a formal ceremony held at the Institute yearly on May 15.

The Institute was shelled and burned by Union forces in June 1864 but reopened in October 1865. By the early 1900s the Corps had grown to 700 strong. The Bachelor of Arts degree was first awarded in 1912 and replaced the older degree of “graduate.” During World War I, more than 1,400 alumni served in the military. The 1930s was a decade of growth with the addition of a new engineering building and main library.

During World War II, more than 4,000 alumni answered the call to service between 1941 and 1945, most notably General of the Army George C. Marshall, Class of 1901, the World War II Army Chief of Staff. The war also brought accelerated academic programs, allowing cadets to graduate early, and VMI was the site for special federally operated training programs. With the return of veterans wishing to complete their education as new cadets under the GI Bill, it was necessary to enlarge the Barracks in 1948. The athletic program also benefited from the growth of the Corps.

VMI alumni continue to serve their nation with hundreds having achieved the rank of general or flag officer in the Armed Forces of the United States and several foreign countries, most notably Thailand and the Republic of China. During World Wars I and II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, over 300 alumni gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country, and two alumni were killed during Operation Desert Storm. Two VMI alumni were among those killed on September 11, 2001, in the terrorist attacks on America, and 12 alumni have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Cadet Corps has grown in size and diversity since 1839. In 1857 admission was expanded from Virginians to any resident of the United States. The first African American cadets graduated in 1972. Women first entered the Corps in 1997. Today women comprise about 14 percent of the approximately 1,600-member cadet Corps.

The devoted service of the 14 superintendents who have followed Maj. Gen. Smith has enabled the Institute to strengthen its position as a uniquely valuable source of honorable and dedicated citizen-soldiers for the commonwealth and the nation. There are nearly 17,000 living alumni. VMI graduates have distinguished themselves as exemplified through seven Medal of Honor recipients, 11 Rhodes Scholars, a Pulitzer Prize winner, 293 general and flag officers, two Virginia governors, numerous state and federal legislators, and many business executives in the fields of science, defense, security, engineering, and manufacturing. Among VMI graduates are General of the Army George C. Marshall, Class of 1901, the World War II Army Chief of Staff, architect of the Marshall Plan and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and Jonathan M. Daniels, Class of 1961, murdered during the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s and named a lesser saint of the Episcopal Church for his sacrifice.

VMI is proud of its uniquely rigorous and constantly evolving system of education, and its earned reputation as one of America’s premier institutions of higher education. Our mission of producing leaders — educated men and women of unimpeachable character and absolute integrity — remains our clear focus today and for the future.

For more information on the history of VMI, please visit: <https://www.vmi.edu/about/history/>



Virginia Military Institute Today

VMI continues to be a distinguished, co-educational, public institution combining rigorous academics, military discipline, and leadership development. The Institute has approximately 1,600 cadets, of which 60% hail from Virginia. Cadets come from 43 states and territories, in addition to Guam, the District of Columbia, and 10 foreign countries. All cadets are required to participate in one of the four ROTC programs: Army, Marines, Navy, or Air Force. Cadets also have the option of a direct commission in the U.S. Coast Guard through VMI's Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program. Commissioning is encouraged but optional. On average, over 50% of each graduating class pursues commissions. More than 87% of the Corps receive some sort of financial aid, with 42% of cadets qualifying for need-based aid. 97% of VMI graduates are employed or enrolled in graduate school within six-months of graduation.

Academics

Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate degrees, the VMI academic program educates cadets in a rigorous environment that encourages lifelong learning and develops citizens of character who anticipate, respond, and lead in a complex and changing world. VMI offers cadets a challenging four-year core curriculum and 14 nationally recognized majors in engineering, the sciences, and the humanities, with an array of enrichment opportunities provided through the Institute Honors Program, undergraduate research, foreign study, internships, and the Institute Writing Program. Cadets are taught by a faculty where 96% of full-time teaching faculty members have a Ph.D. or a terminal degree in their field; the cadet-to-faculty ratio is approximately 10:1.

The Honor Code and Cadet Life

The VMI Honor Code, a foundational principle stating, "A Cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do," and the traditions and rules of the Institute regulate the daily life of cadets. Cadets live in barracks, eat together, and wear the traditional cadet uniforms. Cadets take the VMI fitness test every semester. Cadet rights, privileges, and responsibilities are earned and increase each year of their cadetship through the class system. Several committees run the VMI cadet government and together handle issues of the Corps and enforce Institute regulations. The regimental system is the military component of the Corps of Cadets— nine rifle companies plus the regimental band company. About 70 clubs, club sports, and extracurricular organizations provide a wide range of activities and leadership opportunities for cadets.

The Post

VMI's post consists of 80 buildings, many dating from the 19th century, on 200 acres. It is recognized as a national historic district with Old Barracks recognized as a national historic landmark. Since the dawn of the 21st century, there has been a consistent effort toward modernizing buildings to make them viable sites for learning and athletic competition. VMI also owns several off-post properties, including McKethan Park, which is the site of the VMI observatory, the New Market Battlefield State Historical Park, the Jackson House Museum and the adjoining Davidson-Tucker House in downtown Lexington. VMI also owns the Chessie Nature Trail, a multipurpose recreational trail linking Buena Vista and Lexington.



Athletics

VMI participates in the NCAA Division I (FCS in football), primarily as a member of the Southern Conference. VMI sponsors 18 teams: 11 men's and seven women's. Approximately 30% of the Corps of Cadets participate in NCAA athletics.



Mission

Virginia Military Institute believes that the measure of a college lies in the quality and performance of its graduates and their contributions to society.

Therefore, it is the mission of Virginia Military Institute to produce educated, honorable men and women, prepared for the varied work of civil life, imbued with love of learning, confident in the functions and attitudes of leadership, possessing a high sense of public service, advocates of the American Democracy and free enterprise system, and ready as citizen-soldiers to defend their country in time of national peril.

To accomplish this result, Virginia Military Institute shall provide to qualified young men and women undergraduate education of highest quality -- embracing engineering, science, and the arts -- conducted in, and facilitated by, the unique VMI system of military discipline.

Vision

To be the premier small college in the nation, unequaled in producing educated and honorable citizen-leaders, with an international reputation for academic excellence supported by a unique commitment to character development, self-discipline, and physical challenge conducted in a military environment.

Values

Honor

Honor is the heart and bedrock of the VMI experience. More than a set of rules and regulations, the objective of the honor code is the inculcation of honor as a lifestyle.

Excellence

The VMI experience is predicated on pushing cadets to be the best version of themselves.

Self-Discipline

Cadets learn very quickly there are deep wells of strength that are seldom used but are called upon to succeed at VMI. Cadets learn to do tasks that are seemingly insignificant but, in the end, develop in them the qualities of attention to detail and time management.

Courage

VMI is no ordinary college. Courage is an early sign of a successful cadet. Developing and exercising the moral and physical courage to stand up as a leader, and also be a principled follower, is a cornerstone of a cadetship at VMI.

Esprit de Corps

Although a VMI cadetship is challenging from the start, there is no lack of support. No single cadet's challenges are greater than another's. No one is left behind, no one struggles alone. Embracing these tenets is at the heart of "one corps, one VMI."

Selfless Service

At VMI, self-centered pride takes a backseat to selfless service. Selflessness becomes a way of life. Success comes with honorable service and hard work.

Resilience

Mental toughness inspires cadet life. There is no shame in asking for or receiving help, and help is readily available. There's no fear in failure, but rather a motivation for doing better the next time.

For more information about VMI's mission, vision, and values, please visit the website for VMI's strategic plan: Forging 21st Century Leaders: <https://www.vmi.edu/forgingleaders/plan/>

For more information on VMI in general, please visit the VMI website: www.vmi.edu.





Lexington, Virginia

Lexington is a vibrant, small city located in Rockbridge County in the Shenandoah Valley. The county's economy is influenced by agriculture, education, and tourism, with Lexington serving as the economic and cultural hub, and known for its rich history, academic institutions, and picturesque surroundings. Lexington offers an array of well-preserved 19th-century buildings, a robust culinary culture, and numerous locally owned shops. Serving as the county seat, Lexington has a population of approximately 7,320 as of the 2020 census. Lexington and Rockbridge County offer a unique blend of historical significance, academic excellence, natural beauty, and vibrant community life, making them a compelling destination for visitors and a cherished home for residents.

Founded in 1778, Lexington was named after Lexington, Mass., the site of the first battle of the American Revolution. The city played a significant role during the Civil War and is home to the graves of Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Lee is buried in the University (formerly Lee) Chapel at Washington and Lee University, while Jackson rests at Oak Grove Cemetery. The Stonewall Jackson House, his only surviving residence, is now a museum owned and operated by VMI and open to the public. Lexington also honors Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the mechanical reaper, with a statue on the Washington and Lee University campus. The McCormick farm in nearby Raphine, now serves as a satellite agricultural research center for Virginia Tech.

Surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains, Lexington offers abundant outdoor activities:

- Natural Bridge State Park featuring a 215-foot limestone arch and scenic hiking trails.
- Goshen Pass, a popular spot for kayaking, fishing, and hiking.
- Chessie Nature Trail, a seven-mile trail along the Maury River, ideal for walking and wildlife observation.

Rockbridge County, established in 1777 and named after the Natural Bridge, encompasses 601 square miles of diverse landscapes, including forests, rivers, and mountains. The county is bordered by the Blue Ridge Mountains to the northwest and the Allegheny Mountains to the west, and offers numerous outdoor recreational opportunities, e.g., golf, hiking, biking, kayaking, an outdoor theater, and several breweries and wineries. The region is also known for its picturesque autumn foliage, making it a popular destination for fall getaways.

For more information about Lexington, please visit: www.lexingtonvirginia.com and <https://www.co.rockbridge.va.us/>



The Superintendent

The superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the Institute with responsibility for ensuring the success of VMI's mission, academic integrity and operations, fiscal stability, enrollment management, fundraising efforts, personnel development, and physical plant management. In doing so, the superintendent works closely with the Board of Visitors in developing, communicating, and executing a strategy consistent with the overall mission and vision of VMI. As such, the superintendent will be committed to leading and inspiring VMI stakeholders in pursuit of the Institute's mission to produce educated, honorable men and women, within an environment of excellence in VMI's "Three-Legged Stool:" academics, military, and athletics.

Reporting Relationships & Responsibilities

The superintendent is appointed by, and reports directly to, the Board of Visitors. The board defines the mission of the Institute as a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia and oversees the development, revision, and implementation of a strategic plan for the accomplishment of that mission. The board has 16 members, appointed by the governor of Virginia and subject to confirmation by the Virginia General Assembly. Of those members, four must be non-alumni, and 12 must be alumni. The four non-alumni must be residents of the commonwealth. Four of the 12 alumni will be non-residents of the commonwealth. The adjutant general of the Commonwealth of Virginia serves as a non-voting, ex officio member of the board. A regular term of membership is four years. Members are eligible for reappointment but may not serve more than two consecutive terms. Each year the board appoints a cadet to serve as a non-voting, advisory representative to the board.

The superintendent in turn provides leadership to the Institute's approximately 800 employees, including wage and full-time classified staff, administrative and professional faculty, and teaching and research faculty. She/he will also oversee an operating budget of approximately \$125 million which includes a combination of \$33.2 million from state general funds; \$52 million in cadet tuition/fees/sales; and \$36 million in private funds/local funds. In addition, the VMI Foundation, a separate 501(c)3 organization devoted to the mission of the Institute, manages an approximately \$800 million endowment. Institute executives and special staff officers reporting directly to the superintendent are:

- Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty
- Deputy Superintendent for Finance and Support
- Chief of Staff
- Commandant of Cadets
- Chief Information Officer
- Director of Intercollegiate Athletics (AD)
- Executive Officer to the Superintendent and Secretary to the Board of Visitors
- Assistant Superintendent – Operations and Planning
- Executive Director - Center for Leadership and Ethics
- Assistant Superintendent – Strategic Enrollment Management
- Institute Sergeant Major
- Chief Diversity Officer
- Inspector General/Title IX Coordinator
- General Counsel
- Director – Communications and Marketing
- Institute Chaplain
- Executive Secretary

In addition to the broad responsibilities listed above, specific responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Engage with the board on all matters pertaining to academics, enrollment, cadet affairs, fiscal matters, fundraising, and stakeholder relations necessary to develop and/or revise and implement a strategic plan in support of the Institute's mission and values.
- Provide exceptional, transparent, and empowering leadership, including recruiting, retaining, managing, motivating, and evaluating senior professional staff, who in turn provide leadership through all functional disciplines associated with the Institute.
- Actively, meaningfully, and frequently engage with faculty and staff.
- Provide leadership that continues to advance an environment at the Institute that embodies VMI's values of honor, excellence, self-discipline, courage, esprit de corps, selfless service, and resilience.
- Provide strategic, financial, and operational leadership and oversight in budgeting, fiscal management, and administration to maximize the effective and efficient acquisition and use of resources.
- Provide leadership, along with the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty, in recruiting, retaining, and motivating a high-quality faculty committed to the mission and vision of VMI.
- Aggressively champion the VMI educational experience; promote initiatives to attract qualified students and meet enrollment goals and increase retention.

- Actively lead and participate in fundraising and development activities; major gift solicitations; continue to grow the endowment; create, sustain, and build trusting relationships with multiple and diverse external constituencies, including state political leaders.
- Develop, nurture, and maintain productive relationships with the VMI Alumni Agencies.
- Understand the importance of, and show support for, all facets of cadet life and all manner of cadet activities; support activities consistent with helping cadets to have a transformational educational experience.
- Actively engage with the Corp of Cadets (e.g., visible on campus; attend/participate in a variety of events on campus); serve as a leadership role model for cadets.
- Serve as the face of VMI and seek appropriate opportunities to promote and market the Institute in the community, the region, and nationally via the media, public relations activities, community activities, etc.; be active and visible in the VMI and Lexington communities.
- Engage in the excitement and competitive spirit of VMI Athletics and value their importance and role within the Institute.
- Actively embrace the role of representing VMI to all alumni, media, elected officials, the academic community, the corporate community, and other institutions of higher education; actively interact with important Commonwealth of Virginia offices and officials, including the governor and cabinet, the legislature and its committees and staff, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.
- Maintain regular and consistent contact with alumni, faculty, staff, and the Corps of Cadets to facilitate open communication; listen to ideas and concerns; collaborate in the development of opportunities and solutions.
- Suggest, develop, and implement strategies and/or directives as approved or determined by the Board of Visitors.
- Seek professional development opportunities and encourage others to take advantage of opportunities to further enhance professional knowledge, skills, effectiveness, and competence.

Qualifications

Preferred qualifications for the superintendent include the following:

- Passion and enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the mission, vision, values, and traditions of VMI, with the ability to cast a vision for the Institute in the ever-changing higher education landscape.
- Espouse and model leadership principles based on integrity, honesty, trust, sincerity, empathy, self-discipline, courage, inclusiveness, collaboration, humility, servant leadership, and compassion.
- Ability to lead, and operationally manage, in a manner that unifies individuals in the VMI community of stakeholders in pursuit of VMI's mission and operational goals.
- Visionary, strategic, and creative thinker; able to think innovatively and explore new ideas; understands the changing landscape in higher education and can lead the Institute to adapt as appropriate; ability to articulate the VMI mission, vision, strategy, and value proposition to inspire others.
- Proven record of successful military leadership; additional leadership experience in an academic and/or corporate setting.
- Exceptional people skills and interpersonal abilities; ability to inspire others; accessible; energetic and enthusiastic; able to build and maintain close relationships and engender trust; willing and eager to use these attributes for governmental and community relations and financial development.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills; listens well; appreciates and considers suggestions and ideas of others.

- Ability to be an effective fundraiser.
- Superior business management skills along with a strong financial acumen.
- Courage and willingness to make decisions, including difficult but necessary decisions; willingness to take appropriate risks.
- Experience working with a governing board, or experience as a member of a governing board.
- Experience working with athletic departments and/or the NCAA and/or personal experience as an intercollegiate athlete.
- Genuine desire to be engaged in post activities and participate in the activities of the greater VMI community, the city of Lexington and Rockbridge County, as well as the state and surrounding region.
- Appropriate academic credentials; strong preference for a terminal degree; however, all interested individuals with outstanding success in the military, academia, and/or business or other professional career are encouraged to apply.





Compensation

Compensation will be commensurate with experience including a competitive base salary, car allowance, comprehensive benefits package, and a residence on post.

To make a nomination, provide a referral, or for additional information, please use the contact information below. Applications and nominations will be accepted until a successful candidate has been appointed. Review of applications will begin immediately.

To apply, please submit a resume and/or vita, and cover letter, to VMSuperintendent@buffkinbaker.com.

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980-296-5401 | ken@buffkinbaker.com

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VMI is an Equal Opportunity Employer. In a continuing effort to enrich its academic environment and provide equal education and employment opportunities, VMI encourages women, minorities, disabled individuals, and veterans to apply. AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and other national service alumni are also encouraged to apply. VMI will provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with documented disabilities to ensure equal access and equal opportunities with regard to employment, educational opportunities, programs and services.