

## VMI Board of Visitors Wraps Up Academic Year

The VMI Board of Visitors recently concluded their spring meetings. The Board approved the Institute's fiscal year 2023 budget, set tuition and fees for the 2022-23 academic year, and received updates on academics, athletics, and cadet life.

"We are focused on continuing to assure that we are fulfilling our mission and purpose by preparing our cadets to be the leaders of the future," said Board of Visitors President Tom Watjen '76. "While we continue to address issues that need our attention, we are very pleased with VMI's current position. The three legs of the VMI stool – academics, cadet and military life, and athletics – are in good order as we close the academic year."

During his remarks, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, VMI's superintendent, laid out the process for developing a new strategic plan for the Institute. Acknowledging the great success the Institute has enjoyed under Vision 2039, Wins detailed the need for VMI to continue to evolve to meet the needs of the commonwealth and the nation.

"VMI has become a national leader under Vision 2039," Wins said. "Since the strategy's development in 2005, the higher education, military, and civilian landscapes have changed dramatically. VMI is in a spectacular position to build on our success over the last 20 years while improving the VMI experience to be a top-notch academic institution that trains our cadets to be citizen-soldiers and leaders of character which are so desperately needed in today's society."

### Academics

- Members of the Board of Visitors gave preliminary approval for the Institute to grant 191 bachelor's of science and 147 bachelor's of arts degrees in May to the Class of 2022. Such approval is contingent upon final certification of completion of degree requirements.
- The Peay Merit Scholars program has identified one applicant from the incoming Class of 2023+3 to receive this full scholarship bringing the total number of Peay Scholars to four (two first class, 1 third class, 1 matriculant).
- VMI has received a gift from the Herndon Foundation that will provide \$1 million per year in perpetuity for compensation for faculty in the engineering, natural sciences, computer and information sciences, and economic and business fields.
- Dr. Mark Boonshoft will begin service in August 2022 as VMI's first American Constitutional history chair. Boonshoft most recently served as the executive director of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. He holds a Ph.D. and master's degrees in history from the Ohio State University.

### Cadet / Military Life

- 184 cadets who graduate in May are expected to commission in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, or National Guard.
- Coast Guard held its first field training exercise (FTX) this spring.
- The commandant's office has focused on talent management in building teams among the Corps of Cadets. Talented leaders are chosen who can work together to affect purpose.
- The 2022 cadet leadership team is now in place and is participating in a leader development program setting goals for their time leading the Corps next year. Several leaders had an opportunity to address the board during the meeting.

### Athletics

- Two new head coaches have been added to the athletic coaching team.
  - Andrew Wilson will serve as the men's head basketball coach. Wilson was a top assistant and defensive coordinator for James Madison University.
  - Scott Thacker will serve as the head swim and dive coach. Thacker most recently served as the head coach of the Roanoke College swimming program helping the newly re-established men's swim team to an ODAC conference title in 2021.
- Men's basketball was invited to participate in the post-season College Basketball Invitational in Daytona Beach, Florida, the program's first post-season birth since 2014.
- The men's swimming team broke three school records this season.
- Senior sprinter Jordin Poindexter was named the Most Outstanding Male Athlete at the SoCon Indoor Track and Field Championships.
- Freshman Eleyah Armstrong and senior Ahliyah Williams qualified for the IC4A/ECAC Championships and represented VMI well.
- Sophomore Christopher Hicks has qualified to compete at a USA Shooting event to earn the chance to be a member of the 2022 National Junior Olympic Rifle team and Junior World Championship Rifle circuit.

"With COVID hopefully in the rearview mirror, our focus this year has been to return the VMI experience to normal," said Wins. "There has been a strong emphasis this year on balancing the three legs of the stool so that cadets can succeed in the classroom, on the pitch, and on the hill. The results discussed at our meeting are very encouraging."

## Budget

The Board of Visitors approved the fiscal year 2023 operating budget of \$108.7 million. The budget includes an 11% increase in funds for financial aid while limiting the increase in tuition and fees to just 3%. Private support from the VMI Alumni Agencies increased to \$27.5 million representing approximately 25% of VMI's overall budget.

## Private Philanthropy

David Praznicki, chief executive officer of the VMI Alumni Agencies, reported that private fundraising for the year is expected to finish strong. Praznicki told the board that he expects the agencies will have their best or second-best year of fundraising in five years. According to Praznicki:

- Cash gifts are up by 640 donors and more than \$5.4 million compared to FY 2021.
- Cash gifts and new pledge commitments are up by 814 donors and more than \$27 million compared to FY 2021.
- Annual giving is up by more than \$377,000 and 480 donors.
- In FY 2022, giving is at \$47.7 million, the highest in the last five years with two months to go.

“Our alumni associations remain critically important to the sustainability of the Institute and our ability to support the activities so vital to executing our mission and purpose and maintaining VMI's unique form of education,” Watjen said. “We are forever grateful to them and our loyal alumni for their continued financial support. We are fortunate that between our alumni support and that of the state, we continue to make significant investments in our academic programs and other resources on post.”

## Committee Work

In 2021, the Board of Visitors created two ad hoc committees to address timely issues facing the Institute. The Commemorations and Memorials Naming and Review Committee was formed to review all symbology on post. The committee [filed its final report](#) and recommendations which were adopted by the full Board of Visitors. Most things on post remain as they are as VMI works to do a better job contextualizing VMI's role in our nation's history.

The Recommendations Review Committee was created last year to provide oversight of the Institute's response to the recommendations from the commonwealth's review of VMI's diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. The committee has also filed its final report to the full Board of Visitors. Further [oversight of the Institute's DEI activities will be the purview of the Board of Visitor's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee](#).

“I want to thank these committees and their chairs, Richard Hines '66 and Gene Scott '80, for the extraordinary work they've done under challenging circumstances,” Watjen said. “While I know not all alumni may agree with some of the decisions, I can assure you that our committees have followed a fact-based process with clear criteria to guide their decisions keeping in mind the best interests of the Corps of Cadets and the VMI mission.”

The Board of Visitors External Relations Committee made a recommendation which was adopted by the full board to establish a New Market Medal Selection Committee. The committee will be chaired by Scott as chair of the External Relations Committee.

#### Gen. Peay Recognition

Finally, the Board of Visitors was pleased to [take several steps to recognize and honor the significant service to the Institute of the 14<sup>th</sup> superintendent, Gen. J. H. Binford Peay III '62 and his wife Pamela](#). The board voted to bestow the title Superintendent Emeritus upon Peay. Additionally, the future Center for Leadership and Ethics Phase II building will be named Peay Hall while the building's executive dining room will be named for Pamela Peay.

“To say that there’s a lot going on at the Institute is an understatement. The Board of Visitors, as well as the administration, continues to build for the future,” Watjen said. “Preparing our current and future cadets to lead in this ever-changing world is our sole priority. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the hard work and dedication of our young people culminating with the receipt of a coveted VMI diploma and, for many, a commission in the U.S. armed forces. Our cadets inspire us.”