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# Four Year Plan

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## Why a Four-Year Plan?

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

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

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

## A Plan Designed for you

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

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

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

**Rat/4<sup>th</sup> Class Year:** During your first year at VMI, you will start to build the foundation for a successful college experience.

- Establish a successful academic foundation by completing course work with a quality grade point average (GPA). Most employers and graduate programs are looking for a 3.0 GPA minimum.
- Explore your academic major and consider a minor or concentration area.
- Actively engage at least one faculty or staff member in knowing you well and becoming a resource for you, they can greatly assist in the career search
- Create a time management plan that balances academic, leadership, wellness, and spiritual aspects of personal growth and college life
- Save noteworthy projects, papers and assignments to include in a portfolio.
- Visit the Career Services website, blog, and office to learn about services and resources available.

- Begin exploring potential career paths by using Focus 2, Sigi3, CareerShift, and other resources available through the Office of Career Services.
- Develop your college resume during the fall semester to prepare for application to internships, research experiences, and summer jobs.
- Register for KeydetConnect. KeydetConnect is the place to upload your resume, connect with alumni mentors, and register for on-Post interviewing and career events.
- Commit to at least one VMI-sponsored activity or organization.
- Participate in a service project or community service event.
- Broaden your perspective by attending VMI sponsored academic and cultural events.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Class Year:** Avoid the “sophomore slump” by expanding your self-awareness and involvement in programs and activities. This is a time to explore opportunities to maximize career experiences and networking.

- Maintain and seek to increase your cumulative GPA. Aim for a 3.0 GPA or higher.
- Adjust your time management plan to incorporate new responsibilities in the academic, leadership, wellness, and spiritual aspects of VMI life.
- Discuss career and graduate school plans, and other post-VMI goals with your academic advisor; develop a career action plan.
- Obtain one recommendation from a faculty or staff member for your portfolio.
- Update your GPA and career preferences on KeydetConnect.
- Update your resume at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters.
- Research and apply for opportunities to study abroad or participate in a summer internship.
- Develop a networking strategy that incorporates informational interviewing with alumni and employers. \* Remember to use the Alumni Mentor Network on KeydetConnect\*
- Consider developing a LinkedIn account where you can network in your occupational interest areas, obtain recommendations, and begin building your online network.
- Continue to save noteworthy projects, papers, and assignments to include in your portfolio.
- Commit to activities and leadership experiences related to your major and academic interests.
- Set a plan and priorities activities and programs you will participate in during 2<sup>nd</sup> class year

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

- Seek to be named to the Dean’s List and work for at least a 3.0 GPA each semester
- Consult with your academic advisor and faculty members about your post-graduation plans.
- Organize a timeline for applying to graduate/professional school or seeking full-time employment
- Update your resume and KeydetConnect account.
- Organize and prepare your portfolio of documents (online or paper) for applying to summer internship, research, or work opportunities.
- Consider mock interviews to refine your interview skills.
- During the early Fall begin creating a plan for the summer between second and first class year.
- Continue to add and organize noteworthy projects, papers, and assignments in your portfolio.
- Seek out at least one structured leadership role within an academic or extracurricular organization.

**1<sup>st</sup> Class Year:** Your 1<sup>st</sup> class year at VMI is as significant a time of transition. Your focused goals are now very specific, bound by time and cumulative. This is a time to prepare for the transition to your first career. First class cadets should expect to accomplish the following:

- Continue to maintain/improve your GPA.
- Confirm your graduation date with your academic advisor.
- Request additional letters of recommendation for your portfolio.
- Plan to request copies of your transcript from the Registrar’s Office.
- Update your resume and KeydetConnect account to reflect your graduate date. Be sure to post your approved resume to KeydetConnect.
- Seek out opportunities to network and connect with alumni and employers; through career fairs, networking events, and socials.

- Update your voice mail message and ensure that you have plenty of space for a potential employer to leave you a message.
- Follow-up promptly with employers and graduate schools extending offers.
- Share your employment and post-graduation plans with the Office of Career Services.
- Consider joining an appropriate professional or trade association.
- Maintain involvement in co-curricular, service and leadership activities.

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

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

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

### A Note about Career Testing

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

## WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR ON A COLLEGE RESUME:

Employers look for the following skills and attributes in a college student's resume according to a Spring 2017 NACE Survey:

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| • Teamwork                              | • Problem Solving              |
| • Communication Skills                  | • Strong Work Ethic            |
| • Leadership                            | • Initiative                   |
| • Analytical and Problem Solving Skills | • Flexibility and Adaptability |
| • Detail Oriented                       | • Interpersonal Skills         |
| • Computer Skills                       | • Organizational Skills        |

## HOW EMPLOYERS FIND YOU:

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

1. Resume Referrals (employers collect approved resumes in KeydetConnect)
2. Resume Collections (cadets submit resumes to employers in KeydetConnect)
3. On-Post Interviews (cadets submit resumes and are selected to interview with employers through KeydetConnect)