



# INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 52, Number 5, February 2024

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50TH ANNIVERSARY

# New Psych Class Studies Risk in Youth

By Marianne Hause

Lt. Col. Sara Whipple, associate professor of psychology, developed a new class this academic year titled, “Risk and Resilience in Youth.” Cadets taking the course study risk factors that youth can face, and how those risks manifest in the physical body, particularly the brain. Cadets also learn to identify conditions that safeguard against risk, and examine programs and policies that focus on positive youth development.

According to Whipple, one such program is the College Orientation Workshop, Inc. (COW), a challenging four-week summer program that offers education, leadership, character building, and physical training to promising male minority high school students at no cost to them. The program also encourages and helps prepare the students to seek higher education at the college of their choice. “COW is a superb example of a multi-faceted intervention program. They have 37 years of experience working with young men. As a result, they understand the types of risks these young men have faced at home, school, and in their neighborhoods. They also have first-hand insight into what works, as evidenced by the success of many of the COW graduates,” said Whipple.

Whipple invited Eugene Williams '74, founder and executive director of COW, and Capt. Chad Joyce, instructor in the Department of Human Performance and Wellness at VMI and director of COW, to speak to her class recently. Williams opened his talk by asking the cadets several probing questions: “What comes to mind when you hear the term ‘at risk youth’? Who do you see in your mind’s eye?” After hearing many answers, Williams shared that the majority of COW participants come from single-parent families which are headed by a female—either a mother or grandmother. The environment in which they come from is far from ideal, and there may be abuse in the home. They often view themselves as victims. They don’t come to COW voluntarily, but from the urging of a family member. If the COW graduate goes to college, he may very well be the first generation of his family to go.

Williams stressed that to be successful, a program must be transformational. “So many programs are window dressing. You must get these students out of their comfort zone, in a hard yet loving way. We establish trust. We teach them how they learn, and we have them accept constructive coaching over and over. Repetition is important. We see miraculous things happen in the four-week program,” he said.

Joyce shared that he had engaged in problematic behavior in high school, and asked the cadets if they had ever felt like they were at risk at some point in their lives. After a few confirmed they had,

he stated, “We all have potential of being at risk of something in our lifetimes.”

Whipple and her department colleagues, Col. Scott Frein and Col. Keith Kline, partnered with the COW Program in 2017 to begin researching its effectiveness. “There are now several years of data to confirm that COW participants show improvement across a variety of physical and psychological variables from pre-program to post-program. We collect data the first day, and the very end of the four-week program. From pre-program to post-program, we found there are statistically significant increases in aspirational educational attainment, social support, positive affect, life satisfaction, planning, self-esteem, along with significant trends in increased self-efficacy. There are significant increases in the number of sit-ups and push-ups completed, along with significantly lower run

times. There are decreases in blood pressure (both systolic and diastolic) and heart rate. Additionally, we were able to follow-up with some COW participants three months and six months after program completion. After three months, their life satisfaction levels were significantly higher than before attending the COW program, and their positive affect remained elevated. After six months, self-esteem was significantly higher than before COW,” said Whipple.

Two cadets enrolled in the class, Travis Buchanan '24, a psychology major, and Jesse Dennis '24, an electrical and computer engineering major who minors in psychology,

disclosed their thoughts on the course. “Risk and Resilience teaches us topics and values that not only apply to the classroom, but also apply to the environment around us. We discuss what causes a person to be at risk and ways to overcome adversity,” said Buchanan.

Dennis added, “The course provides access to a different way of thinking about a problem. The COW lecture was a fantastic example of how the class works. We discussed both some of the causes of risk to youth, and programs like COW that help them overcome it and succeed,” she said.

Williams closed his lecture with a story to illustrate the need for transformational tough love, and that one grows and develops through challenges. “A loving father was concerned for his young family, and wanted to protect them from the dangers of the world, and from those who would do them harm. He wanted to teach them to be tough, but knew he would have to take them out of their comfort zone to do it. So, one day he led them on a hike to the top of House Mountain, and called them over to the edge. Do you know what he did then? He did something drastic, and pushed them over the edge. Do you know what happened? They flew. They were a family of birds.” ❁



Lt. Col. Sara Whipple teaches class on the first day of fall semester.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

# INSTITUTE REPORT

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The Institute Report, VMI's news magazine, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; 540-464-7207; or [VMIRreport@vmi.edu](mailto:VMIRreport@vmi.edu).  
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On the cover: Snow fell on post Jan. 15, making the morning of Jan. 16—the first day of class—a snowy start to the semester.—VMI Photo by Lexie West.

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# VMI Holds December Commissioning and Graduation

By Marianne Hause

The shortest day of the year was a great day of celebration, joy, and pride, as families and friends gathered in Memorial Hall surrounded by holiday greenery, to witness 35 cadets cross the stage to receive their diplomas during the commencement ceremony Dec. 21.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, gave the keynote remarks, standing in for the scheduled speaker, John D. Adams '96, who apologetically canceled due to illness. Adams graduated from VMI with a degree in economics and business and is now a member of the VMI Board of Visitors.

Wins congratulated the graduating cadets and commended them on their persistence and hard work, and that he understood that they were ready to move on to the next stage of their lives, but cautioned them not to forget what they had accomplished during their time at VMI. "Leaving VMI is often bittersweet. There are a few routines you won't miss: room inspections, studying late into the night, and forming up on cold mornings. On the other hand, I am confident you will have pleasant memories of Ring Figure, barracks life, and your brother rats. The bonds you have formed will last a lifetime and are priceless," he said.

Wins asked them to consider the lessons they learned at VMI: lessons of honor, teamwork, discipline, and friendship. "I am confident these lessons will serve you well for the rest of your life and provide a strong foundation to build upon," he stated.



Graduating cadets sit in Memorial Hall during the commencement ceremony Dec. 21.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

He challenged them to ponder the fundamentals they learned from VMI. "Apply those principles to whatever situation you find yourself in life. Think critically, build trust, and reinforce the principles of honor and integrity. You own your integrity; it can never be taken away from you. Your integrity is irreplaceable. This foundation you built never goes out of style, especially in the face of danger. When others compromise during times of crisis, use that

muscle memory you developed at VMI to overcome adversity.

"The world needs young leaders ready for a challenge who have the persistence and intensity to face problems head on. Use what you have learned. America needs strong leaders who are not afraid to make sound decisions and overcome obstacles."

He told the cadets that his speech would be the last time he addressed them as cadets. "From this point forward, you are graduates—fellow alumni—of the Virginia Military Institute. We are all very proud of your accomplishment."

He reminded the cadets to thank their parents, family members, close friends, and anyone else who helped them along the way. "Every cadetship has its highs and lows, but it would have been much harder, maybe even impossible, without support from friends and family members."

*Continued on next page*



Cadets toss their gloves in the air upon graduating in Memorial Hall Dec. 21.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Naomi Hahn '24 receives her diploma from Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



John Daniels '23 is pinned shortly after commissioning into the U.S. Army.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Wins concluded by asking the cadets to stay in touch and to return as often as they can. "You are forever welcome here on post. I wish you the very best in the years to come and look forward to staying apprised of your many accomplishments and contributions to our society. You have the tools to go out into the world and accomplish great things. I have every faith you will do so. Congratulations graduates. Rah Virginia Mill!"

The presentation of candidates for degrees was delivered by Brig. Gen. Robert W. Moreschi, dean of the faculty and deputy superintendent for academics, followed by a standing ovation and the traditional tossing of the gloves.

Four cadets, Robert Austin Doyle II '24, Naomi Hahn '24, Collin Blythe Ironside '24, and Aidan Noonan '24 maintained a four-year cumulative GPA at 3.5 or higher, designating them as distinguished graduates. Five cadets, John David Boles '24, Evan Michael Eller '24, Owen Donald Munz '24, Ian Salyers '24, and Carter Elliot Steward '23 graduated with distinction by maintaining a four-year cumulative GPA between 3.0 and 3.499.

The evening before commencement, the Joint Commissioning Ceremony was held, also in Memorial Hall, in which nine graduating cadets were commissioned into the U.S. Army as second lieutenants, and two May 2023 graduates, Connor Alan Smith '23, who was a distinguished graduate, and Robert Bruce Gomez Jr. '23,



Maj. Gen. Christopher LaNeve swears cadets into the U.S. Army.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

who graduated with distinction, commissioned into the U.S. Coast Guard as ensigns.

Offering remarks and administering the oath of office was Maj. Gen. (Promotable) Christopher C. LaNeve, who currently serves as the Commanding General of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, U.S. Army, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

LaNeve told those commissioning that, after learning the history of VMI for four years, they are now part of that history. He said when he was in their shoes, he was worried about what it would take to succeed, and he spoke on several principles he has discovered along the way. He advised them to be motivated leaders who bring focus and energy to their cause, and to do what is right all the time, even when no one is watching. He instructed them to stick to the high standards that people expect, and to take care of what the military gives them, including equipment and people. Finally, he encouraged them to develop tomorrow's leaders, creating a climate for growth and caring for those around them.

LaNeve graduated and was commissioned from the University of Arizona. He has served in a variety of command and staff billets including, Fort Ord, California; Western Illinois University ROTC program; the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division; Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Polk, Louisiana; Afghanistan; and Grafenwoehr, Germany. His positions include executive officer to the assistant deputy chief of staff for operations and plans, and deputy director of executive communications and control division-operations in the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army. In 2006, he was assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency, Joint Staff, Washington, D.C., where he served in the Defense Warning Office.

In addition to an undergraduate degree, LaNeve holds a Master of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University, and a Master of Military Art and Science in Strategic Studies from the Command and General Staff College Advanced Operational Art Studies Fellowship. His military education includes the Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the Combined Arms Services Staff School, the Command and General Staff College, the Joint Forces Staff College, and Senior Service College Fellows Course. His awards and decorations include the Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, Air Assault Badge, Ranger Tab, Pathfinder Badge, Master Parachutist Badge and Army Staff Identification Badge. He has also earned the Mexican Parachutist Badge and the Royal Australian Parachutist Badge. ✪



Maj. Gen. Christopher LaNeve speaks in Memorial Hall Dec. 20.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

# English Professors Secure Book Deals

By Marianne Hause

Lt. Col. Mary “Polly” Stewart Atwell, associate professor, and Maj. Henry A. Wise III ’05, assistant professor, both in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, have secured book deals.

Atwell, who writes under the pen name of Polly Stewart, has successfully sold her third novel to publisher Harper Books at HarperCollins in New York. The new book titled, “The Felons’ Ball” is a rural noir set in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia. It follows Natalie Macready, the youngest daughter of a powerful family with a sordid history (including distilling and selling moonshine) and a feeling of impunity, whose dark secrets set a chain of events in motion at their annual party dubbed, ‘The Felons’ Ball,’ as she finds herself caught in the vortex of her family’s history and its deadly consequences, exploring questions of crime, gender, and class in the South.

In literary fiction, the genre of noir is defined when a character is placed in an impossible situation as a result of making mistakes and poor choices, and must pay the consequences, usually without a tidy resolution.

Atwell’s first two novels, “Wild Girls” and “The Good Ones,” also take place in small towns in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia. Although each book stands alone and the characters are not shared in the three works, she imagines them bumping into each other at Kroger. “My father’s family settled in Virginia in the mid-nineteenth century, and I grew up here. I’m so happy to be living in this part of the country again,” she shared.

An exceptionally disciplined writer, Atwell wakes each day at 4 a.m., and writes for three hours. She organizes the outlines of her stories by employing the three-act structure, a model used in narrative fiction that divides a story into three parts, or acts. She uses a large cork board on which she tacks index cards with story actions in order, and rearranges the cards, and order of the action if necessary. “I teach the three-act structure in class when discussing revisions. It makes writing much easier because in writing, events must happen in a certain order, and often the writer must revise the

order. Rearranging the cards helps form the action. It’s like a seesaw, where there are back-and-forth, moving pieces. Revising is a big part of writing. You need to make sure every part of the story is working,” she said.

“The Felons’ Ball” will be available for purchase next year. “Wild Girls” and “The Good Ones” are currently available in bookstores and on Amazon.com. Atwell has sold the film and television rights for “The Good Ones.”



Lt. Col. Mary “Polly” Stewart Atwell

Wise has sold his novel, “Holy City” in a two-book deal. “Holy City” is scheduled to be published June 4 by Grove Atlantic. The second book will be published next year.

“Holy City” tells the story of Will Seems, who after a decade of exile precipitated by the tragic death of his mother, returns home from Richmond to rural Southern Virginia, and takes a job as a deputy sheriff.

Seems’ efforts to go about his life are disrupted when a mysterious, brutal homicide claims the life of an old friend, forcing Seems to face the true impetus for his return: not to honor his mother’s memory, but to pay a debt to a Black friend who, in an act of selfless courage years ago, protected Seems and suffered permanent disfigurement for it.

Meanwhile, a man Seems knows to be

innocent is arrested for the murder, and despite Seems’ pleas, his boss appears all too content to wrap up the case and move on. Seems must weigh his personal guilt against his public duty when the local Black community hires Bennico Watts, an unpredictable private detective from Richmond, to help him find the real killer. It doesn’t take long for Watts and Seems to realize they much prefer to operate alone.

Wise, who teaches full time and is the father of two young children, cherishes the limited time he has to write, and uncommonly chooses to write longhand on a legal pad. “I feel more creative writing longhand. I also use a 1920 Royal portable typewriter that I inherited from a great uncle. I type the first draft on the typewriter because it forces me forward, and there’s a physical rhythm to it. Does everybody around me like it? No, because it’s pretty loud. But I can find a corner of the house or a time when nobody else is around, and it works just fine,” he shared. Once his first draft is complete, Wise transcribes his work onto the computer.

There are no scheduled plans for a book launch yet, but according to Wise, it may take place in Richmond. Wise earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from VMI, where he started his writing, using it as a coping tactic in the midst of the intense physical and academic rigors that challenged him as a cadet. He is part of a VMI family legacy which includes his uncles, Anderson Wise ’60 and Richard S. Wise ’68, as well as his grandfather, Henry



Maj. Henry A. Wise III ’05

A. Wise, Class of 1927. His great-great-great grandfather was Henry A. Wise, governor of Virginia (1856–1860), whose son John S. Wise, Class of 1866, was one of the cadets wounded in the Battle of New Market in 1864. Wise believes that when he matriculated in 2001, he was 32<sup>nd</sup> of the Wise family to

*Continued on next page*

do so. His cousin, Ethan Wise '24 is scheduled to graduate in May, making him the 33<sup>rd</sup> Wise.

After graduating from VMI, Wise taught for several years in Taiwan, where he worked for the Republic of China Military Academy in Fengshan, selecting, instructing, and training cadets who would go on

to study in American military institutions, including VMI. In 2015, he earned his Master of Fine Arts degree in poetry from the University of Mississippi, where he taught creative writing and composition. In 2017, he joined VMI's English faculty where he teaches American literature and creative writing and serves as faculty adviser to

Cadence, VMI's annual fine arts journal, which he edited as a cadet. He has taught a variety of courses including Frontier American Literature and the works of William Faulkner. A writer across multiple genres, his poetry has been published in Shenandoah, Radar Poetry, Clackamas, and Eunoia Review. ❁

## Kendrick and Murphy Receive SoCon Recognition

By Marianne Hause and VMI Athletic Staff

Col. Jeff Kendrick, professor of French in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, and Michelle Murphy, executive assistant for intercollegiate athletics, were recognized by Michael Cross, Southern Conference league commissioner for being named members of the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team for the 2023–24 academic year. With two representatives chosen from each of the Southern Conference's 10 member schools, the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team recognizes individuals who have demonstrated service to their schools and made contributions to campus life and the local community. "The Southern Conference is proud to publicly recognize the exceptional faculty and staff members at our institutions. Each of the selected honorees are leaders and mentors at their respective institutions and we celebrate their service and commitment. We thank them for fostering the special and unique environments found across the ten SoCon campuses and serving as pillars in their communities," said Cross. Kendrick and Murphy were officially recognized during the Jan. 20 home basketball game against The Citadel Bulldogs in Cameron Hall.

Since his arrival at VMI, Kendrick has co-developed an entirely new French curriculum that emphasizes written, oral, and cross-cultural communication across a French major's cadetship. In addition, Kendrick devotes significant time and energy developing cadets outside the



Michael Cross hands Col. Jeff Kendrick the SoCon All-Conference Faculty Award during the game in Cameron Hall Jan. 20.—Photo courtesy of Randall Wolf.



Michelle Murphy receives the SoCon All-Conference Staff Award from Michael Cross.—Photo courtesy of Randall Wolf.

classroom. He co-directs the VMI in Paris summer study abroad program and serves as Project Global Officer's Mandarin Chinese program (2022) and resident director (2023) in Taiwan and has worked with cadets on Summer Undergraduate Research Institute projects. Kendrick's primary research interests include polemic and violence in the French Wars of Religion, gender in sixteenth century French devotional poetry, and the integration of classroom technology with language learning. He has published and presented on Marguerite de Navarre, Joachim DuBellay, polemic and politics in the French Wars of Religion, using sitcoms in the French classroom, student-centered learning, and flipping the language classroom.

Murphy provides front-line administrative support for the athletics executive-level staff and coaches, serves as departmental coordinator for meetings, and also manages travel authorizations, reimbursements, and procurement. She is payroll supervisor for athletics hourly employees, and provides additional human

resources support to the associate athletic director for internal operations. She is the departmental athletics awards administrator and serves as a notary public. Prior to joining athletics, Murphy was a member of the VMI Registrar's Office as office manager and scheduling coordinator for 15 years. She received the VMI Distinguished Service Award in 2014, the Marshall New Market Battalion Appreciation Award in 2012, and has achieved a Recognition of Service from VMI on three separate occasions. Murphy supports the VMI mission through her professionalism and is frequently noted for her positive approach. She takes pride in watching all cadets grow and succeed, and can often be found cheering loudly in the stands for the Keydets. ❁

# 50 Years of the Institute Report: Amazing and Remarkable

By Marianne Hause

The Institute Report officially turned 50 in December. To celebrate the anniversary, milestones, unique news features, and Institute enhancements covered throughout the five decades are being highlighted in each issue during the 2023–24 academic year. Amazing, remarkable, and sometimes humorous news and events involving VMI are being highlighted in this issue.

For history buffs who want to test their memories, trivia questions follow the article. Answers are found on the inside of the back cover.

1977—Newsweek magazine mailed a promotional advertisement to Ms. Virginia M. Institute, Board of Visitors, offering her half off a subscription. She decided not to accept the offer.

1978—Army ROTC officers, non-commissioned officers, and cadets took five M48-A5 tanks on a 13-mile road march from Buena Vista's railhead to White's farm outside Lexington. Spectators were amazed at the sight rumbling down Magnolia Avenue in Buena Vista.

1981—Spartacus, the Army mule mascot of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, was abducted from his stall in the wee hours of the night preceding the VMI-Army football game. A group known only as "Checka's Raiders" was assumed responsible. Spartacus was taken to an undisclosed location on Long Island, and returned at the end of the game with his mane plaited and festooned with red, white, and yellow ribbons, and the letters VMI painted on his rump. The final score of the football game was VMI 14, Army 7.

1982—Mary Moody Northen, VMI's only living honorary alumna at the time, celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with a 300-pound cake cut with help from two cadets in Galveston, Texas. She was also presented with a giant birthday card signed by the entire Corps of Cadets.

1986—VMI held an "as is" auction of surplus and outdated office and audio-visual equipment, band instruments, miscellaneous machinery and tools, and several flood-damaged vehicles in Cormack



Mary Moody Northern flanked by Mark P. Ciarrocca '82 and Walter M. Sanders '82 cuts into her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration cake Feb. 10, 1982.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

Hall. It drew many bargain hunters and netted the state coffers more than \$7,500.

1987—Snow fell on Founders Day, aborting the planned parade, but delighted cadets in a day free from classes.

1988—Col. P. Allan Carlsson, registrar and professor of philosophy, had an unexpected meeting with Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat while he was in Tunisia over the summer as a Malone Fellow of the National Council for U.S.-Arab Relations. Asleep in his hotel room, Carlsson was contacted with a message that Arafat would see the group if its members could be ready in ten minutes. Arrangements were made for taxis to take the group to the meeting.

Their driver had followed a guide to the unknown destination, and the group was searched before Arafat entered the room. Carlsson's group talked with Arafat for over an hour.

1995—Record rainfall—15 inches in less than a week, five inches in the final day—sent creeks and streams over their banks. The water washed away a footbridge over Woods Creek as well as main city sewer lines and drains off Institute Hill. The creek also seriously eroded the parking lot adjacent to the Patchin Field House.

2011—An earthquake occurred, causing a broken water line at Shell Hall and minor damage around post.

2012—History was made when lacrosse midfielder Russell East '13 scored VMI's first goal of the day against Marist College at the 11:46 mark. Then, capitalizing on a Marist violation, specialist Stephen Robage '12 scored four seconds later. The four seconds between the



Beekeepers carefully remove a colony of honeybees from a building on Main Street in 2012.—VMI File Photo by John Robertson IV.



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two goals marked the fastest consecutive goals by the same team in NCAA history. A colony of 60,000 honeybees discovered beneath the siding of a VMI-owned residence on Main Street was removed and adopted by a local beekeeper.

VMI's copy of the Great Seal of the Confederacy, which had been lost for over 30 years, was found in an antique shop in Greensboro, North Carolina, and restored to the VMI museum collection.

2013—A suspicious object was found in front of Preston Library. The State Police bomb disposal unit's robot moved the item to a small sandbag bunker set up on the Parade Ground and neutralized in with a controlled detonation. Ultimately the object was determined not to have been an explosive device.

2014—A recipe book originally belonging to Mary Anna Jackson, wife of Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, was donated to the Stonewall Jackson House by a great-great grandchild of the couple. Most of the recipes were for sweets and rich desserts.

A time capsule was sealed on Founders Day, to be opened in 50 years—year 2064.

2015—Hunter Jenkins, son of Robert Jenkins '58 donated his father's collection of Civil War muskets to the VMI Museum. The collection included Virginia Manufactory of Arms muskets, which may have been stored at the VMI armory before and during the Civil War.

2016—A copy of a letter written by Francis H. Smith in 1845 asking alumni for artifacts to begin a museum at VMI, was purchased by the very museum he was founding. The letter was discovered on eBay and was addressed to William Beale, VMI Class of 1843. The museum Smith created from the artifacts received from the alumni became the first public history museum in the state of Virginia.

2017—Identical twins, Brandon Hogge '17 and Tyler Hogge '17 both commissioned into the Navy in hopes of becoming SEALs. Along with Sam Paulay '17, the Hogges attended SEAL training in Coronado,



Cadets place items in a time capsule which was then sealed until 2064.—VMI File Photo by Kevin Remington.



Members of Virginia State Police unload a robot to inspect a possible bomb on post in 2013.—VMI File Photo by John Robertson IV.

California, the fall before. All three were selected into the program, making VMI's Navy ROTC the highest-producing unit in the nation for SEAL candidates.

A partial solar eclipse was visible from VMI. At its peak, the sun was 87% blocked.

2019—As many as 50 to 60 trees fell on post and Washington and Lee campus during a microburst storm in July. Power was lost in some buildings, but the damage did not affect cadets on post, and no one was injured.

2020—The Department of Physics and Astronomy received 11 meteorites donated by Army veteran Paulo Rocha '87. The oldest is a tiny piece of the famous Murchison meteorite, which fell to Earth in Australia in 1969. Scientists have dated the silicon carbide particles in the meteorite at 7 billion years, making the Murchison meteorite the oldest known object on the planet.

Because of the COVID-19 shutdown, the VMI Museum, the Jackson House Museum, and the New Market Battlefield State Historical Park, which typically attract a large number of visitors in the spring, were all eerily devoid of visitors. With Washington & Lee also being mostly closed, few people visited downtown Lexington, and businesses experienced poor sales.

Just under 180 cadets commissioned in online ceremonies due to pandemic limitations.

## Trivia Questions

1. What type of vehicle was used to return Spartacus to West Point in 1981?
2. Where was the epicenter of the 2011 earthquake?
3. In addition to delicious dessert recipes, Mrs. Jackson's recipe book contained instructions for a remedy for what malady?
4. How many items were placed in the 2014 time capsule?
5. During the COVID-19 shutdown, seamstresses in the tailor shop switched from sewing uniforms to sewing what much needed product?

# Secret Service Makes Recruiting Visit

By Marianne Hause

Kimberly Cheatle, the 27<sup>th</sup> director of the U.S. Secret Service, along with a large contingency of agents—including VMI alumni and The Citadel alumni—made a special recruiting trip to VMI Jan. 20.

Saturday morning began with the team's arrival to post in multiple black SUVs and an armored bus used for recruitment purposes, as well as transporting people under their protection, including presidential candidates. They were given a tour of barracks, where they chatted with a select group of cadets, followed by a walk to Crozet Hall, where they ate lunch with cadets and talked with them about career opportunities.

Cheatle shared that over the last several years, her team has gone on many recruiting trips to colleges and universities, but their partnership with VMI is special. "One of the things that is instilled in VMI cadets is service to something greater than themselves. That is what we look for at the Secret Service. VMI has a little different atmosphere than what you'll find on the typical college campus. The skills the



Kimberly Cheatle speaks to cadets and visitors in Crozet Hall Jan. 20.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers and Col. Adrian Bogart III '81 give a tour of barracks to Secret Service agents.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

cadets learn and develop, enabling them to grow into leaders, are the same skills we use at the Secret Service," she said.

Cheatle is confident that the relationship with VMI will continue and expand. "There are many different career opportunities with the Secret Service. We encourage college students to establish their relationships with us early, even if it's just finding a mentor or coach within the Secret Service who will talk to them and guide them with career paths. Internships are also available within our offices," she said.

Jim Kingsley '05, a VMI alumnus who majored in history, holds the position of assistant to the special agent in charge in the Protective Intelligence and Assessment Division, based at Secret Service headquarters in Washington, D.C. Prior to that, he was on the Presidential Protective Detail, and traveled extensively throughout the

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Secret Service agents, including VMI and The Citadel alumni are recognized during the game in Cameron Hall Jan. 20.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

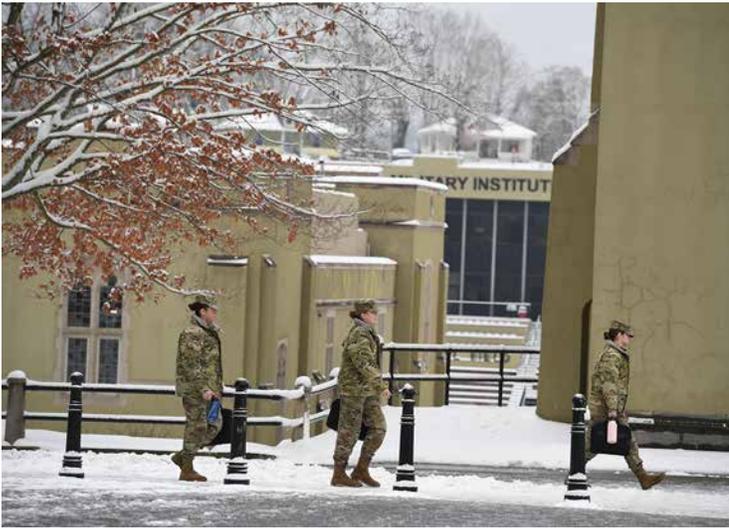
world, providing protection to the president's family. Kingsley stated that alumni can best relate to what cadets are going through because they have gone through the exact thing themselves. "A lot of the traits the cadets already possess, like camaraderie, teamwork, discipline, and attention to detail carry over to the Secret Service, where we share a lot of camaraderie. Some of the greatest friendships of my life I have made here at VMI, and it's fun to come back and be able to talk to the cadets," he said.

Kephner Etienne '25, an electrical and computer engineering major from Bristow, Virginia, is interested in a career with the Secret Service. "My brother is a NYPD cop and I always wanted to work for the FBI or Secret Service. I think they both have great opportunities. The Secret Service people here today all have positive attitudes,



Kimberly Cheattle along with VMI alumni in the Secret Service pose in front of Old Barracks Jan. 20.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

and they do a good job of recruiting. To be honest, they already got me last year. I think working with them in the future will be awesome," he said. After lunch, the group attended the VMI basketball game against The Citadel, where they were acknowledged as special guests of the Institute. The Keydets defeated the Bulldogs, 70-63 in an exciting game from start to finish. The mission of the Secret Service is to ensure the safety and security of their protectees, key locations, and events of national significance. They also protect the integrity of the U.S. currency, and investigate crimes against the U.S. financial system committed by criminals around the world and in cyberspace. Information on career opportunities with the Secret Service, may be found at [www.secretservice.gov](http://www.secretservice.gov). ✪



### First Day of Class in the Snow

Approximately three inches of snow fell the night before the first day of the semester, Jan. 16. Physical Plant employees worked to clear the sidewalks and roads for cadets and faculty to attend classes safely. Temperatures dipped into the teens for the rest of the week, allowing the snow to stick around for several days.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



# Swedish Defense Chief Visits VMI

By Marianne Hause

Swedish Armed Forces Chief of Defense Staff, Lt. Gen. Michael Claesson, along with several of his staff members, visited VMI recently, during his brief visit to the United States. The purpose of his stop was threefold: to speak to the Corps of Cadets about the security situation in Europe, and Sweden becoming a member of NATO; to research new and creative ways to recruit and commission more officers for Sweden's expanding military; and to visit the Institute about which he has heard good things from American officers he has interacted with throughout his career. "I always thought if I got the chance, I want to visit VMI," said Claesson.

While on post, Claesson visited with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, in his office; shared lunch with members of the faculty and staff, and a select group of cadets majoring in international studies (IS); then addressed a large group in a full Gillis Theater.

Claesson opened his speech in Gillis by stating that Sweden and the United States share a unique familial relationship. "Let me apologize for all the Johanssons, the Andersons, and the Karlssons in this country," he teased. Explaining the levity he added, "During a period of 50 to 60 years in the nineteenth century, approximately one-quarter of the Swedish population immigrated to the United States. Every family in Sweden has relatives in the United States, so obviously this ties us together." He further noted that commercial trade and working together militarily in bilateral activities are other ways the two countries are interlinked.

Displaying a world map, he indicated the many shipping routes passing by Sweden, the other Nordic countries, Europe, through the Baltic Sea, and across the Atlantic



Lt. Gen. Michael Claesson discusses world security in Gillis Theater Jan. 24.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Russians, and they had to act. They have no physical need of the territory, but they are at war with thought, and they are at war with the collective West in that regard. It might sound harsh, but I stand by every word," he stated solemnly.

Claesson pointed out that Russia is a nuclear power, second only to the United States. Indicating the map he stated, "On top of the Scandinavian Peninsula, you will find the Kola Peninsula and there you will find the base system for the Russian second-strike capability, so they're clinging to that place. That is of course, important to Sweden for obvious reasons. It is also important to the United States,

in terms of security challenges that need to be handled, managed, and dealt with in some way or another."

He discussed the technology development of modern warfare, hypersonic system development, pre-strike warnings, and their importance for security of the world. He added that Russia, China, and Iran are involved in illegal intelligence activities in Sweden, and warned



Lt. Gen. Michael Claesson and Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 have lunch with cadets in Moody Hall Jan. 24.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

*Continued on next page*



Lt. Gen. Michael Claesson speaks in Gillis Theater.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

that the free world should not just focus on Russia, but also on China. “From my perspective it’s not either/or, it’s both,” he said.

Claesson hopes that Sweden will gain full membership of NATO no later than July of this year. He stated that NATO membership is important not just for Sweden’s own security interests, but for their allies as well. “I want to make very clear that Sweden is not a country that comes just to ask for help. We are not the consumer, we are a contributor to your goals with our geography and with our military capabilities,” he said. Sweden submitted its application to NATO in 2022. According to Claesson, the application was triggered by a letter sent to both the governments of Sweden and Finland from Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister in December 2021. “The letter read, ‘We want you, by treaty, to say no to ever joining NATO.’ They wanted to pin us down in that regard. That was the trigger for us to submit our application.”



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 presents Lt. Gen. Michael Claesson with a gift for visiting post.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Claesson concluded his talk by stating how impressed he was by the opportunities and training offered to cadets at VMI, and wished them well in their future military careers.

Antonio Ahanj '24, an IS major who attended Claesson’s talk said, “With the majority of IS majors commissioning into the military or going into government service of some capacity, General Claesson’s speech was of incredible relevancy, not just to our studies but also to our future careers. His unique perspective gave us the chance to learn about many of the shared challenges facing Sweden and the U.S., as well as the strategic nature of their military, national defense, their contributions to NATO, and the U.S. Especially now, the opportunity to learn from those directly involved in political and military issues across the world is something we are all grateful for, and even though the general only spoke for an hour, he imparted a great deal of knowledge onto all of us.” ❄️

## New Faces on Post

By Marianne Hause

VMI welcomes two new essential department heads to post. Col. Niccole Gatliff has filled the role of registrar, and Lt. Col. Allyson Pierce has assumed duties as director of Miller Academic Center.

Gatliff brings a wealth of experience in a college/university registrar office environment, most recently serving as associate registrar at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. She holds a master’s degree in organizational leadership and a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communications, both from Shenandoah University.

Pierce comes to VMI from West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown, West Virginia, where she worked in several academic support units, including academic advising and the WVU Office of Student-Athlete Development. She brings to the role special interests and expertise in developing and implementing proactive,

innovative strategies for academic success. She earned her master’s degree in Higher Education Administration at WVU after teaching high school English. ❄️



Col. Niccole Gatliff



Lt. Col. Allyson Pierce

# Chemistry Majors Study Antiquities

By Marianne Hause

Cadets enrolled in Lt. Col. Kevin Braun's general chemistry lab course recently conducted preliminary data analysis on metals in an unconventional place—the VMI Museum.

The VMI Museum was established in 1856 when Maj. Gen. Francis Smith, VMI's first superintendent, accepted the donation of a Revolutionary War musket. Most of the 15,000 artifacts in the museum have been presented by alumni who used them, or by individuals who acquired antiquities and gifted them to VMI. Many of the objects are not on display but kept in storage, and it was from those pieces that Braun's class conducted their observations.

The archeology-themed activity called for the cadets to choose two or three of the unidentified displayed artifacts, and use their prior knowledge of metals to speculate their origin, how they were employed, determine what type of materials were used in the making of the object, and how that material fit the purpose of the object. "Museums are fascinating places chemically and culturally. This activity ties together chemistry, history, and culture, and gave cadets a full liberal arts experience. Archeology lies at the intersection of science and the humanities, so it engages students of all majors," said Braun.

Museum curator, Catherine DeSilvey, selected artifacts based on their age or metal composition. "I also chose items that have a direct connection to a world event or VMI alumnus. For example, a blade fashioned from a tin can was made by James Berger '61, while he was held in Vietnam as a prisoner of war for six years. A fourteenth century Samurai



Austin Merritt '27 takes notes on VMI Museum artifacts.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Jun Xin Liu '27 inspects VMI Museum artifacts.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

sword was donated by General Thomas Handy, VMI Class of 1914, after World War II, and a gold-plated AK-47 magazine from one of Saddam Hussein's golden guns was donated by Navy SEAL Chris Beck '87," shared DeSilvey. In addition, she showed the cadets Chinese coins dating back to 713 A.D., a bronze spear dating back to 150 to 2000 B.C., Byzantine bronze crosses found in a tomb in Jerusalem, a hand-to-hand combat knife dated 1917, a Roman helmet dated 42 B.C., an Indo-Persian shield about

200 years old, and a hydrodynamic ball used as testing during the Manhattan Project.

Braun was impressed with the vast collection held at the museum. "It's remarkable what they have in their collection. It is truly a jewel here on post. So many members of the alumni have generously donated their cherished objects, and even though the objects may not be currently on display, they are being used for educational purposes, which should give the donors much pride and satisfaction," he stated.

According to Braun, archeology has relied on chemical methods and instrumentation to characterize, date, and authenticate material remains for over 200 years. Museums often employ chemists to identify the composition of artifacts, and to determine what was used to preserve them, noting that in the past, dangerous substances like arsenic, strychnine and mercury were used in taxidermy



William Gray '27 and Colin Crenshaw '27 study artifacts in the VMI Museum under the instruction of Lt. Col. Kevin Braun.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

*Continued on next page*

and the preservation of artifacts. “I want the cadets to be aware of the many employment opportunities available with a chemistry degree,” he shared.

Jack Neuhart III '27, a chemistry major from Virginia Beach said, “I was able to use the knowledge of chemistry that I have learned this semester to interact with history. We were able to handle some amazing objects.”

Next semester, Braun plans to continue the investigation of the museum collection by characterizing the metals using a portable

X-ray fluorescence spectrometer, acquired through a collaboration with Washington and Lee University. “The resulting data could prove invaluable to the museum staff for the continued preservation of these artifacts, and allow students to better understand the technology required to create them,” said Braun.

Braun periodically teaches a full semester special topics course on archeological chemistry. He also leads a research group that studies archeological pottery lipid residue (chemical analysis evidence for milk and meat). ❁



## Holiday Festivities

December activities on post kicked off the holiday spirit. On Dec. 4, Preston Library and the Building BRIDGES Club hosted a holiday card writing workshop, allowing cadets, faculty, staff, and family members to create cards to be sent to veterans at the Virginia Veterans Care Center and to residents at local assisted living facilities. Spirit Night was held Dec. 12 with cadets enjoying a special dinner served by Parkhurst Dining in Crozet Hall. That evening, community members enjoyed carol singing by the Glee Club in barracks and a candle-light service with the chaplain's office in Memorial Hall. Faculty and staff were also treated to a holiday meal in Crozet Hall Dec. 19.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Kelly Nye, and Andrew Partridge '24.



## Trivia Answers from Page 9

1. A catering truck
2. Louisa County, 50 miles northwest of Richmond, five miles from the town of Mineral.
3. Curing a sty on the eyelid: “Put a teaspoon full of black tea in a small bag; pour on enough boiling water to moisten it; then put on eye pretty warm. Keep it on all night.”
4. 22
5. Facemasks



Past issues of the Institute Report can be found in the digital VMI Archives.



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## MLK Day Celebrations

Cadets participated in various Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations in January. Mark Shelton '24, regimental commander, and Col. John Young, chief of staff, shared what King meant to them during Washington and Lee University's MLK Reflections Dinner in Evans Dining Hall Jan. 17. Cadets also participated in a MLK-themed Open Mic Night in Moody Hall Jan. 22 titled "Lift Every Voice."—VMI Photos by Rhita Daniel, Andrew Partridge '24, and courtesy of Briana Williams.

