



# INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 53, Number 8, June 2025

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# ECE Cadets Present Capstone Projects

By Marianne Hause

Two teams of senior electrical and computer engineering (ECE) majors recently presented their capstone projects after working on them throughout the academic year. According to Col. David Feinauer, professor of ECE, the engineering capstone experience is an important milestone. "It is an academic crucible event where students are challenged and emerge stronger, more confident, and more prepared for their future careers."

One team developed an app—compatible with 95% of android phones—to assist veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI). The team received the request from three partners: Quality of Life Plus (QL+), a national nonprofit founded to engineer solutions for injured veterans and first responders; Craig Hospital, a neurorehabilitation

Kristie Yelinek, program manager for QL+, said the team delivered beyond expectations. "This project does more than create solutions for those who've served; it gives VMI cadets hands-on experience in real-world engineering, user-centered design, and working directly with clients. As a proud community partner, QL+ connected the cadets with OTF and helped turn their innovative ideas into action. We can't wait to see the app launch this summer."

The second team designed a battery monitoring unit for field radios for the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Star Challenge. The challenge is issued to senior military colleges to provide their students an opportunity to demonstrate their technical excellence in a competitive

environment, and enhance the relationships between those colleges and the Army. The competition was held April 14 at the DEVCOM headquarters at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. Competitors included two teams from The Citadel, one from Norwich University, and one from VMI. The challenge from DEVCOM read, "Soldiers' success on the battlefield is reliant on multiple factors to include power, communication, situational awareness, and adaptability. Your challenge is to design a capability that speaks to the availability, sustainability, and/or distribution, monitoring and management of one or more of these elements across the battlefield in support of Army tactical systems and operational requirements."

According to Brian Tavenner '25, project manager for the team,

the most important take-aways were, "power, communication, situational awareness, sustainability, monitoring, and management, with a focus on radios. We decided to passively pull battery data including state of charge, state of health, and time until empty. We believed those to be the most important values, and the easiest for an officer to understand when viewing it on a display."

The team conducted multiple tests using civilian radios, along with a battery monitoring chip, and a Raspberry Pi, a small, affordable single-board computer, as a proof of concept. They proposed that their solution could apply to the PRC 152, a multiband handheld radio used by the military.

The team experienced partial success, but admitted there were limitations and challenges, and suggested the project be passed on to the next class for further work. They received honorable mention at the DEVCOM competition. 🌟



Caleb Fender '25 discusses the app his team developed to assist veterans with traumatic brain injury as his team members look on.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

and research hospital in Colorado that specializes in TBI rehabilitation; and Operation TBI Freedom (OTF), a program of Craig Hospital that provides support for veterans and active duty military personnel with TBI.

Cole Bowyer '25, project manager for the TBI app, stated that people who suffer from TBI experience not only physical symptoms, but cognitive symptoms as well, including difficulty in understanding and concentrating, and frustration with certain undertakings. "Many people with TBI struggle with their daily duties, which include setting reminders on their phone, preventing them to get to appointments on time. Our task was to create a simple all-in-one application to simplify the routines and increase independence for people with TBI. The app enables the user to easily display their calendar, see specific events, set personal reminders, store passwords, play brain games, and change settings."



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On the cover: First Class cadets take their seats at the beginning of the change of command parade May 16.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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# Meet the 186<sup>th</sup> Regimental Leadership of VMI

By Marianne Hause

VMI recently announced the Class of 2026 leaders of the 186<sup>th</sup> Regiment for the 2025–26 academic year.

Devin Auzenne, from Opelousas, Louisiana, was named first captain and regimental commander (RCO), the highest-ranking position a cadet can hold. His goal as RCO is to foster an environment where cadets excel and are empowered to better the Corps. He chose to come to VMI after receiving a four-year Marine Corps scholarship. “I wanted to be as prepared as possible to lead once I commission. VMI has a great Marine officer program as well as leadership opportunities,” he said. As a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class cadet, he served as cadre corporal and as a 2<sup>nd</sup>, he served as regimental sergeant major. He was a member of the Regulators boxing club, and is involved with the aviation club, the Jiu-Jitsu club, and is the secretary for the Virginia History Society.

Mark Stann, named regimental executive officer (XO), is part of a large VMI legacy that includes his grandfather, John Stann Jr. '69, his father John Stann III '95, his uncle William Stann '98, and his three brothers: John Stann IV '21, Matthew Stann '22, and Luke Stann '24. He came to VMI because he wanted to face the same challenges they faced. He applied for the position of XO as an opportunity for personal growth, and he wants to ensure the Rat Line is run effectively and smoothly. His current home is in Reston, Virginia, but he grew up in Okinawa, Japan, where his father was stationed as a Marine officer. Stann is majoring in civil engineering and will commission into the Marine Corps.

The new regimental chief of staff is Heaton Lawrence, from Richmond, Virginia. He chose to attend VMI because he has family friends who are alumni, and because one of his close friends with whom he attended St. Christopher's School, Warner Collier '24, encouraged him to apply. As a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class cadet, he served as Foxtrot Company cadre corporal and as a 2<sup>nd</sup>, he was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion sergeant major. Lawrence studied 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century British literature and history at the University of Oxford in England last summer, and credits the rich experience as instrumental in his academic development. He sits on the Cadet Superintendent Advisory Board, and is an operations intern for Alumni Agencies.

Following graduation, he hopes to work for the U.S. Secret Service as a special agent.

The new 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion commander (CO) is Samantha Waters from Brooklet, Georgia. A graduate of Southeast Bullouch High School, Waters chose VMI because she knew it produced great leaders. “When I commission into the Navy, I want other officers and leaders to have a positive connection to people from VMI,” she said. For Alpha Company, she served as cadre corporal as a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class cadet, and operations sergeant as a 2<sup>nd</sup>. In her new position next year, she wants to help develop cadets into leaders. Her father and brother are two of her role models. “My dad served in the Marine Corps before my brother and I were born, and he has been a police officer

our whole lives. My brother serves in the Marine Corps.”

Sarah Woosley has been named 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion CO. She is from Louisville, Kentucky, and a graduate of the Academy for Individual Excellence. She came to VMI to get more from her college experience, and applied for the position of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion CO because she wants a leadership role that allows her to help others succeed, and develop her own management skills.

In addition to her rank position, Woosley has been a member of VMI's Ranger Challenge team since she was a rat. After graduation she will commission into the Army and hopes to be an engineer officer. After serving her four-year commitment, she plans to go back to school to become a physician's assistant.

Anastasia Herrell has been named 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion CO. VMI is the only college to which she applied since she is part of a family legacy. Her father graduated from the Institute in 2001. As battalion CO, she wants to be involved in as many cadet activities as possible, and to uphold the importance of cadet training and the regimental system. Herrell stated that her family has been the greatest influence in her life. “I wouldn't be where I am without them, they are my greatest supporters.” She is from Miami, Florida, and an alumna of Coral Gables Senior High School. Upon graduating, she will commission into the Army.



Devin Auzenne '26 accepts the VMI flag from Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, ceremoniously transferring leadership of the Corps to him.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

*Continued on next page*

VMI Institute Report

The new Alpha Company CO is Seth Patterson from Mount Sterling, Kentucky, where he attended Montgomery County High School. Patterson initially planned to enlist into the Marine Corps after high school, but received a Marine Corps scholarship and chose to attend VMI to best prepare him for the challenges he would face as a Marine officer. During his 3<sup>rd</sup> Class year, he served as a cadre corporal, and during his 2<sup>nd</sup> Class year, he was the company's master sergeant. He applied to the position of CO because of the immense impact previous COs had on his development as a leader. Patterson also wants to see the company continue their current trend of excellence. "This past year, Alpha lead the Corps in highest GPA and lowest number of demerits."

The new Bravo Company CO is Michael Hatfield from Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, where he attended Beechwood High School. His choice of attending VMI and serving as a regimental officer is his way of gratefully acknowledging his supporters, including his parents. He stated that he did not seek his new position for personal gain, but out of a genuine desire to contribute to the betterment of the Institute. Hatfield served as cadre corporal and first sergeant his 3<sup>rd</sup> Class and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class years respectively. His fondest memories on post are hearing his name called for first sergeant during 2<sup>nd</sup> Class announcements, serving as cadre during Matriculation Week, and receiving his class ring. After graduation, Hatfield will commission into the Navy.

Cadlee Jarvis has been named Charlie Company CO. He is part of a legacy, as his uncle is Col. Keith Jarvis '82, director of facilities management at VMI. From being exposed to VMI over many years, and knowing of the opportunities VMI offers its cadets, Jarvis knew it was the place for him. He applied for the position of CO to make a difference. Other regimental positions he has held include cadre corporal his 3<sup>rd</sup> Class year and company first sergeant his 2<sup>nd</sup> Class year. Jarvis is from Waynesboro, Virginia, where he attended Fishburne Military School. Following graduation, he will commission into the Army.

Leading Delta Company as CO is Emma Thompson from Lovettsville, Virginia. She attended Woodgrove High School in Purcellville. Her family legacy not only includes her father, Roderick Thompson '95, but her great uncle, Earl Lawhorne '49C, as well. She chose to come to VMI because her father inspired her with stories from



Heaton Lawrence '26 will be the regimental chief of staff for the 2025-26 academic year. -VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

his experiences as a cadet. Her previous leadership roles include cadre corporal and operations sergeant. Her goals as CO are to build stronger bonds and regain the Garnett Andrews Cup, presented to the company scoring highest in military efficiency throughout the year. Following graduation, Thompson will commission into the Navy.

Jonah Ibanez is the new Echo Company CO. He also is part of a legacy as his father, Ramil Ibanez '90 is an alumnus. Hearing how fondly his father always spoke of VMI and the personal growth and leadership development it offered, as well as the brother rat bond, Ibanez could not imagine going to college anywhere else. He applied for CO to serve the company that has been so integral to his leadership development. Ibanez is a member of VMI's Ranger Challenge team, which involves physical training every morning along with practices every afternoon focused on honing Army skills. Ibanez is from King William, Virginia, where he attended King William High School. Following graduation, he will commission into the Army.

Leading Foxtrot Company as CO is Matthew Kleinschuster, from Richmond, Virginia. He too is part of a legacy, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Jake Kleinschuster '64, his uncle, David Kleinschuster '94, and his brother, Jake Kleinschuster '24, who has always been his role model. Kleinschuster's previous leadership positions include company corporal during his 3<sup>rd</sup> Class year, company first sergeant during his 2<sup>nd</sup> Class year, and secretary on his class's Ring Figure committee. As CO, he wants to help influence the future of the Institute. A special VMI moment for him was during his grandfather's 60<sup>th</sup> reunion last year when he and his brother were asked to speak. Kleinschuster is an alumnus of Veritas School. Following graduation, he plans to commission into the Army.

Leading Golf Company as CO is Kern Aughinbaugh, from San Marcos, California, where he graduated from San Marcos High

School. Aughinbaugh chose VMI to follow the same path of his father, Brad Aughinbaugh '97, and plans to commission in the Marine Corps just as his father did. Aughinbaugh previously held the position of company master sergeant. He applied for CO to have a greater influence in creating the company's culture. "I want a culture where cadets feel validated and are respected for their roles in the Corps and for their future goals, whether commissioning, continuing their education, extending their athletic career, or starting a new job," he said.

Sadie Smith will be leading Hotel Company as CO. She first became interested in VMI as a freshman at St. Lucy's Priory High School in Glendora, California,



Sadie Smith '26 will lead Hotel Company in the upcoming academic year. -VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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# VMI Holds Commencement for Class of 2025

By Marianne Hause

A stormy week surrendered to a warm morning under a blue sky May 17 as VMI held its commencement ceremony in Cameron Hall and conferred degrees on the Class of 2025.

The Regimental Band played “Pomp and Circumstance” as over 300 cadets marched into the arena to the cheers and applause of thousands of family members, friends, and supporters.

In his final commencement speech as VMI superintendent, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 welcomed the assembly, and noted that the great personal achievement of graduating from VMI is not reached alone, but with the help of family, friends, faculty, staff, and coaches who encouraged, guided, and sustained the cadets.

Wins shared that when the class of 2025 matriculated, the world was emerging from the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike so many other colleges, VMI returned to completely in-person classes that fall semester, although many safety protocols were maintained.

“Your first year was also my first full year as superintendent. In many ways we have grown together. I challenged you when we first met to own the narrative about VMI and the Corps of Cadets and maintain a commitment to honor and integrity in everything you do. You rose to the challenge magnificently.”

He reminded the class of their Ring Figure celebration in November 2023 both because of what it represented and because of the dense smoke and poor air quality that had shrouded Lexington from the Matts Creek Fire in neighboring Bedford County.

Wins told the cadets that when they met their rats last August, they ran a Rat Line focused on professionalism and purpose. “You have proven to be excellent mentors and have positively influenced the next generation of cadets.”

He encouraged them as they begin their next journey to remember that every decision or challenge they undertake can be successfully navigated by applying basic principles of leadership: character, courage, and commitment. “The character you developed over the past four years is a hallmark of our education program and part of our mission. You will find that your character will



Gen. Darren McDew '82 delights his audience during the commencement ceremony in Cameron Hall. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

breed trust in others and trust is a key to every relationship. It took courage to select VMI and endure our unique form of education. When faced with mental, physical, and social pressures you didn't quit. Stay committed. You understand the brother rat spirit. Be the leader who others look to for strength and encouragement.”

Wins challenged them to serve the people around them. “At its very foundation, leadership is about serving. Class of 2025, the open road now awaits you. I wish you my sincerest congratulations and the brightest future possible,” he concluded. Wins then introduced Jonah Jurack '25, peer-elected valedictorian.

Jurack stated that VMI is no ordinary college, and its unique characteristics are what attracted the Class of 2025 to come to Lexington for their college education. Jurack recalled their memories as rats on Matriculation Day. “We were herded like sheep into barracks. When the drums sounded and the upperclassmen slow-marched into New Barracks, our new reality came into focus.” He stated that those early memories are just a fraction of what sets VMI and its graduates apart from their peers. In addition are the values, the bonds of brotherhood, and the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy. The Honor Code was instilled in them, and they soon understood the gravity of succumbing to temptation. “VMI boasts the strongest honor system in the nation, maintaining a single-sanctioned, swift, and fair gavel of justice. This ideal will help inform our decisions as military officers or as business leaders.”

*Continued on next page*

VMI Institute Report



Jurack also said that VMI taught them the importance of shared suffering. “We strained as rats together, we contracted COVID together, and most importantly, we broke out of the Rat Line together. If one of us failed to uphold the standards of cadets, we would all suffer the consequences. But without shared suffering, there can be no brotherhood that will last a lifetime.”

In closing, Jurack asked his brother rats to reflect on their four years at VMI. “What lessons did you learn? How did you grow as a man or woman of character? How can you translate these lessons into your upcoming careers? I ask you to uphold VMI’s legacy and ideals, strive for excellence, and live an exceptional life defined by honor. Don’t be ordinary!”

The son of Peter James “PJ” and Kaaren Jurack from Manassas, Virginia, Jurack finished as a distinguished graduate with institute honors, a designation for cadets with at least a 3.5 GPA and completed a cross-disciplinary honors curriculum. He majored in international studies with minors in Arabic, Spanish, and national security. He held rank, serving as Echo Company commander, was prosecutor on the honor court, and the Blue Ridge Battalion commander for Army ROTC. He was the cadet in charge for the Navigators Bible Study, a tutor for the Miller Academic Center, a tour guide for the VMI Museum, and a member of multiple honor societies. He commissioned into the Army infantry.

Turner Gallo ’25, president of the Class of 2025, also shared farewell remarks to his brother rats.

He spoke on the tools the VMI system provides, which remind him of the biblical passage in the Book of Matthew, chapter seven. “Four years of struggle, hardship, and choosing the hard right over the easy wrong, have allowed for the very foundations of our character to be built on solid rock. I don’t doubt that when the rain comes down, the rivers rise, and the winds blow, those who chose the easier path will quickly crumble under the burden of the weight they may be asked to carry.” He reflected



Jonah Jurack '25 speaks to his brother rats during the valedictory address in Cameron Hall. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

that the VMI system breaks rats down and builds them back up to become cadets with humility, grit, tenacity, and integrity.

Gallo compared the characteristics of a successful VMI cadet to those of the characters in Howard Pyle’s classic tale, “The Story of King Arthur and His Knights.” “An ordinary boy named Arthur had his moment of assay—the testing of metal to determine its quality—as he drew with both hands a gleaming sword from a stone and became one of the greatest kings old England ever had, leading with a sense of decency, civility, respect, and honor. Each of us at VMI has been assayed every day for four years, and the quality of

our mettle has been determined. You’re all men and women of grit, integrity, and courage, and it has been my distinct honor to spend these past four years with you,” he concluded. He then introduced commencement speaker, Gen. Darren McDew ’82, former commander of the U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

McDew, who is a retired four-star general and VMI alumnus, served as regimental commander



On behalf of the Class of 2025, Turner Gallo '25 presents a sabre to Gen. Darren McDew '82 after he gave the commencement speech. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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# VMI Commissions New Officers

By Marianne Hause

What started out as a foggy, misty morning, warmed into a bright afternoon as nearly 170 VMI cadets commissioned into the armed services in Cameron Hall, May 15 at the annual Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) joint commissioning ceremony. The ceremony was livestreamed for family and friends who could not attend the event in person.

Lt. Gen. Karl Gingrich, deputy chief of staff for the U.S. Army, offered the commissioning officer remarks and administered the oath of office to the cadets beginning their journey of military service as second lieutenants in the U.S. Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Space Force, and as ensigns in the Navy and Coast Guard.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, welcomed all in attendance and thanked the ROTC departments, faculty, staff, family members, and guests who supported and encouraged the cadets throughout their time at VMI. "Every

successful cadetship is a testament to the hard work of many people. VMI produces more commissioned officers than any other school in the nation outside of the federal service academies. This doesn't occur by happenstance." He noted that the ceremony marks the culmination of four diligent years, and the beginning of a life of service, and part of one of the central purposes of VMI, the preparation and education of citizen-soldiers.



Lt. Gen. Karl Gingrich addresses the commissioning cadets in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

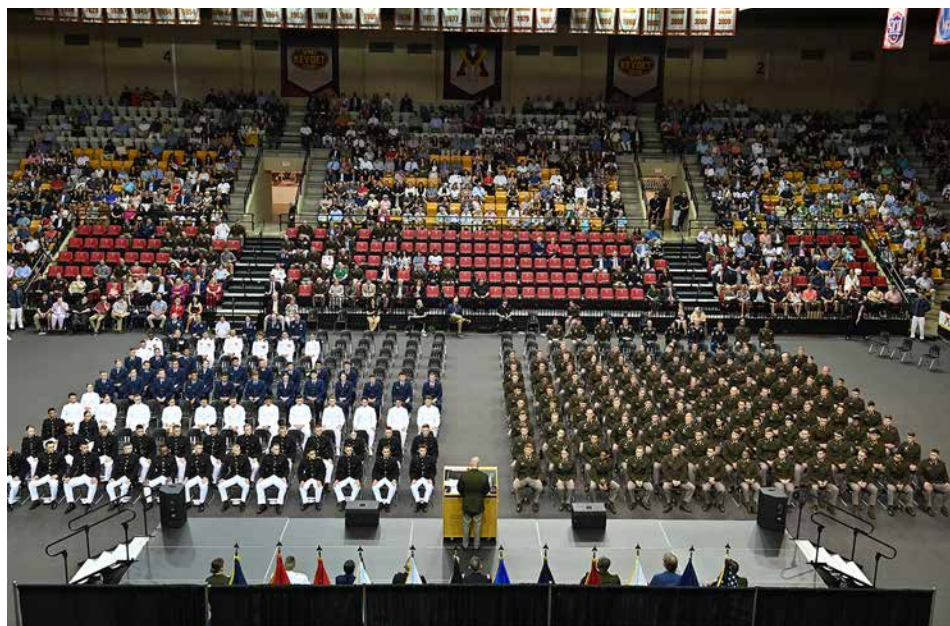
After Wins recognized veterans and current military members in the audience and thanked them for their service, he noted that since the founding of VMI 186 years ago, cadets have always stepped up to serve the nation, and that soon many of those commissioning will join other alumni serving around the world. "We must have a strong military that is led by forward thinkers who are highly educated and grounded in character. As I look out here today, I see future leaders who are ready for

the challenge. I feel confidence and hope for the future of our nation, because, during your time at VMI, I have seen what you are capable of doing."

Wins shared with the cadets that when he became a young officer, his life was filled with exacting missions, tough training, rapidly changing responsibilities, assignments around the world, attendance at outstanding military schools, and service under remarkable leaders. "Above all, I became part of a great team of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and service families. You, too, will come to cherish these same experiences."

Wins congratulated each of them on pursuing and attaining their commission and told them the country is fortunate to have them. "We are all very proud of you!" He then welcomed Gingrich to the lectern.

After thanking Wins for the warm welcome, and recognizing several distinguished guests in the crowd, Gingrich said, "It is a privilege to address the commissioning officers from one of the nation's top senior military colleges. This institution has produced nearly 300 general and flag officers, seven Medal of Honor recipients, 11 Rhodes Scholars, and one Nobel Prize winner. Additionally, VMI



Commissioning cadets, family, and friends fill Cameron Hall during the joint commissioning ceremony.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

*Continued on next page*





Jonah Jurack '25 poses for a photo with loved ones during the Army pin-on ceremony.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Cate Dowden '25 receives her rank pins from family members in Memorial Hall.—VMI Photo by Jake Falcone '27.

graduates have proven to be leaders in industry and government.”

He told the cadets that he appreciates their dedication, commitment, and determination, and that those characteristics will be essential to their future success. “You are about to join a selective portion of our society, a mere 23% of our nation’s young adults are physically, legally, or educationally eligible for military service. Less than 1% of our nation’s population currently serve. Vanguard of our freedoms and way of life, envied by our nation’s friends and allies and feared by enemies, tyrants, and oppressors worldwide. Of that proportionally small force, only 18% represent the commissioned officer corps, which you are about to enter. Even more impressive is that most of our current force made a conscious, deliberate decision to volunteer for military service in a time of known, persistent conflict.”

He reminded them that there are threats all over the world. “North Korea remains unpredictable, Russia is in decline, fueling desperate and dangerous opportunism, and China is on the rise as a growing world power. As Americans, we do not have a deed on liberty. We only have a lease that must be renewed by every generation, a lease underwritten today by these exceptional aspiring leaders.”

Gingrich reminded the cadets that they will sacrifice greatly, yet they will embrace the challenge and lead with courage. “You will set the example of quiet professionalism, skilled, confident and unflappable, but also self-effacing and humble. You will shun the limelight and defer credit to your subordinates, and despite that humble underpinning, you will have plenty of reason to be proud. You and those you lead will thrive where few are capable and fewer still have the courage

to try. You will endure where most lack the character and determination to persist, you will voluntarily relinquish many of the very rights you protect, and you will steer clear of domestic politics and growing polarization and stay above the fray. In all things, you will be held to a higher standard of

conduct. This may sound overwhelming, but you’re ready, VMI has armed you for success.”

In closing, Gingrich referenced a personal favorite Bible verse, Isaiah 6:8. “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here I am. Send me!’”

He then asked the commissioning cadets to stand and he administered the oath of office.

Gingrich commissioned from Temple University in 1989 as an armor officer with a degree in civil and construction engineering technology. He embarked on a career in operations research, supporting and leading the Army’s force and program development. His operational experience includes chief, Force Generation, and Plans and Posture in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; and deputy director, Chief of Assessments, during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). He returned from OEF and completed one year as a fellow with the Brookings Institution, a research foundation based in Washington, D.C. Prior to becoming deputy chief of staff, he was director of program analysis and evaluation, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff. Gingrich holds a master’s degree in industrial engineering from the University of Louisville, as well as advanced degrees from the Air University and the National Defense University.

Following the ceremony, the separate military branches held their individual



Jiayi “James” Li ‘25 takes the oath, commissioning into the U.S. Navy in Cameron Hall May 15.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

*See Commissioning, page 14*

# A Farewell Salute to Maj. Gen. Wins

By Marianne Hause, with contributions by Amy Goetz and Mary Price

As the tenure of Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 as 15<sup>th</sup> superintendent of VMI winds down, and he prepares to take his leave and bid farewell, it is fitting to honor the man who came into the position and led the Institute through difficult times, both locally and globally.

Wins' bond with VMI began Matriculation Day, August 1981. Recruited to play NCAA basketball, he discovered very quickly his first day as a rat that the VMI system is designed to teach a life focused on teamwork and a willingness to support others. Wins believes VMI's unique education method, which includes the Rat Line, the regimental and class systems, and the highly revered Honor Code, all have the potential to allow young men and women a period of "intense self-discovery."

Wins played basketball all four years of his cadetship, finishing among the top five scorers in VMI history. He was involved in the Promaji Club and the Society for Young Economists. He graduated with a degree in economics.

He commissioned into the Army and served for 34 years. During his Army career he held positions in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions, Combined Army Support Command, and U.S. Special Operations Command. His overseas service included the Republic of Korea; peacekeeping in the Sinai Desert, Egypt; and wartime service in Afghanistan. His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Defense Superior Service medal, the Legion of Merit with one oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star, and many others. He was the first commanding general of the Army Combat Capabilities Command, the Army's organic science, technology, and analysis organization dedicated to developing combat capabilities, and retired as a two-star general. During his military service, he was often reminded of lessons he learned at VMI. "I've been in situations during my

Army career where things were occurring that really could have meant a soldier gets harmed or killed. In those moments, you as a leader aren't expected to collapse, fold, or shrink under pressure, in part, because my VMI experience taught me resolve."

Indeed, resolve was needed as Wins stepped into the position vacated by Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62, who resigned Oct. 26, 2020, at the request of Governor Ralph Northam '81 and legislative leaders days after they promised an independent

had used throughout his military career. "We must do the right things for the right reasons. I will focus on what is best each and every day for the Corps of Cadets and VMI," he stated when he became interim superintendent in Nov. 2020.

In April 2021, he was named superintendent by a unanimous vote of the VMI Board of Visitors.

In response to the commonwealth's audit into VMI's diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, and spending countless hours



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 addresses the crowd during his inaugural parade in September 2021. —VMI File Photo by Kelly Nye.

third-party review of the Institute's "culture, policies, practices, and equity in disciplinary procedures" with regard to accusations of racism and sexism. The rapid global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak during the 2020–21 academic year. Countries sealed their borders, sports teams canceled their seasons, and schools, including VMI, had moved classes online. Additionally, the number of admissions applications to VMI had been falling for more than a decade with no apparent understanding of why or a plan to address the decline.

To tackle the challenges, Wins again applied what he learned as a cadet and

listening to cadets, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni to better understand the culture of the Institute, Wins released his "One Corps-One VMI: A Unifying Action Plan," in June 2021. The plan focused on five goals: honor, diversity and inclusion, the VMI brand, competing and winning, and one VMI. His purpose of the plan was, "For the VMI community to come together as brother rats, fellow cadets, alumni, and friends to make an already special place even more special. We cannot do this as a community of factions. VMI has a long history of improvement. Now is no

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different. The Institute will move forward and will be better because of this chapter in our history.”

Wins was inaugurated as VMI’s 15<sup>th</sup> superintendent Sept. 10, 2021, and honored with a parade by the Corps of Cadets, a reception in Marshall Hall, and a 13-gun salute.

During his time as superintendent, Wins made a point of being visible throughout post, often with his wife, Cassandra, by his side. He regularly attended sporting events, especially football at Foster Stadium and basketball in Cameron Hall, where he often was animated and vocal. He took review of countless parades, presided over and spoke at annual ceremonies including matriculation, convocation, Ring Figure, commissioning, and commencement. He frequently met with faculty and paid visits to classes, barracks, and Crozet Hall to join cadets for meals. He welcomed VIPs to his office, and personally conducted post tours. He went out of his way to ensure employee morale stayed strong, and recognized them for their labors. He attended the annual employee recognition breakfast, where employee milestones were recognized; established an annual family day celebration, where employees could bring their families for a day of fun and relaxation; and hosted a holiday open house at the superintendent’s quarters. He

also worked to acquire additional funds to make sure employees’ salaries remain competitive. In addition, he managed and executed daily Institute tasks and focused on the cadet experience. He placed emphasis on building a strategic enrollment management infrastructure which, during the 2024–25 recruitment period, boasted the largest number of applications ever received during an admissions cycle. Wins visited Richmond often to lobby on behalf of the Institute with the General Assembly and governor, and attended the annual legislative reception held at the Library of Virginia in February. His efforts to build relationships in the General Assembly led to a 65% increase in state funding to VMI during his tenure. He worked long hours in his office in Smith Hall, where a light could be seen burning into the dark of the evening sky.

Wins publicly introduced his strategic plan, “Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders,” during Founders Day celebrations for the 185<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VMI’s founding in November 2024. The plan is a culmination of two years of collaboration among cadets, faculty, staff, board members, and alumni, and is a call to action built on five critical initiatives: 1. Preparing Exceptional Leaders: producing educated and honorable citizen-leaders; 2. Strengthening Academic Excellence: equipping cadets with the

intellectual tools to navigate and shape the future; 3. Fostering Esprit de Corps: unity, pride, and mutual respect that binds; 4. Recruiting Top Cadets and Boosting Success: sharpening recruitment strategies and attracting top talent from across the world; and 5. Delivering 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure: investing in modern classrooms, labs, technology, and physical fitness facilities. With the implementation of this plan, Wins sees VMI in 2034 firmly secured in its place as the premier small college in the nation, unequaled in producing educated, honorable, and adaptable citizen-soldiers and leaders. He sees, “A VMI with a global reputation for academic excellence, a renowned model for leadership training, and a shining example of what it means to lead with honor, courage, and selfless service,” he said.

Additional achievements of Wins include the ribbon cutting and dedication of the \$44 million Aquatic Center in January 2023, the addition of the Coast Guard as the sixth military branch to which cadets began receiving direct commissions in May 2023, and VMI achieving a 5-star rating from Money magazine’s Best Colleges in America—the only senior military college to achieve such a rating.

Eddie Williams II ’83, head coach for women’s track and field at VMI, graduated two years ahead of Wins and knew him as a cadet. “I’m most impressed by Major General Wins’ humility as well as how respectfully he treats others. He has an impressive character, especially in the face of adversity, he is competent and committed to excellence. I’ve always believed that the first responsibility of a leader is to define expectations and create a positive environment where individuals can be successful. The last is to say, ‘thank you.’ That epitomizes Major General Wins in my book,” stated Williams.

Col. Jeff Boobar ’86, senior director in the Office of Finance and Support at VMI, also knew Wins when they were both cadets. “Having had the joy of watching fellow Cadet Wins thrill the Corps on the floor of Cameron Hall, and the privilege and honor of working with



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 and Tom Watjen '76 cut a ribbon during a ceremony to open the Aquatic Center in January 2023.—VMI File Photo by Kelly Nye.

See Farewell Salute, page 21

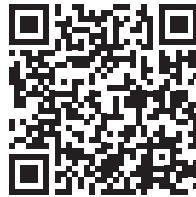




## Graduation Week

Graduation week events included a parade for the regimental change of command, commissioning, the Memorial Parade, Baccalaureate, Institute and Commandant Award ceremonies, concerts, and commencement.

More photos from the week of events can be found at [www.flickr.com/photos/vmiphotos/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vmiphotos/albums). —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Kelly Nye, and Jake Falcone '27.





pin-on ceremonies in four separate locations on post.

According to Capt. Maurice Dawson, assistant professor of military science for Army ROTC, two cadets stand out as exemplary, Jonah Jurack '25 and Ethan Fogle '25. "Jurack is the Blue Ridge Battalion cadet commander and valedictorian for the graduating class. There are approximately 6,000 Army ROTC cadets in the nation and Jurack is ranked 14<sup>th</sup>, and a Distinguished Military Graduate. Fogle is ranked 56<sup>th</sup> nationally, and he is a Distinguished Military Graduate as well. In addition, Fogle was part of the Ranger Challenge team that competed in Exercise Cambrian Patrol in Wales last October and received the bronze medal," said Dawson.

Lt. John Walker '18, naval science instructor for Naval ROTC, designated two outstanding cadets, Anna Yemelianova '25 and Jiayi "James" Li '25. "Yemelianova has excelled in both academics and physical fitness. She ranked second out of a very competitive group of 1<sup>st</sup> Class midshipmen. She was in charge of the NROTC academic program for 300 midshipmen, managing study hours and student-tutor pairing. She will be a surface warfare officer aboard the USS Mount Rushmore stationed in Sasebo, Japan. Li stands out in both academics and leadership and ranked fourth out of 14 in his peer group in cumulative GPA. He is commissioning as a submarine warfare officer, and will attend Naval post-graduate

school in Monterey, California, to complete a master's degree before beginning the Navy nuclear power training pipeline."

Capt. Philip Haly, Marine officer instructor for Naval ROTC, named two outstanding cadets entering the Marine Corps, Jack Fletcher '25 and Trey McGee '25. "Fletcher has a cumulative GPA of 3.24, and scored 290 out of 300 on the physical fitness test. He exceptionally performed the duties as Marine ROTC Company commander and Bulldog Platoon advisor. The cadets within the Marine company voted him "most inspirational leader." McGee has a cumulative GPA of 3.88, and scored 300 out of 300 on the physical fitness test. He served as the Marine ROTC senior enlisted advisor and the Bulldog Platoon commander throughout his 1<sup>st</sup> Class year. As the senior enlisted advisor, he was critical in our company's accountability and culture development. He completed this through meticulous attention to detail and leadership by example. Those characteristics carried over to the spring, where he led the charge in developing 2<sup>nd</sup> Class cadets for officer candidate school in our Bulldog Platoon."

Lt. Col. Nicholas Cooper '09, director of staff of Air Force ROTC, cited two exceptional cadets entering the Air Force: Elena Gutierrez '25 and Cate Dowden '25. "Gutierrez is the epitome of both a VMI cadet captain and a future Air Force officer! She's held various leadership



Elena Gutierrez '25 takes the oath to commission into the U.S. Air Force on the stage of Memorial Hall May 15.—VMI Photo by Jake Falcone '27.

positions throughout the AFROTC cadet wing. Her highest role was cadet vice wing commander, in which she was the number two cadet in the entire 250-plus wing, which includes cadets from Mary Baldwin University, Southern Virginia University, and Washington & Lee University. She is

*Continued on next page*



Jack Fletcher '25 receives his ranks for the U.S. Marine Corps from family members in Cameron Hall May 15.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Col. Ryan Finn administers the U.S. Marine Corps oath to Trey McGee '25 in Cameron Hall May 15.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

ranked the No. 1 Air Force cadet by AFROTC Commander, Col. Nichole Scott, and has earned the coveted Distinguished Graduate (DG) award—established to recognize the top 10% of commissioning cadets—from AFROTC. She's made huge impacts in the Corps of Cadets as the S2 captain over academics, improving the availability of tutors significantly. She partnered with the academic department heads to ensure the tutors were vetted and qualified to lead struggling students through academic rigor. As the cadet wing inspector general in her final semester, she has ensured her peers stay on task and finish their four-year

AFROTC interview strong. She already acts at the level of a second lieutenant, and will make a fantastic air battle manager in the USAF.

"Dowden has been an asset to both the AFROTC and the Corps of Cadets. This has been an amazing journey for her as she juggled the hardest major of mechanical engineering at VMI, Institute Honors, as well as the cadet wing commander for AFROTC. Simply amazing! She has risen through the VMI ranks to be the Charlie Company commander, and was hand-picked to lead the Cadet Wing in her final semester. She also earned the DG award. She's going

to be an excellent space and missiles officer, and will give respect and honor to the VMI name," shared Cooper.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein, director of cadet activities and VMI liaison for the Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program (AUP), Nicholas Hemstreet '25 was the only cadet to commission into USCG this year. "Nicholas was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion commanding officer, the AUP commander, and one of the AUP founding members who has worked diligently toward improving the program. He is a self-starter with unlimited potential," she said. 🌟



Anna Yemelianova '25 receives her ranks for the U.S. Navy from family members in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Nicholas Hemstreet '25 receives his ranks for the U.S. Coast Guard in Memorial Garden.—VMI Photo by Jake Falcone '27.

## WWII Veteran Joins Commissioning Celebration

Staff Sgt. Jack Moran, a 99-year-old WWII veteran, flew from his home in Los Angeles to witness the commissioning of Thomas Langston '25 into the Army. Langston's great-granduncle, Tommy Langston, was Moran's friend and squad commander in the 347<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment—K Company. The morning of Dec. 16, 1944, their squad was hunkered down for battle near a little town called Obergailbach, France, close to the German border. Moran witnessed several of his brothers in arms die that day by German bullets. One of them was Langston.

Following the commissioning ceremony in which Moran received a standing ovation from the crowd, the separate military branches held their individual pin-on ceremonies in various locations on post. It is there that the newly commissioned officers follow a tradition of presenting a silver dollar to the active service member or veteran from whom they receive their first salute. In Marshall Hall where the Army held their pin-on ceremony, the crowd erupted in cheers, applause, and a few tears when Moran rendered Langston his first salute. Langston then gave Moran a silver dollar and a bear hug. Moran then joined the Langston family in North Carolina for extended celebrations.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.





# Summer Projects Underway on Post

By Lt. Col. Michelle Ellwood and Lt. Col. Daren Payne '90

From the moment cadets leave post after the graduation week festivities, teams began working on summer projects, and some significant projects have been taking place during the academic year that will be more noticeable when cadets return in August.

The Post-Wide Safety and Security Project is 70% complete and many families probably noticed newly installed gates and bollards at various post entrances that can be activated remotely. This summer, the Parade Ground wall will be finished, along with barriers along Burma Road and Engineering Drive. Remaining tasks will be complete in October. This project addresses the need to be able to secure all entrances and exits to the main areas of post in the event of emergency or elevated threat level.

The Cadet Safety and Security Project is nearly 50% complete. This summer, installation of card readers on barracks doors, security cameras, a guard room



Construction continues on the Parade Ground wall in May.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



A newly installed barrier along Burma Road behind the Old Hospital can be lowered as needed.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

remodel, and fielding of new radio systems will get started, with the goal to be complete by November. Cadets will be enabled to securely shelter in place during an active threat.

With the dust from cadet cars still in the air, the project to replace Old and New Barracks windows kicked off May 19. The first phase of this two-year project is to replace approximately 90 of the 793 windows by August 2025, while the next phase will take place during the upcoming fall semester. Completion of the project will be in the fall of 2027.

Also happening in New Barracks is the courtyard project. The

courtyard pavers will be replaced, along with the underlayment, and an improved drainage system will be installed. This work will eliminate leaking into the space below the courtyard and prevent courtyard flooding. This will be complete in August.

Families in Cameron Hall for the graduation or commissioning ceremonies may have noticed some work taking place in the upper seating areas. The aging sound system and old scoreboards will be replaced with video displays, new shot clocks, and an upgraded sound system. The new video boards will be installed this summer.

A few other projects that will enhance club or NCAA athletic facilities include replacing the existing targets in the Kilbourne Hall rifle range with a modern targetry system and remove lead buildup throughout the range facility. Also, the Foster Stadium game day locker room will have an improved drainage system and water damage will be addressed in the locker rooms caused by roof leaks. Clarkson-McKenna hydrotherapy room will be remodeled, correcting leaks and

*Continued on next page*



installing new equipment for additional treatment of athletes. All these projects will be completed in the early part of the fall semester.

Crozet Hall will have a remodeled dishwashing area along with new a freezer and cooler. This project will address failing equipment, improve efficiency

of operations, and increase food storage capacity to support a larger Corps of Cadets.

Some of the residents on post will get a new roof or gutter system. Existing roofs were failing, and many gutters and down spouts were causing drainage issues around the residences. The project started in April and will be complete by early June.

Some future high-profile projects are in the design phase, including the Moody Hall replacement, Nichols Engineering Building expansion and renovation, Hinty Hall expansion, New Market Museum renovations, and Center for Leadership and Ethics Phase II.

Lt. Col. Daren Payne '90, deputy director of facilities management, knows the long-term value of each of these projects. "Some of these projects are more visible than others," he stated, "but each one will contribute to the day-to-day activities of VMI, and the success and safety of the Corps." ❧

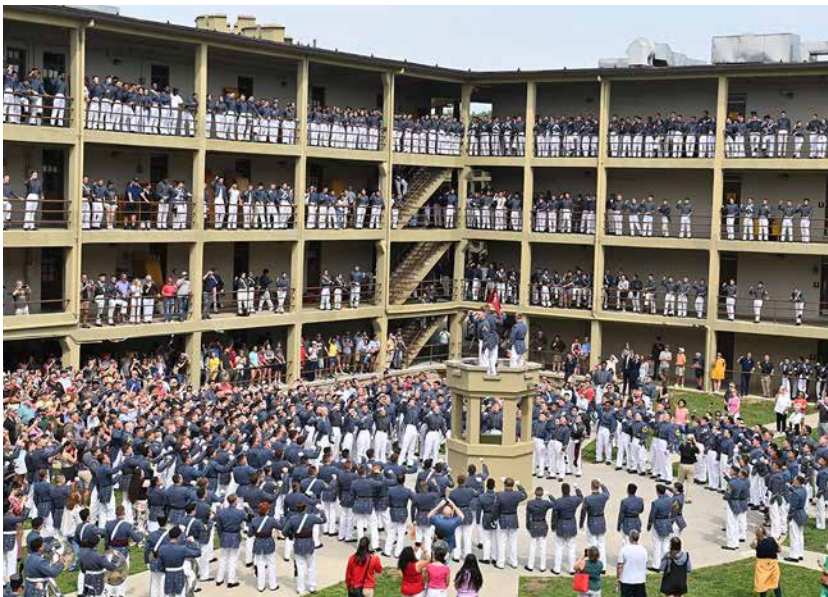


Scaffolding is put into place in front of New Barracks so workers can begin to replace barracks windows.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



## Change of Command

The 186<sup>th</sup> regiment of cadet leadership, including Devin Auzenne '26, the new regimental commander, took command of the Corps of Cadets at the change of command parade May 16. Following the parade, the Corps gathered for an Old Yell in barracks and Brian Pritchard '25 placed his name plate on the first captain plaque in barracks.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.





# POST BRIEFS

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## CIS Build & Fly

Dr. Sherif Abdelhamid, assistant professor in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences (CIS) and outreach liaison officer for the Cyber Defense (CyDef) Laboratory, participated in "Build & Fly with VMI," a free drone event for students ages 13–18 held April 19 at the New College

Institute in Martinsville, Virginia. The event was part of the outreach initiative by CIS and CyDef. James Bangura '26 and Ben Hagerich '26, both majoring in computer science, accompanied Abdelhamid.

## Poetry Podcast

Dr. Mattie Quesenberry Smith, instructor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies and Virginia's poet laureate, is featured on "The Laureate Project," a podcast launched by Emmy-nominated

journalist, Matt Hoisch. The episode may be found online at <https://hoisch.substack.com/p/virginia-mattie-quesenberry-smith> and on Apple Podcasts and Spotify under "The Laureate Project."

## Gilman Scholarships

Josiah Farrell '28, a double major in international studies and Chinese, and Anderson Robles-Rodriguez '28, a mechanical engineering major, have been awarded Gilman Scholarships for study abroad this summer. Both

will participate in the Taiwan Huayu BEST Program and study Mandarin Chinese at the National Chengchi University in Taipei from June 2 to Aug. 18.

## Sweden AI Conference

Alexa Avery '25 and Amber Strapponi '26, both majoring in computer science, wrote a paper on artificial intelligence (AI) that has been selected for publication and in-person presentation at the 27<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction, in Gothenburg, Sweden, in June. The paper titled, "Reimagining Educational Research: A Multi-Model

AI Evaluation of AI-in-Education Literature" was the final assignment for the Department of Computer and Information Sciences' Research Topics course and offers an AI-driven methodology designed to assist in exploring the growing body of literature and how AI can better support both students and educators.

## Mystery Writers Award

Maj. Henry A. Wise III '05, assistant professor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, won the Mystery Writers of America

2025 Edgar Allan Poe Award in the Best First Novel by an American Author category for his book, "Holy City." 🦋



## Memorial Parade

The Memorial Parade was held the morning of May 15, commemorating the bravery and sacrifice of all alumni who died on the field of honor. The garrison flags were flown at half-staff, by order of Gov. Glenn Youngkin, in memory and respect of Peace Officers' Memorial Day, a fitting backdrop as all 591 alumni names were read by Angelina Garcia '25, William Lauerman '25, Garrett Maye '28, and Jamie Rodriguez '28. A wreath was laid at the foot of the monument, "Virginia Mourning Her Dead," as well as at the three barracks arches, followed by the firing of a three-volley salute. A stirring echo rendition of "Taps" was played, followed by the Pipe Band leading the Regimental Band in an emotional delivery of "Amazing Grace." Col. Lawrence "Ley" Havird '90, commandant, was joined by Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, in taking review of the parade as the Corps marched from the Parade Ground down Letcher Avenue toward barracks.—VMI photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.





# Professor Mentors Juvenile Center Youth

By Marianne Hause

Maj. Aubrey Whitehead, assistant professor in the Department of Psychology, volunteers as a senior mentor two hours each week at the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center (SVJC) in Staunton. He began his visits to the secured detention facility in March with the goal of connecting with the 18-year-old male residents, gaining their trust, and teaching them accountability and motivation. After speaking with them about his work at VMI, the teens showed interest in the discipline and lifestyle of VMI cadets, individuals close to their age. Realizing an ideal opportunity to bring cadets and SVJC residents together for their mutual benefit, Whitehead coordinated with SVJC vocational specialist, Wade Teets, to allow two cadets join him during a mentor session in late April.

Alex MacFarlane '26 and Amiel Diaz '26, both majoring in international studies, joined Whitehead on his visit to the center April 24. The two cadets spoke frankly with the residents about their lives, cadet activities, post-graduation plans, and the benefits of the VMI culture, both good and challenging. In turn, the residents demonstrated the knowledge they have acquired from various certification projects, including welding, electrical technology, and fiber optics installation. During that visit, Whitehead observed that the residents were more engaged than he had ever seen them.

Diaz and MacFarlane both agreed the trip was eye-opening and humbling. "Even though they are currently in a detention center, they are very kind-hearted and dedicated to becoming better people," shared Diaz. "They showed us what they have learned at the facility. I was amazed with their openness and felt a great connection with them."

"The trip to SVJC was a phenomenal experience," emphasized MacFarlane. "The ability to speak to people from different backgrounds and perspectives is something you do not come across often, and I am thankful for being able to visit them."



Amiel Diaz '26, Maj. Aubrey Whitehead, and Alex MacFarlane '26 visit the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center in Staunton. —Photo courtesy of Maj. Aubrey Whitehead.

Whitehead believes strongly in setting a strong example for at-risk youth. "My own teenage years were questionable, and I may have gotten into trouble without the support and structure of my dad and family. My goal is to show these young men that their future has yet to be written, regardless of their past."

Teets wishes to continue the relationship with Whitehead. "Dr. Whitehead has brought much needed inspirational conversation to our residents, and gives them an outlet for their thoughts of the community and direction for their future as young men"

SVJC annually serves 200 youth, both male and female, with an average daily population of 25. Their ages range from 10 to 20. Additional information may be found on their website, [www.svjc.org](http://www.svjc.org). 🌿

## Pipe Band Dominates in Savannah

The Pipe Band competed at the Savannah Scottish Games and Celtic Festival in Savannah, Georgia, May 2–4.

Four other pipe bands competed against VMI at the festival: The City of Mount Dora Pipes and Drums, from Mount Dora, Florida; Savannah Pipes and Drums, from Savannah, Georgia; and two groups from the Charleston Pipe Band from Charleston, South Carolina. VMI placed second. In addition, there were individual competitions which VMI dominated. They include William Bolay '26, first place for grade 5 march A competition. For grade 5 march B competition, Alden Rhodes '26 received first place; Caleb Swanson '27, second place; Ben Bowen '26, fourth place; and Byron Rivey '26, fifth place. For grade 5 snare drumming competition, Connor Wolfe '26, placed first; Harrison Sloane '27, second place; Serenity Fraser '28, third place; and Thomas Sasso '27, fifth place. For the tenor drumming competition, Christina Britton '28 received second place and Keye Warren '28, fourth place. In the bass drumming competition, Kira Brenaman '26 earned first place and Andrei Antonio '28 got second place. —Photo Courtesy of the VMI Pipe Band.

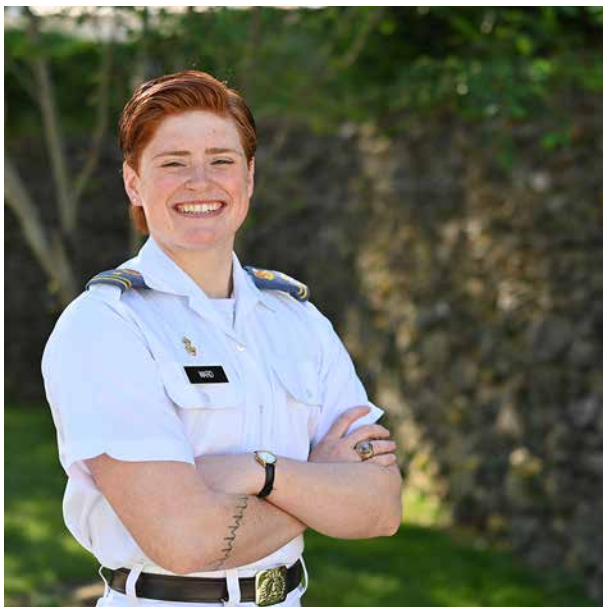




## Regimental Leadership *continued from page 5*

because, as she said, "It is a place like no other. I love the lifestyle here. It will prepare me for a successful career and life. I am a committed athlete on the women's water polo team, and VMI makes it possible to balance intense academics, sports, and military obligations." As CO, she wants to be representative of athletes and women at VMI. Smith is from Ontario, California. After graduating, she plans to work for the Defense Intelligence Agency or some other government agency. She hopes to later attend graduate school.

Grant Rose has been named India Company CO. His brother, Luke Rose '24, matriculated two years before him. "He was always telling stories about VMI, and all the opportunities it offered. When I was awarded a three-year Army ROTC National Scholarship, I knew VMI would be a great place to further my academic career and build a foundation for my future in the military." Rose stated that being CO will allow him to make a difference in the lives of others, as well as maintain VMI traditions and standards. Rose was also named honor court president for the



Band Company commander for the 2025–26 academic year will be Julia Ward '26.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

next academic year after serving on the court during his cadetship, and is a member of the Cadet Investment Group. He is from Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he attended Kellam High School.

Julia Ward, a Peay Scholar from Frankfort, Illinois, has been named Band Company CO. She chose VMI because she wanted a challenge, and it was the only college where she could compete in NCAA water polo, study engineering, and commission into the military. She applied for the position of CO because of the growth potential she sees in the company. "Within the past three years, we got a new music director and a new Pipe Band director, and there has been a shift in vision for the company.

I want to help foster an environment of growth, setting the framework for the next generations," she said. Ward is the daughter of Richard and Susan Ward. She attended Lincoln-Way East High School. Following graduation, she will commission into the Navy. 🌟



## Employee Recognition

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, recognized VMI staff during the employee breakfast May 9 in Crozet Hall and family day May 10 at McKethan Park. During the employee breakfast, he administered awards for years of service to classified employees, including Martha Potter of admissions for 50 years of service. Recognized for 45 years of service were John Camper, facilities management, and Sandra Campbell, human resources. Certificates of excellence were handed out during family day for exemplary work performances over the past year. Lunch was provided and activities were available for employees' children.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





Superintendent Wins, I am proud to say that his dedication to the Corps of Cadets and his love for the Institute have never wavered. I hope that he continues to serve VMI as superintendent emeritus for many years to come,” he said.

Wins gave a farewell address to the entire Corps of Cadets May 13 in Cameron Hall. He reminded them that the VMI brand is not simply a logo or phrase. “It’s how you live. It’s how the community sees the Corps and how it recognizes each and every one of your accomplishments.” He told them that it is unfortunate that they got swirled into the political firestorm of the past five years. “Because I know and you know that is not who you are. The Corps consists of young men and women who come here with a purpose, who come here wanting to accept the challenge and to strive and succeed in every field of endeavor. You demonstrate each and every day what you do because you live a life of honor.” Wins stated that each superintendent has left his own mark on the Institute. “I believe VMI is better today than when I arrived. We have improved the academic and well-being resources, and we have invested in our people. An investment in them gives you a return investment to know that the college you go to, the experience you’re undergoing, you have every opportunity to do it with the best resources, the best instructors, the best faculty, and the best environment that could possibly be done for any college in America.” He concluded by stating that his departure signals the next phase in VMI’s history. “We don’t know who the next



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 and his wife, Cassandra, listen as speakers address their time in Lexington during a community recognition at First Baptist Church.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

superintendent is going to be, but we know that the future is bright.” To the Class of 2025 he said, “We arrived together, and we will depart together.” To the entire Corps he said, “It’s been an honor and privilege to watch each class mature from your day of matriculation until your graduation, I’m very proud of that. I’m proud of the leaders that you all have become and how you demonstrate leadership. And I know that your brand and leadership will carry you into the future. You will be prepared for the many challenges the world faces. And I hope that as you rise up to those challenges, you will remember some of the things that you learned here, that you demonstrated

here, and that you value as important and that you carry it through a lifetime.” After thanking the cadets, they stood at attention as he exited the floor.

First Baptist Church in Lexington hosted a community celebration May 18 for Wins. Pastor of the church, Rev. McKinley Williams said, “The community wanted to come together and tell him and show him how much they appreciated him.”

The Wins will move back to their home in Northern Virginia. He has no immediate plans, but he will continue to support his beloved alma mater, as the Board of Visitors conferred upon Wins the status of superintendent emeritus, May 3, 2025. 🌟

## Class of 1975 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Gifts

The Class of 1975 presented its 50<sup>th</sup> reunion gift of \$6,026,328.75 to the Institute during the reunion parade April 26. David Prasnicki, VMI Alumni Agencies chief executive officer, and Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, accept the check from Chip Louthan '75, John Plunkett '75, Vic Arthur '75, Jim Hobbs '75, and John Young '75.

“In addition to their strong event participation and handsome 50<sup>th</sup> reunion gift, the Class of 1975 also embraced the nascent Pass in Review program by offering a special gift to each member of the Class of 2025,” said Meade King '85, VMI Foundation chief operating officer and Alumni Agencies director of advancement. “In doing so, they not only demonstrated their affection for one another and for VMI, but specifically for the Corps of Cadets.”—Photo courtesy of VMI Alumni Agencies.





when he was a 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet. He was also Wins' uncle dyke, a term given to the roommate of a rat's dyke, or mentor. McDew's charm and easy demeanor was immediately apparent with his good-natured ribbing and self-effacing humor. "I have been warned to be poignant and be gone, but no one gave me a time limit. I am, in fact, a retired four-star with time on my hands," he joked to the amusement of the audience. In thanking the faculty and staff for all they do for the cadets he quipped, "You take the lumps of coal—who try to remain lumps of coal—and put pressure on them to make them diamonds."

When he offered serious words he wanted to ensure the cadets remember, he paused his speech and made eye contact with each of them. "This is a turbulent time. It wasn't easy when you started this journey. It wasn't easy in the middle of this journey, and we're going to cast you out of the nest. You think you're going to zoom away from here, but we're casting you out. But only to do good, to be the example." He reminded them of the large class ring they all wear on their fingers, a physical representation of the merits of VMI, merits that not everyone admires or respects. "Here's your challenge. You can't hide from it, as big as that monster is. You now have to live up to the unlimited promise and potential that you possess. For four years, you have been given the most wonderful and glorious leadership laboratory known to mankind. That's a wonderful



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 presents the Second Jackson-Hope Medal to James Andrew Boynewicz '25.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

challenge you. Decide right now the type of person you're going to be in crunch time. Be that person every day, you can't wait until you feel like it. You have to decide on every single day that you're going to be better tomorrow than you are today."

With more than 3,300 flight hours and decades of operational leadership, McDew is now retired from active duty. He continues to champion ethical leadership, integrity, and opportunity through his service on the boards of Abbott, USAA, GE Aerospace, Parsons

gift, especially if you take full advantage of it. Your generation is full of people who love celebrity, but you have a set of indisputable qualities that are in high demand but extremely short supply. Don't waste them."

McDew closed by offering the cadets three words: "Beware. Decide. Be. Life tests are coming. They look like moral dilemmas. Beware, someone is going to

Corporation, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and the Manns Horne Youth Foundation.

Three awards are traditionally given at VMI's May commencement exercises. The First Jackson-Hope Medal for highest attainment in scholarship, accompanied by the Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award, went to Gabriel



Courtney Nicole Novotny '25 receives the Society of the Cincinnati Medal from Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

*Continued on next page*



Patrick Williams '25, an international studies major from Ashland, Virginia.

Receiving the Second Jackson-Hope Medal, for second highest attainment in scholarship, accompanied by the Colonel Sterling Murray Heflin 1916 Academic Proficiency Award, was James Andrew Boynewicz '25, from Virginia Beach, Virginia, who majored in biology.

Courtney Nicole Novotny '25, a biology major from Reading, Pennsylvania, received the Society of the Cincinnati Medal, for efficiency of service and excellence of character, accompanied by the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards.

Commencement concluded with a benediction offered by Col. John P. Casper '04, chaplain, followed by Devin Auzenne '26, the new regimental commander, relieving the Class of 2025 of their duties as they cheered and tossed their gloves in the air. 🍀



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 presents the First Jackson-Hope Medal to Gabriel Patrick Williams '25.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

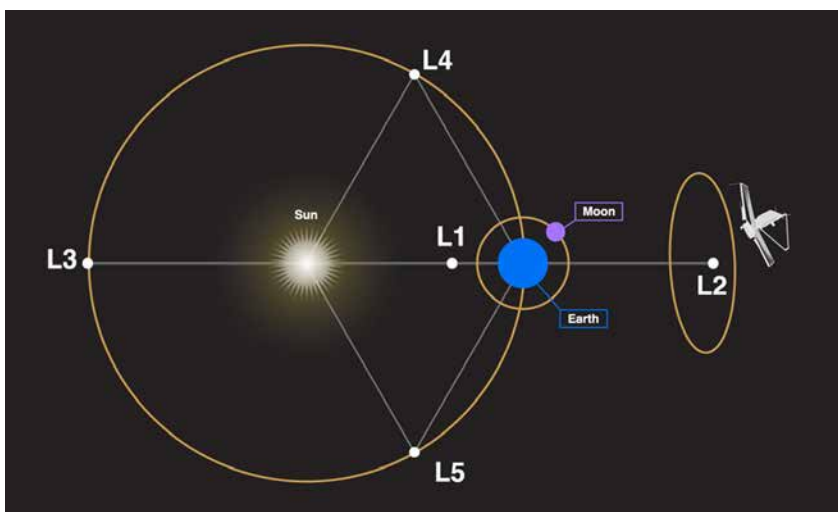
## VMI Chemistry Professor Looks at Cosmic Ice

By Marianne Hause

Maj. Christopher N. Shingledecker, assistant professor of chemistry, recently learned that a research proposal he submitted to the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) has been accepted. The proposal titled, "A New Modeling Toolkit for JWST Ice Observations," describes the construction of theoretical models

to support observations with the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), the largest telescope in space. Proposal applications to the STScI are highly competitive, and his was judged to be in the top 11% of more than 200 submitted in the theory category.

The JWST, which is an infrared observatory, allows astronomers to observe objects blocked by dust and gas in the visible light spectrum. It was launched on Christmas Day 2021, and is orbiting approximately 1 million miles from Earth, where it circles L2, a so-called Lagrange point selected to keep the Earth between the telescope and the sun. Shingledecker



An image illustrating the Lagrange point keeping the Earth between the telescope and the sun.—Image courtesy of NASA.

illustrated, "These are points around Earth that are particularly gravitationally stable. The Hubble Space Telescope is fairly close to Earth, orbiting at an average altitude of about 300 miles. It's a space telescope, but metaphorically, it's still in the Earth's backyard. The JWST is four times further from the Earth than the moon. It's very much a space telescope. So now you're not just camping in the backyard, now you're camping in Shenandoah National Park."

Shingledecker, who is the principal investigator of the project, is working with two other researchers, Andrew Burkhart, Ph.D., assistant professor of physics at

Worcester State University in Massachusetts, and Serena Viti, Ph.D., professor of astronomy at Universiteit Leiden in the Netherlands.

Their goal is to take an astrochemical model Viti developed with her students, called UCLCHEM, and incorporate into it some of the various astrochemical theories Shingledecker has developed. "What we're going to be looking at in particular is cosmic ice. JWST is one of the few observatories that allows us to see cosmic ice, but there's a problem. Even though you can observe these ices better

than ever before, getting information about their composition has been challenging because we don't have good models to predict what those ices should be made of, so that's what we will be working on. We want to make it easier to go from observations to conclusions for people who want to study cosmic ice," explained Shingledecker.

Shingledecker, who also serves as vice chair of the American Chemical Society astrochemistry subdivision, stated that the project should take two years to complete and will involve the work of several VMI cadets. The funding received will support the study of astrochemistry at VMI. 🍀






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KEVIN GARROWAY '25 TELLS  
HIS VMI STORY.

I AM  
VMI



The cadets, faculty, and staff, both past and present,  
are what define Virginia Military Institute and make it  
NO ORDINARY COLLEGE.



Scan the QR Code  
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