

Parents

A Word from the Parents Council

Dear Incoming VMI Families,

Welcome to Virginia Military Institute—
“No Ordinary College. No Ordinary Life.”

As co-presidents of the VMI Parents Council, we extend our warmest welcome to your family. Choosing VMI marks the beginning of a transformative journey for your student—and for you. The VMI Parents Council serves as a bridge between families, cadets, and Institute leadership. Our mission is to support and inform families while helping them navigate the unique VMI experience. We understand the transition can be both exciting and challenging, and we’re here to help you every step of the way.

You’ll find Parents Council volunteers available during key events such as Matriculation, Family Weekend,

fall tailgates, and other VMI events throughout the year. Please seek out our members wearing a red Parents Council nametag for any guidance you might need.

This handbook was created by cadet leadership to help guide your transition—please keep it handy. For real-time updates and connection with fellow parents, we encourage you to join the Official VMI Rat Mass 2027+3 Parent’s Page on Facebook. It’s a trusted, supportive space to ask questions and stay informed.

If you have any questions or need assistance, feel free to reach out at VMIPCPresident@gmail.com. We look forward to welcoming you on post soon!

Rah Virginia Mil!

Jeff '94 and Ginny Crenshaw
Parents of Colin Crenshaw
Class of 2027

Parental Perspective and Support

As the parent or guardian of a new cadet, you can take pride—and find peace of mind—in the structure and support built into the VMI system. While regular communication with your rat may be limited, rest assured their whereabouts are always known, and their days are carefully structured around academics, military training, and character development.

Every rat adjusts to life at VMI at their own pace. Challenges are common—whether academic, physical, or mental—but no challenge is faced alone. The system is designed to push, mold, and support them. What your rat is going through, thousands before them have endured and

overcome. This is a team effort, and rats quickly learn that success at VMI depends on leaning on their brother rats, dykes, and leaders.

To ensure safety and accountability, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are assigned to each company and supervise all rat events. Additionally, two key cadet-run groups—the Cadet Equity Association (CEA) and the Officer of the Guard Association (OGA)—monitor cadet life. The CEA addresses concerns of discrimination or misconduct, while the OGA enforces strict rules against hazing and ensures healthy cadet-rat interactions.

During the first six months, the Rat Line, your encouragement is vital.

Attending football games and tailgates offers support—and for out-of-state families, other VMI parents often step in to help. Letters/small care packages from home and email are also great ways to offer encouragement.

Your rat may not always want to talk in detail about their experience. When they do reach out, the best support is a listening ear and confidence in their ability to rise

to the challenge. If your cadet expresses frustration, listen with empathy and remind them of their strength. If you ever have concerns that seem beyond regular frustration to a new challenge, please contact VMI Counseling (540-464-7667), the Infirmary (540-464-7218) or the Chaplain's Office (540-464-7390). Additional resources are also available on the Cadet Counseling website.

Staying in Touch with Your Rat

While communication at VMI isn't as frequent or flexible as it might be at a traditional college, there are still meaningful ways to stay connected with your rat throughout their first year.

Email

Email is the most reliable and consistent way to reach your cadet. All cadets are issued a VMI email address during Matriculation and are expected to check it daily. Rats check their inboxes often and eagerly look for words of encouragement from home. Please note that rats do not have access to their personal computers until after Cadre Week, so there will be a brief delay in email responses during the first week of training.

Mail

Letters and care packages go a long way in lifting morale and reminding your rat they are not alone. Each cadet is assigned a mailbox in the VMI Mail Room that remains theirs throughout their time at VMI. Small, frequent care packages—especially those with snacks—are ideal, as storage is limited and no refrigeration is available. Cadets can also send mail and packages through USPS and UPS directly from the Mail Room.

Cards, Letters, & Packages

Cadet (*followed by name*)
510 Burma Road (*VMI Box Number*)
Virginia Military Institute
P.O. Box 1839
Lexington, Va. 24450-1839

Formatting

- » “Virginia Military Institute” is a required part of the address.
- » “P.O. Box 1839” is a required part of the address.
- » “-1839” is a required part of the zip code.

Please do not address cadet packages to any academic or athletic buildings—they will not be delivered and will be returned by the Lexington Post Office.

Telephone

Phone access for rats is extremely limited. Cell phones are not permitted in their rooms, though many keep theirs with their dyke (a mentoring 1st Class cadet). You may also leave an urgent message through the VMI Visitors Center (540-464-7306);

messages are typically delivered by the cadet on duty within 20 minutes. However, due to demanding schedules and limited phone privileges, direct conversations may be infrequent, especially during the Rat Line. Patience and understanding are key.

Visiting Your Cadet

Visits from home can be incredibly meaningful—especially during the intense early months of the Rat Line. At VMI, support from family plays a key role in helping rats through their training. While VMI is not a traditional college, there are designated opportunities to see your rat during their early cadetship.

You may visit during select times when training is not scheduled—typically on Sunday afternoons, after Saturday morning parades, or during home football and basketball games. When visiting, rats can meet you in Lejeune Hall or at the tailgates on the Parade Ground. These moments, though brief, can be a great boost to morale.

Flexibility and understanding are key when planning visits or holiday travel.

Sundays

Sundays offer a much-needed break from the demands of cadet life. There are no morning formations, no classes, and typically no scheduled training. Many rats take this opportunity to rest, attend local churches, or participate in faith-based organizations. On Sundays, rats are often permitted to leave post for religious services and return feeling refreshed and supported.

Permits / Furloughs

Cadets must receive formal permission, called a “permit,” to participate in activities that deviate from their normal schedule, such as leaving post or missing formations. These permits are governed by the rules outlined in the “Blue Book,” which cadets receive during Matriculation Week. Rats are thoroughly briefed on which permits apply to them and how they are used.

Before making travel plans or arranging visits, it’s essential to communicate with your rat first. Rats have limited availability and are rarely released early for furloughs to accommodate family travel schedules.

Details for My Cadet

Matriculation Day is a wonderful experience, but it is also filled with a lot of information. Use this sheet to help you jot down all those important things to remember.

» Company _____

» Room Number _____

» Roommates

> _____

> _____

> _____

> _____

> _____

> _____

» Academic Advisor _____

» Mailbox Number _____

» Dyke _____

» My Rat's Email _____

Important Dates*

Home football games and tailgating opportunities

Sept. 12, 2026—VMI vs. Bucknell University

Oct. 3, 2026—VMI vs. Mercer University

Oct. 23–25, 2026—Family Weekend

Oct. 24, 2026—VMI vs. East Tennessee State University

Nov. 14, 2026—VMI vs. The Citadel

Nov. 21, 2026—VMI vs. Furman University

Thanksgiving Furlough: _____

Winter Furlough: _____

Spring Furlough: _____

Graduation: _____

* The best way to stay up to date with the events happening at VMI, to include sports schedules, furlough, and class dates, is to visit the calendar page on the VMI website: www.vmi.edu/calendar.