

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA 24450-0304

23 March 2020

Members of the VMI Corps of Cadets, Staff and Faculty, the Classified Team, Parents and Families, and our Communities:

VMI is no stranger to adversity. The Corps has survived many outbreaks and epidemics throughout its long and rich 180-year history. There have been times when we have had to send the Corps home only to resume our training and academics months later, and numerous times when wars have interrupted the journey to graduation. However, none of these obstacles, nor will this one, deter the Institute from delivering on our Mission.

Make no mistake that VMI is taking seriously its responsibility to protect cadets, staff, and the local communities during this public health emergency. No part of our operations has been unaffected by the pandemic, and I have asked each department to provide as much detail as possible on operational changes through this summer.

The three most frequent questions we receive concern commencement, commissioning, and retrieval of personal effects and clearance of the Institute. For commencement, the Class of 2020 will be invited back to Post as the centerpiece of our December graduation ceremony on 19 December 2020 (tentative) in Cameron Hall. This ceremony will be given all the pomp and circumstance, speakers, awards, and publicity associated with our May ceremony. Our cadets deserve to be recognized as do the family and friends who have supported them through the years, and we will make it a splendid celebration. Understanding that some graduating 1st Class cadets will not be able to join us in December due to military and job obligations, graduates of the Class of 2020 will also be most welcome to participate in the May 2021 commencement exercise. We will work with the armed services and employers to encourage their attendance at this December 2020 graduation ceremony. VMI will mail diplomas upon final grades and graduate certification. Official transcripts will be available through established protocols with the Registrar.

The Joint Commissioning Ceremony scheduled for 15 May in Cameron Hall has been cancelled. Individual commissioning ceremonies will be scheduled with respective ROTC departments and conducted over a period of time in May and June for all Cadets who have met degree requirements. Cadets will be commissioned in time to meet Officer school dates and career start points. These ceremonies will allow Cadets to be commissioned in a small group setting at VMI under the supervision of the Army, Navy,



and Air Force Detachments. A professional photographer will be present to capture this special moment.

Scheduling and size of individual ceremonies will comply with restrictive Department of Defense and State of Virginia guidance related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Any requests for alternate commissioning locations should be submitted to your respective ROTC department. After our new officers begin their military journeys, as mentioned previously, we hope that most can make it back to take part in the VMI Commencement Ceremony in December, and, if unable to return, to cross the stage at the May 2021 graduation ceremony.

Retrieval of individual personal effects for graduating cadets and those returning underclassmen in this current environment is sensitive and we must be able to accomplish this efficiently, quickly, and safely, while abiding specifically by the law and state guidelines. Enclosure 1 provides the specifics of this process and it must be strictly followed. Failure to do so introduces this virus to the VMI Post, its Barracks, and the surrounding communities. We must complete this on the timelines depicted to set the Institute on a path and schedule that ensures the necessary maintenance, possible on-Post Summer Session II, and earlier return of Cadre than traditional for the next academic year. I am confident the Corps and our families will rise to the challenge in this period of uncertainty.

The decision to provide academic instruction online raises the question of tuition and fee credits. While appearing simple, there are many elements under review to include guidance on federal financial aid, private scholarships from the Alumni Agencies, scholarships from ROTC, existing contractual obligations...all balanced with the myriad of financial package variations that exist among cadets. We will announce very shortly how VMI plans to provide credits in a manner that is fair to each cadet and the Institute's ability to position services for long term success at 'essential' levels of operation.

Today, I also want to provide you our current thinking on the series of events facing us through the Fall 2020 timeframe (Enclosure 2). This does not mean these are final decisions, rather events and details, as we currently see them unfolding in this dynamic and changing environment. Some of these events could well be adjusted as we get closer to the targeted date, but the thinking is provided here for planning purposes. These thoughts apply not only to the Corps of Cadets, but also the greater VMI family and Agencies.

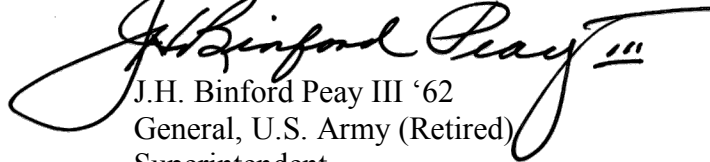
As we begin our temporary online academic courses, I extend my sincere appreciation to the faculty, staff, and classified team for their work over the past few weeks and for the manner in which they have responded to the various issues and national/state guidance that arise daily.



Cadets will continue to abide by their Cadet Oath, maintain a daily physical fitness regimen, and live a lifestyle of honor and integrity expected of every VMI Cadet and alumnus. I encourage you to be a leader within your local community, volunteer to help those who cannot help themselves, set the example for your peers by adhering to government health and safety guidelines, and remain flexible as you adapt to change and adversity. While there will surely be challenges ahead, I am confident of our success based on the “never say die” spirit, character, and leadership qualities instilled in every VMI Cadet. Our nation requires strong leaders during such periods of national peril. VMI remains committed to producing the graduates to guide us through times of uncertainty. I look forward to completing the semester with success...and graduating the splendid Class of 2020.

The Institute will be heard from (again) today! May each of you stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,



J.H. Binford Peay III '62
General, U.S. Army (Retired)
Superintendent



Enclosure 1

OVERVIEW: It is intended for Cadets to clear their barracks room in a safe, orderly and efficient manner during a scheduled single trip back to VMI. In order to provide as much possible flexibility and planning of available time and transportation, Cadets will schedule their return to VMI between 14 April and 3 May, and again between 12-17 May, to retrieve their personal belongings, as well as to turn in VMI issued uniforms, NCAA/Club gear, ROTC equipment and other items that belong at VMI. The Registrar's Office, the Office of Financial Aid, the Athletic Department, the Mail Room and other offices will notify individual cadets if they have any additional administrative or other requirements for Cadets to accomplish while on post. Cadets will bring all of their VMI uniforms, all VMI owned equipment, NCAA/Club gear and all ROTC gear back to Post with them when they return to clear their barracks room.

Cadets should plan for enough cargo space to take and haul all of their personal belongings with them to be stored at home, or arrange for some other coordinated storage location off Post. It is each Cadet's individual responsibility to clear their barracks room, store their own personal belongings over the summer or make appropriate arrangements with a BR, roommate, host family etc. to have this done for you. Cadets who are unable to clear and store their own belongings and who have exhausted all attempts and available options are to contact CSM Rubenstein at rubensteinsd@vmi.edu **no later than 8 April.**

SCHEDULING OF CLEARANCE: Cadets will sign up to arrive and clear during two 4-hour blocks each day. No more than 40 slots will be available for each of the time blocks, 1000-1400 hours and 1400-1800 hours each day. In order to spread out arrivals during each time block, Cadets may return at any time during their scheduled time block but are not to return to VMI prior to 1000 hours. Barracks will close and Cadets are to be completed their barracks clearance no later than 1800 hours each day. Scheduled dates are as follows:

- Tuesday, 14 April thru Sunday, 19 April
- Tuesday, 21 April thru Sunday, 26 April
- Tuesday, 28 April thru Sunday, 3 May
- Final Exam Week (No Barracks Clearance)
- Tuesday, 12 May thru Sunday, 17 May

80 cadets scheduled each day are authorized to clear barracks and adhere to distance and group number directives. **Each cadet is authorized to bring no more than one other person into the barracks to assist them in retrieving their belongings.** These restrictions exist to minimize the number of individuals coming into contact with one another and to reduce the risk of introducing or spreading infection.

The online sign-up form will be sent out and available via the website beginning **0800 hours on 3 April.** Sign-ups will close at **1600 hours on 13 April.** As a simple courtesy and to reduce disruption, it is requested and encouraged that Cadets from Virginia, or a closer proximity to VMI, defer most of the weekend scheduled time slots to Cadets who are traveling much longer distances from further out-of-state locations.



Cadets unable to return to VMI at all, arrange to have another individual (another cadet, host family member, etc.) pack out and clear barracks for them, or have a scheduling conflict (full schedule on a particular date) must notify CSM Rubenstein rubensteinsd@vmi.edu by 1600 hours by 8 April.

** The clearance schedule will be adjusted as necessary, if and when VMI receives additional guidance from local, state, and national authorities. The Office of Communications and Marketing will update the VMI Community when these changes occur.*

SAFETY MEASURES: The safety of all members of the VMI community is paramount throughout the barracks clearance process. No individual who is currently sick, has been exposed to someone who is sick or is exhibiting signs of infection with COVID-19 may return to Post. Common COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. A quick medical questionnaire and screening will be conducted prior to entering barracks.

Individuals must be symptom free for 14 days prior to being permitted to return to Post. Anyone with direct contact with an infected individual must self-quarantine and show no signs of infection for 14 days before returning to Post.

The VMI Physical Plant staff will thoroughly clean common areas such as railings, door knobs, light switches, and bathroom fixtures daily. Hand sanitizer will be available as well as latex gloves for those who wish to utilize them.



Enclosure 2

- We will continue to conduct the first session of summer school (Summer Session I: 19 May – 19 June) in the distance learning (on-line) mode. The decisions regarding mode and place for Summer Session II, commencing 22 June, the Summer Transition Program (STP) on 22 June, and the optional Parents Orientation on 22 June are pending. The College Orientation Workshop (COW) is currently scheduled at VMI this summer, but may slip to the latter half of the period or be canceled.
- We are considering an “earlier return” of Cadre during the week of 2 August to ensure the train-up and preparation for Matriculation, due to the loss of this 2nd Semester, the Cadet Leadership Retreat, and that transition and planning period. In several weeks, the Commandant will select and announce the Sergeants and Corporals for the next year, and working with the Class Leadership, designate the cadets comprising the Cadre and Cadet government for the 2020-21 Academic Year. Assumption of Command ceremony is being studied. Fourth Class leadership (Class Officers) will be voted on upon return of the entire Class on 23 August 2020.
- The Retirement Parade for retiring VMI Staff and Faculty has been cancelled. We are evaluating several “combined” options that may see a faculty farewell and retirement reception in the Hall of Valor of Marshall Hall on 4 May 2020 or a postponement until the Fall Semester.
- With the cancellation of the Institute Awards Convocation (14 May), cadet awards will be announced and mailed to cadets during the summer furlough period.
- Based on the State Department’s Level 4 travel advisory and recommendations of public health experts, VMI will not commence any study abroad program prior to 15 June 2020. This includes Project Global Officer. Our Program Directors are working diligently with host country providers to determine the possibility of rescheduling their study abroad programs for later in the summer (after 15 June). In a week’s time we will update you as to which programs have been rescheduled and which have been cancelled.
- The Employee Breakfast on 12 May has been postponed and will occur early in the Fall Semester, at which time service award certificates will be presented.
- The orientation for the new leadership of the VMI Parents Council on 12 June is still planned to take place.



- The visit by MG John Evans, Jr., Commanding General, U.S. Army Cadet Command is cancelled.
- The Cadet Superintendent's Advisory Board's (CSAB) out-brief to the Superintendent has been cancelled. A written study brief will be prepared and submitted to Colonel Dave Gray, Director, Center for Leadership and Ethics for his out-brief to the Superintendent and probable "carry forward" to next year's CSAB.
- A number of meetings will be actioned by teleconference in lieu of face-to-face meetings. Virtual presentations follow:
 - George C. Marshall Foundation Board of Trustees (25 March 2020);
 - VMI Alumni Board of Directors (3-4 April 2020);
 - Jackson-Hope Board of Trustees (14 April 2020)
 - VMI Board of Visitors (1 May 2020);
 - Executive Committee will meet in Smith Hall.
- Decisions "pending" whether "in person" or "virtual":
 - Southern Conference Meeting of Presidents, Athletic Directors, and Faculty Athletic Representatives (26-29 May 2020);
 - VMI Foundation Board of Trustees Retreat (29-31 May);
 - Keydet Club Board of Governors and Outing (12-13 June);
 - George C. Marshall Foundation Board of Trustees (29 July 2020);
 - Volunteer Leaders Conference (14 August 2020).
- The New Cadet Oath Ceremony is currently scheduled for 6 September 2020.

