



# **Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders**

Strategic Plan 2024–2034

# Letter from the Superintendent



It is through the VMI experience that many of the nation's top military leaders, captains of industry, and guardians of democracy have been forged. The success of our graduates is tied to a steadfast adherence to a personal credo, first taught and then embraced, and then instilled in others. A creed where our graduates have the confidence to achieve things—at times never thought possible—ensconced in a culture of honor, integrity, and civility.

This is nothing new. For more than 184 years, VMI has been at the heart of fulfilling our nation's need for citizen-soldiers. Over time, a succession of Institute leaders has maintained a watchful eye over the activities on post while in constant pursuit of mission-readiness for the future. We now find ourselves at similar crossroads, requiring the Institute to reinforce its non-negotiables: our unwavering commitment to core values, defining the requirements for graduate preparedness, and delivering on the expectations for alumni success.

Although we have accomplished much over the decades, we must continue forging a path forward. In the ever-changing landscape of higher education, we are determined for VMI to be the premier small liberal arts college and to operate fully as a leadership laboratory for young men and women. Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders is intended to help us realize this vision by leveraging academic advancements through which we can achieve operational excellence while being ever vigilant about year over year affordability for VMI families. Done successfully, the VMI diploma will be strengthened and enhanced, ensuring the honorable graduates

we produce enter the workforce prepared to succeed and ready to overcome the formidable challenges of the coming decades.

The future of VMI is incredibly bright as we endeavor to keep pace with a dynamic, ever-changing world that requires preparedness, advances technology, is shaped through evolving teaching methods, demands critical thinking skills, values personal character, and the ability to operate under pressure, while constantly adhering to a life of honor and integrity. No place in our nation attempts to ascend these milestones better than VMI. We are the bastion of this worthy cause and our graduates are the clear result of what we do. Forging strong leaders who courageously embrace selfless service remains the driving force in all we do.

I invite you to explore the pages that follow, which include a careful outline of our path forward built around five key initiatives focused on delivering on five enduring outcomes. Each are built on the almost two centuries of progress achieved thus far through a proven VMI experience. Following a thoughtful and comprehensive review that revalidates the mission and vision of VMI, we are confident of our path forward which can only be accomplished with those engaged and committed to the Institute.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85  
U.S. Army (retired)  
Superintendent

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Virginia Military Institute believes that the measure of a college lies in the quality and performance of its graduates and their contributions to society. Therefore, it is the mission of Virginia Military Institute to produce educated, honorable men and women, prepared for the varied work of civil life, imbued with love of learning, confident in the functions and attitudes of leadership, possessing a high sense of public service, advocates of the American democracy and free enterprise system, and ready as citizen-soldiers to defend their country in time of national peril.

This plan builds upon the Institute's historic success and will enhance and preserve the VMI experience for years to come. The intent of the Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders Strategic Plan is to shape the Institute's actions around these initiatives to deliver on the five enduring outcomes of the One Corps—One VMI: A Unifying Action Plan:

1. commitment to honor,
2. diversity and inclusion,
3. the VMI brand,
4. competing to win, and
5. one VMI.

VMI continues to deliver its unique method of education, thereby producing leaders of character who will positively influence their communities.





# The Vision Guiding the Process

**"There was no stone left unturned in the development of this plan. Every aspect of cadet life, taking into account the needs of the future and the successes of the past, were considered. This plan reflects input from cadets, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and many others."—Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, Superintendent.**

The VMI vision is to be the premier small college in the nation, unequalled in producing educated and honorable citizen-leaders, with a global reputation for academic excellence.

## Making the Vision a Reality

The process for developing this plan began in 2022, and is built upon the success of previous strategic documents such as Vision 2039 and the One Corps—One VMI: A Unifying Action Plan, as well as the superintendent's initial planning guidance, which was developed starting in 2021. Many VMI stakeholders were involved and provided input throughout the process, which included reviewing and reaffirming the mission and vision of the Institute. Focus groups comprised of VMI faculty, staff, members of the Board of Visitors, and cadets met regularly to determine the highest strategic priorities in the areas of military, academics, athletics, and culture. More than 2,400 alumni, parents, cadets, and other VMI stakeholders completed a survey and shared what they believed were the most important aspects of VMI. This valuable input helped shape the future priorities.

In January 2023, the strategic plan steering committee synthesized information from the focus groups and survey to develop the plan priorities and objectives. The VMI Board of Visitors reviewed the draft plan at their April 2023 meeting. The board's feedback was incorporated, and the resulting strategic plan was considered by the Board of Visitors at a November 2023 meeting.

As we work toward our 2039 bicentennial, we envision a VMI that will:

- » Grow and retain a Corps strength at operational capacity.
- » Be a first-choice destination for talented students, faculty, and staff.

- » Retain and graduate cadets at rates that rival the best institutions in the nation.
- » Have a leadership and education model that other institutions of higher learning seek to emulate.
- » Teach America's next generation of leaders to think critically and act ethically, and work effectively in teams.
- » Develop and graduate honorable men and women who serve with courage and compassion, with a goal of more than half commissioning in the U.S. Armed Forces, and additional quarter serving in other public service roles.

In the implementation of this plan, we are committed to achieving the Institute's mission by protecting our time-honored culture and traditions and maintaining the elements fundamental to the VMI experience, namely:

- » A single-sanction honor system that reinforces integrity and is fair.
- » A Class System that promotes accountability and camaraderie.
- » A Regimental System that promotes leader development.
- » A rigorous academic curriculum that challenges cadets to think critically and encourages ethical reasoning.
- » An enduring commitment to preparing graduates for a life of service to the nation and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### Honor

Honor is the heart and bedrock of the VMI experience.

The VMI Honor Code has been fundamental since the school's beginning in 1839. "A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do." VMI's unique, single-sanction Honor System is foundational to the culture of the Institute. Living the Honor Code establishes the framework for an honorable life.

Beyond our code, VMI seeks to develop men and women who live lives of integrity. Choosing to do the right thing even when there's an easier path, and treating others with dignity and respect, should be hallmarks of a VMI graduate. These are foundational to the VMI mission of producing "honorable men and women prepared for the varied work of civil life..."

The VMI Honor System's strength is the expectation of adherence to the high standards of ethical behavior offering no tolerance for aberrations. More than a set of rules and regulations, the objective of the honor code is the inculcation of honor as a lifestyle. The application of honor is accomplished through conscientious daily decisions undertaken by each individual cadet in all facets of their lives.

### Excellence

VMI has a long history of excellence. The VMI experience is predicated on pushing cadets to be the best version of themselves, reaching targets and goals that stretch themselves to new limits.

VMI graduates' noteworthy accomplishments are exemplified through seven Medal of Honor recipients, 11 Rhodes Scholars, one Nobel Peace Prize winner, one Pulitzer Prize winner, 293 general and flag officers, two Virginia governors, numerous state and federal legislators, and many business executives in the fields of science, defense, security, engineering, and manufacturing. Leaders emerge from VMI irrespective of their chosen path.

Pursuing excellence is the standard at VMI, not just in the classroom, but in every aspect of a cadet's life: academics, military, extra-curricular, and athletics. It is a hallmark of a VMI graduate.

### Self-Discipline

Cadets learn very quickly there are deep wells of strength that are seldom used but are called upon to succeed at VMI. With each day of one's cadetship, our cadets learn to do tasks that are seemingly insignificant but, in the end, develop in them the qualities of attention to detail and time management which results in them accomplishing more than they believed possible. From sunup to sundown, they are responsible for performing the duties of a cadet,

**"This institution gave me not only a standard for my daily conduct among men, but it endowed me with a military heritage of honor and self-sacrifice."**—*Gen. George C. Marshall, VMI Class of 1901.*

### Timeline



including military training, attending classes, studying, parades, competing in NCAA or club athletics, and more, all while managing their time for eating, sleeping, and bonding with their brother rats. This self-discipline is developed throughout their time as cadets and is a valuable asset for the rest of their lives.

## **Courage**

VMI is no ordinary college. High school students who apply for admission to VMI recognize this truth. As their friends are applying to schools, it takes courage to choose the VMI experience. That courage is an early sign of a successful cadet, and transitions to accepting leadership positions within the Corps of Cadets, standing up for brother rats, training new cadets, speaking up when the VMI Honor Code is violated, and taking the oath to serve within the U.S. armed forces, as a public servant, or in private industry.

Developing and exercising the moral and physical courage to stand up as a leader and also be a principled follower in a rapidly changing world is a cornerstone of a cadetship at VMI.

## **Esprit de Corps**

Although a VMI cadetship is challenging from the start, there is no lack of support in the toughest moments. No single cadet's challenges are greater than another's. No one is left behind, no one struggles alone. Embracing these tenets is at the heart of "one corps, one VMI." The entirety of the VMI community deliberately accepts and promotes their connection to the Institute, reflecting the lifetime friendships that are the norm. The strong sense of belonging is a hallmark of VMI directly connected to recruitment, retention, job placement, post-graduation networking, and a long-term connection and service to the Institute, to include philanthropic support. The involvement of alumni through service and philanthropy has direct financial impact on the ability to sustain and deliver excellence in all aspects of the VMI Mission.

The characteristics of this strong community attract faculty, staff, and cadets to VMI. Graduates of the Institute remain steadfastly involved and connected to each other and to the Institution.

## **Selfless Service**

At VMI, self-centered pride takes a backseat to selfless service. From Matriculation Day to the commissioning ceremony, where more than half the graduating class enters the services of the U.S. military, selflessness becomes a way of life.

Many hold leadership positions within the Regimental or Class System or as an athletic team captain or as cadet in charge of a club. They sacrifice time, lead from the front, offer ideas, and develop those around them as they serve.

There are no days off from being a VMI cadet. It's not uncommon to hear of a cadet on furlough, being of service to someone in need.

Success does not come from taking someone's seat at the table. Instead, it comes with honorable service and hard work.

## **Resilience**

Mental toughness inspires cadet life. They get tired, get knocked down, and take some tough hits, but it's how they react and recover that makes them special.

It takes a level of grit just to apply to VMI. Then starting as early as Matriculation Day, a cadet's resilience is tested regularly. There is no shame in asking for or receiving help, and help is readily available.

Cadets face challenges each day on the field of competition, in the classroom, and as they prepare for the battlefield and the boardroom. There's no fear in failure, but rather a motivation for doing better the next time.

Resilient leaders at VMI are developed through the constant pressure to prioritize requirements and strive for excellence in response to the rigorous demands of a cadetship.

## The Plan

The VMI experience is a time-tested program that develops cadets into citizen soldiers. This strategic plan focuses on the initiatives, resources, and infrastructure necessary to positively mold future generations of the VMI family into strong, effective leaders, be it within their communities, respective military branch, or chosen profession.

Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders sets five strategic initiatives for the Institute:

- » Prepare exceptional leaders.
- » Enhance academic excellence.
- » Foster esprit de corps.
- » Recruit top cadets and boost success.
- » Deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities.

These five initiatives support our longstanding mission and help us move closer to achieving our vision. The mission and vision remain

unchanged—to be an anchor in an ever-changing world.

### Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leader Initiatives



**"VMI graduates are making a difference in the lives of their fellow service members, co-workers, and families. To continue to deliver on our mission, the VMI experience must refine, enhance, and adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of our communities, commonwealth, and nation."—Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, Superintendent.**

## Initiative

### Prepare Exceptional Leaders

**"I continually seek out leadership opportunities and place myself in challenging situations to grow as a leader. I think that's what VMI is all about. I think it's about pushing yourself, challenging yourself, trying to grow as a person, trying to grow as a leader, to ultimately be prepared for what faces us once we graduate."**—  
*Mark Shelton II '24, class regimental commander.*

## Goal

**Execute the premier leadership development program in the nation, and develop a Corps of Cadets that is mentally tough, academically astute, physically fit, and for which the Honor System, Regimental System, Class System, and Rat Line are the foundational backbone.**

Embarking upon the VMI leadership journey is a courageous undertaking for any new cadet. It's a challenge not meant to be easy, and our system is time tested. Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders seeks to strengthen and supplement this leadership journey to produce strong future leaders for the nation and commonwealth.

## Objectives

- 1. Teach, coach, mentor, guide, and direct cadets through the VMI training model to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to become effective leaders.**

Our country needs leaders of character now more than ever. VMI serves this need by developing men and women who think and act ethically, lead by example, inspire confidence, and are willing to work hard to achieve their goals. They endure rigorous training that promotes resilience and perseverance. Opportunities for cadets to hone their leadership skills are many and varied. Examples include participation in club sports, extracurricular activities, academic clubs and honor societies, Center for Leadership and Ethics programs, and the regimental

and class systems. Similarly, through NCAA athletics, leadership opportunities abound on the field of competition where individual and team skills are demonstrated. Our unique method of education, symbolized by a three-legged stool (academics, military, athletics), has produced Rhodes Scholars, numerous military leaders, and captains of industry. We intend to continue this great tradition and find ways to improve upon it. We strive to elevate VMI's approach to leader development to world-renowned status.





## **2. Ensure cadets receive mentally and physically challenging experiences that lead to meaningful personal and professional development.**

Our curricular and co-curricular rigor at VMI is unmatched. Cadets are required to complete a holistic academic experience and participate in physical training and athletic programs designed to challenge and develop them. To provide an optimal experience, we must balance a schedule that prioritizes the essential

functions of cadet daily life that results in individual and collective health and wellness. To this end, we intend to optimize the academic and physical training schedules in ways that best promote cadets' personal and professional development. In this pursuit, we will work to ensure that the learning experiences we

provide are mentally and physically demanding, and importantly, designed, implemented, and evaluated in alignment with cutting edge research. Increasing Summer Transition Program participation will also play a key role in achieving this objective.

## **3. Prepare cadets for a wide variety of opportunities for service upon graduation, such as commissioning in the U.S. armed forces, employment with governmental agencies, or private industry.**

Cadets are required to participate in ROTC during their cadetship. For many, ROTC leads to a commission into the armed forces, helping us reach our mission to produce leaders who are prepared to defend their

nation in times of peril. This form of service is, and will remain, an Institute priority. We also recognize service comes in many forms, including employment as a civilian in a federal or state agency, or in the business

sector. For those who do not have the benefit of summer military training, we can augment their experience with internships, undergraduate research, and study abroad.

## **4. Increase opportunities for the VMI community to serve, debate ideas candidly and civilly, and nurture esprit de corps.**

Experiential learning is a key component of leadership development. This type of learning provides cadets with meaningful ways to integrate their knowledge, skills, and experience. It also provides opportunities

for cadets to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds and creates opportunities for cadets to assume leadership positions and practice their skills. Given the importance of these experiences, we

intend to expand current opportunities by, among other things, increasing leadership funding support and the number of leadership experiences, events, and activities offered by the Center for Leadership and Ethics.

## **5. Explore the value-added opportunity of expanding the Institute's exceptional leadership training model and reputation in new and innovative ways.**

We have an exceptional leadership development model that prepares leaders for all walks of life. Questions abound about whether this model should be expanded to a broader group of aspiring leaders, and if so, how would its design and implementation best align with and strengthen our mission. Thus, we need to determine if expansion into areas like undergraduate research and micro credentials makes sense, and if so, how it should be undertaken.

traditions will be top priorities in this value-added exploration.

Additionally, leveraging existing initiatives, such as the Peay Endowment, provides unexplored opportunities to attract VMI graduates as faculty. Offering a continuing education or graduate program may be a catalyst to achieve this end more expeditiously. Maintaining and preserving the Institution's mission, culture, and



## Initiative

### Strengthen Academic Excellence

**"VMI needs to continue enhancing innovative approaches to ensure a learning environment for cadets that will set them up for success in their chosen academic path."**—Brig. Gen. Robert "Bob" Moreschi, Dean of Faculty and Deputy Superintendent for Academics.

## Goal

**Provide the nation and commonwealth's future leaders with a world-class education and training regimen.**

Historically, higher education has been a place for change. Since the early days of post-secondary education in the United States, colleges and universities have been innovating through research and pedagogy. We must continue to adapt to teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century cadets, fostering innovation in our classrooms and laboratories.

### 1. Enhance effective pedagogical approaches to promote cadet engagement and enhance academic achievement.

VMI has a renowned reputation for its commitment to highly personalized educational experiences. With average class sizes of about 16 and a current student-faculty ratio of approximately 10 to 1, we are a standout among competitors in providing engaging learning experiences. To continue to build on prior successes and to integrate innovative educational approaches, VMI seeks to leverage the science of academic motivation and human learning. Three significant actions are planned:

1. evaluate, and revise, as needed, the core curriculum, to ensure the courses and content remain relevant and the instructional practices are effective,
2. increase faculty development in the science of learning and academic motivation, and
3. evaluation and revision of faculty teaching to align with evidence-based professional development.





Virginia Military Institute, in collaboration with Virginia Tech, held a 12-week internship for high school students, funded by a workforce development grant from the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative. The grant seeks to build a pipeline of mentorship in which graduate students from Virginia Tech, (with more knowledge and experience on cyber security topics) mentor VMI cadets, and in turn the cadets mentor local high school students. The goal of the internship is to teach the high school students how to develop practical hardware, software, and cybersecurity skills through in-person practical learning and self-paced online training.

## 2. Integrate new technology into our educational and organizational processes.

We are committed to staying current with changes within the higher education landscape. VMI will remain a leader in the industry by deploying new technologies that are appropriate to increase learning

and motivation and that educate, train, and prepare cadets for success post-graduation. This includes creating hybrid classrooms that provide classroom access to traveling cadets and purchasing state-of-the-art lab

equipment for STEM courses. These efforts will help VMI attract talented cadets and faculty, provide more opportunities for grant-funded research, and ensure cadets are better prepared for varied workplaces.

## 3. Recruit, retain, and promote distinguished faculty with expertise in emerging fields.

To educate the best and brightest cadets in ways that provide an exceptional educational experience, we must attract, develop, and retain outstanding professors able to update and improve upon the relevance of VMI's educational programming. Hiring processes will focus on and be dedicated to finding faculty who

are committed to the mission of the Institute, alumni and non-alumni alike, and who have a strong interpersonal interest in the daily lives of cadets. Hiring VMI alumni into faculty positions is an essential characteristic in maintaining the culture of the Institute. VMI faculty do more than teach and publish, they lead by

example. We want to continue to attract faculty of high integrity and capability who want to serve as role models, grow personally and professionally, actualize their full potential, and contribute significantly to their discipline and the Institute's mission.

## 4. Strengthen high-impact practices and experiential learning, such as undergraduate research, global learning, internships, and service-learning activities.

Participation in high-impact practices currently offered by VMI, including undergraduate research, internships, and study abroad, are shown to enhance learning and improve retention. Given their importance

to cadets' learning and success, we want to maximize the potential of these high-impact practices. Achieving this end will require examining our current funding support for these practices and leveraging

new research and services offered by leading organizations such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).



## Initiative

### Foster Esprit de Corps

**"The brother rat spirit is unlike anything that I've ever seen. And I know people probably say that a lot, but just the trust and the shared suffering, just knowing that we all did it together, and we went through all of the same things together, makes it so much of a tighter bond. Being able to see my brother rats excel at everything they do and how much I support them and how much they support me is unlike anything."—Carter Hugate '24, S6 captain and Moe the Kangaroo.**

## Goal

**Facilitate a supportive, respectful, and professional operating environment for cadets, faculty, staff, and alumni.**

Alumni, faculty, staff, and parents make up the tight knit VMI Community. This strategic plan seeks to rally the community around this common mission, facing current events, celebrations, accomplishments, and concerns head-on, together.

### 1. Advance efforts that foster a safe, diverse, and inclusive environment.

We strive to make VMI safer, more diverse, and inclusive. We will work to advance these efforts in ways that are appropriate for our mission and that resonate with the VMI community. To do so, we will focus efforts on system-level policies and procedures and the use of science-based practices and programming recommended by reputable, apolitical scholars and organizations.

We will continue to teach and enforce a standard of conduct that aligns with the Code of a Cadet; honorable behavior will always be

paramount. Further, the primary means of promoting inclusion and belonging will continue to be achieved through learning experiences that promote effective teamwork, team cohesion, and leadership of teams.

With an appreciation for diversity and individual effort, the strength of the VMI environment is a function of the character infused within individuals who are focused on achieving a common set of outcomes and results.





## **2. Provide a supportive work environment that enhances employees' well-being through effective recruitment, onboarding, development, engagement, and compensation.**

Our employees help to make cadets' educational experiences rewarding and special. Their dedication and devotion to VMI's mission is unparalleled. We want to make VMI among the best colleges to work for by improving the employee experience, beginning to end. Specifically, in the

execution of this plan, we will first implement a new onboarding and mentoring system that expedites acculturation and productivity. Second, rethink how we manage and fund professional development, and third, develop new, innovative compensation models. Additionally, because

cadets and faculty alike benefit from faculty exchanges with other colleges and universities, as well as interaction with external research and policy groups, we will work to increase these opportunities.

## **3. Deepen VMI's connection with alumni, donors, and parents.**

During their tenure at VMI, cadets develop special bonds with others that can last a lifetime. Most of these bonds are with fellow cadets, while others are with faculty, staff, or local community members. These strong relationships continue to impact the Institute long after graduation, through donations, support for athletes, or other service. Without the generosity of alumni, VMI's ability to offer an outstanding educational experience is not possible. Given

our need for, and appreciation of, alumni support, we will strengthen these bonds even further by creating new opportunities for connection, leadership development, and mentoring. We will also work to increase donor engagement in new ways that support cadet success and their leadership development. A vibrant and competitive NCAA Athletics program plays an important role in accomplishing this goal.

Lastly, we will broaden VMI's value to the broader external community by enhancing strategic communications and marketing efforts in ways that help us communicate our uniqueness, continually make the VMI brand recognizably valuable to important leaders in state and federal agencies, and attract talented cadets, faculty, staff, and prominent organizations interested in our hiring graduates.

## **4. Provide experiential learning opportunities that will help cadets fully integrate within the VMI system, achieve their highest potential, and be productive members of a high performing Corps of Cadets.**

We respect and embrace the spectrum of religious, racial, ethnic, gender, political, and viewpoint diversity that cadets bring with them, and acknowledge that a key strength of the Corps of Cadets is its diversity. Although we cannot guarantee cadets' success, we can ensure our support structures help them learn and refine the skills they will need to achieve their personal best—while at VMI and as graduates. Without exception, cadets must be willing to commit to the VMI system, work diligently toward their goals, and meet required standards. That is, cadets must earn their place within the Corps. In return, we have a responsibility to ensure the VMI system is conducive to healthy development and growth, and that every cadet, regardless of background, can be a contributing member throughout the echelons of the Corps.

To that end, we will offer world-class, research-based training and learning

experiences that promote growth, enhance belonging, and equip cadets with the skills needed to successfully build and lead strong teams. Exposure to diverse perspectives will challenge cadets to think critically and work collaboratively across differences. They will also learn to work together effectively, build

strong relationships, and hone their leadership and communication skills. By fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance, while also embracing differences and unique perspectives, VMI will continue to produce culturally competent leaders who can manage diverse teams and make a positive impact on society.



## Initiative

### Recruit Top Cadets and Boost Success

**"VMI gave me friends and brothers—cast by special circumstances of struggle and triumph, by victories and defeats, by hearty laughter and tears, which relieve and release, are joined not by mere genes but by bonds, fired in the Institute's great forge. They stand the test, treasures and traumas of time—forever!"—Dr. Mac Bowman '73, award-winning cardiologist.**

## Goal

**Recruit and retain talented cadets who embody VMI's core values of honor, courage, and excellence.**

The competition for top high school graduates is fierce. We need to find those future cadets who exemplify courageous ambition. We must strive to ensure our valued method of education remains affordable and relevant. To do so, cadet recruitment and retention efforts need to be coordinated, intentional, and cutting edge.

### 1. Adopt and integrate a strategic enrollment management model that integrates admissions, financial aid, marketing, and cadet support into one unit.

Our enrollment operations will be improved by organizing into a strategic enrollment management framework. Our goal is to create a framework that serves as an interconnected set of functions supporting both recruitment and retention. First, we will hire staff and leadership committed to this effort. Second, we will organize these functions (admissions, financial aid, marketing, and support) into an integrated set of

units. Third, we will prioritize innovative recruitment of potential cadets and cadet-athletes (who traditionally constitute more than one-third of the incoming class). Finally, we must leverage data analytics and technology in new ways to optimize these operations and assess their impact. These four actions will be the first in a series of steps to update our approach and regain a competitive advantage in these areas.







## 2. Be among the top five Virginia public institutions in retention and graduation rates.

VMI is physically and mentally demanding in ways that most institutions are not. Nonetheless, VMI has very respectable retention and graduation rates. Our most recent six-year graduation rate is 77%, which is 15-points above the national average (NSC, 2016 cohort). Among Virginia four-year public institutions, VMI's graduation rate is five points higher than the average. However, our most recent retention rate was 82%, which is 9<sup>th</sup> place among Virginia public colleges and universities, 15-points below the front-runner.

To become a top five Virginia school, we must improve our retention rate without decreasing academic and physical rigor. There are four strategies that will help us meet this challenge. First, we must adopt a data- and technology-intensive approach to academic advising and support. Second, we must augment advising and support by rethinking our approach to classroom engagement, especially in core curriculum courses. Third, we must address growing high school deficiencies in core knowledge areas—such as mathematics,

writing, and history—before cadets matriculate because failing a core curriculum class increases the likelihood of attrition.

Fourth, we must be exceptional in our fund raising and operational excellence efforts, with particular emphasis on controlling the costs of education.

Together, these four efforts will benefit the entire VMI community: cadets, parents/guardians, faculty, staff, and alumni.

## 3. Provide quality support services to the Corps of Cadets.

We provide an educational experience that tests and improves cadets' capacity for perseverance and resilience in ways that prepare them to support and defend the nation in times of peril. It is not a sink-or-swim

approach, however. Cadets must have access to the best support services available. Ensuring access to top notch support demonstrates our commitment to cadets' success in each component of the three-legged

stool: academics, military, and athletics. We will build out our cadet health and wellness services, with a focus on ways that best support our unique educational experience.

## Initiative

### Delivering 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure

**"There is no doubt that the quality of post facilities directly impacts the success of cadets, faculty, and staff in their daily routines. Plans for new facilities and renovations focus on serving cadets for generations."—Brig. Gen. Dallas Clark '99, Deputy Superintendent for Finance and Support.**

## Goal

**Invest in facility maintenance, operations, physical plant, and auxiliary facilities to advance VMI's academic, military, and athletics priorities.**

VMI is no ordinary college. As such, it requires more than ordinary facilities. VMI operates and maintains many facilities that other institutions of higher education do not. Many facilities have been built or renovated within the past decade, but others need repair, modernization, or replacement. Providing continuously updated facilities and infrastructure is an important component of Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders.

#### **1. Strengthen and enhance overall sustainment, restoration, and modernization of facilities to support 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements.**

Facilities will be operated to maximize useful life, incorporating safety, security, efficiency, and sustainability. Planning and modernization will be undertaken to incorporate evolving programmatic requirements for

classrooms, physical training, and NCAA athletics, which can enhance the appeal to Institute scholars and athletes, who want to learn and compete in modern and attractive arenas of competition.



Cadets' needs were top of mind throughout the entire process of the \$43 million Scott Shipp Hall updates. The five-year project included a 28,000-square foot expansion and a complete renovation of the previously existing 68,000-square foot space. In addition to being the home to multiple departments' classrooms and offices, including history; economics and business; international studies; and English, rhetoric and humanistic studies, the building has a photography lab, an art studio, a 70-seat auditorium, and courtyards for outdoor study. Other open spaces allow for group meetings and easy access to professor offices. It also holds a 3,600-square foot space for the John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis.



## 2. Advance capital investment.

Advancing capital investment into facilities will include close collaboration with gubernatorial, legislative,

and alumni stakeholders. Investment in facilities in support of Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders will require

investment of both private and public funding into facilities.

## 3. Modernize and enhance post-wide safety and security.

Because cadet and employee safety is a top priority, modernization and enhancement of the post-wide safety system is critical. Barracks safety plans include replacement of exterior doors and hardware, replacement of windows and frames, an upgraded camera system, and updates to the technology within barracks. There will also be gates and barricades that can be deployed as needed to shut down post in the event of an emergency or to provide additional safety during cadet training.



# A Foundation Forged



- » Best College Nationally, ranked by value: **No. 5** (2022)
- » Best Public School Nationally: **No. 6** (2022)
- » Best Small College Nationally: **No. 3** (2020 most recent ranking)—**Money magazine**



Georgetown University study ranks VMI **No. 1 for Return on Investment** among public liberal arts colleges nationwide. (2021)



National Colleges and Universities: No. 158, among top 20% (out of 801) **U.S. News and World Report** ranked VMI in the top four public liberal arts college in the nation for the 18<sup>th</sup> year, behind only the nation's federal service academies.

- » **No. 4 in National Public Liberal Arts Colleges**
- » No. 70 in National Liberal Arts Colleges
- » No. 21 in Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs (where doctorate is not offered)



VMI meets 100% of the financial need for Virginia cadets and aims to meet a significant portion of the need for out-of-state cadets



Payscale.com estimates VMI graduates earn \$70,000 per year on average during their early years after graduation and \$129,000 per year mid-career



**97%**

of VMI cadets are employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation



7 VMI graduates have earned the Medal of Honor, the U.S. military's highest award  
11 VMI graduates are Rhodes Scholars  
1 Nobel Peace Prize laureate



**Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Ed. Ranking (2022)**

- » Best Value: **No. 5**
- » Strengthen Academic Excellence

*\* Statistics are representative of 2023 data, unless otherwise noted.*



**“Earning a degree from the Virginia Military Institute is an experience like no other. On a daily basis, our cadets choose a path that challenges them academically, physically, and mentally. Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders strengthens the VMI experience and ensures a future of great leaders for our nation and commonwealth.”—Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, Superintendent.**

**“Built upon the time-honored Institute values of honor, excellence, self-discipline, courage, esprit de corps, and selfless service, the ‘Forging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders’ strategic plan provides a solid foundation from which the Institute will launch into its third century. With its unanimous approval, the Board of Visitors looks forward to the plan’s implementation over the coming years.”—Tom Watjen '76, VMI Board of Visitors president.**



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