Virginia Military Institute

Institute Report

Volume 55, Number 3, November 2026

FALL FTX



Family Weekend 2026

Smith Named Deputy Superintendent

Post Briefs

Knepper Edits Volume on Desmond

Col. Steven Knepper, professor and the Bruce C. Gottwald Jr. '81 Chair for Academic Excellence in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, has edited a wide-ranging series of essays on the philosophy of William Desmond titled, "The Intimate Strangeness of Poetry: William Desmond and Literature."

Desmond is a contemporary Irish philosopher who has taught at Villanova University in Pennsylvania for many years. His books include "Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind," "Ethics and the Between," and "Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art."

According to Knepper, Desmond is well known as a metaphysician and philosopher of religion. "But Desmond's first love was poetry, and he frequently writes about literature, art, and aesthetics." The book, published by Wipf and Stock Publishers, may be purchased through their website, **wipfandstock.com**.

VMI Receives Top Award from International Association

The International E-Learning Association (IELA) has granted VMI first place with gold ribbon in the academic division of the Learning Delivery Platform category of the 2026 International E-Learning Awards. The announcement made earlier this month at the IELA conference in Cologne, Germany, disclosed VMI's educational platform, "NetBattle: AI-Assisted Network Science and Complex Systems Learning Platform," had won the top honor. Winning submissions comprise a variety of attributes including educational soundness and effectiveness, user experience, and overall significance.

Sherif Abdelhamid, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences and platform developer, led the program. Two recent VMI graduates, James Bangura '26, a computer science major, and Gunnar Romsland '26, an economics and business major, helped with the research related to the platform.

Taps

Lisa Kelly

The superintendent regrets to inform the VMI community of the death of Lisa Kelly, the cashier in VMI's Office of Cadet Accounting since November 2018. She passed away Friday evening, Oct. 23, after a brief battle with cancer.

She was affectionately known to many as "Chip"—being so much like her dad, a "chip off the old block," since birth.

"Lisa loved to travel and embraced life with a spirit of adventure," shared Lt. Col. Corey Matteson, Institute bursar. "She was a dedicated and hardworking member of the cadet accounting team, known for her commitment and kindness. Loved by many, families often asked for her by name because of the genuine care she showed to everyone she met. Lisa was more than just the cashier; she was a trusted friend whose warmth and compassion left a lasting impression on countless lives."



Moses Ezekiel Art Expert Visits Post

VMI welcomed guest speaker Dr. Samantha Baskind, distinguished professor of art history at Cleveland State University and a foremost scholar on Jewish American art, for a lecture titled, "Moses Jacob Ezekiel: VMI's Soldier and Sculptor," Oct. 28 in Gillis Theater.

Moses Ezekiel, VMI Class of 1866, was the first Jewish cadet to attend VMI. He went on to achieve an international career as a sculptor. Baskind's talk highlighted Ezekiel's most notable works, following the outline of her 2025 book, "Moses Jacob Ezekiel: Jewish, Confederate, Expatriate Sculptor." Through these sculptures, she discussed how the artworks reflected Ezekiel's complicated and multifaceted identity. In particular, she analyzed "Virginia Mourning Her Dead" as Ezekiel's most personal artwork, born of the trauma he experienced at the Battle of New Market, and its donation to VMI as an indication of how his time as a cadet became a core component of his understanding of himself. While on post, Baskind also spoke with two classes: The Language of Art, taught by Col. Catharine Ingersoll, professor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies (ERHS); and Civil War and Reconstruction, taught by Maj. Madeleine Ramsey, assistant professor in the Department of History.

The event was sponsored by ERHS, the VMI Museum, and the Dean's Academic Speakers Program.—*VMI Photos by Jake Falcone '27.*

Institute Report

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The Institute Report, VMI's news magazine, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Public Information & Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; 540-464-7207; or **VMIReport@vmi.edu**.

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Career opportunities are available across post. Learn more about faculty, staff, and hourly career opportunities at **www.vmi.edu/jobs**.

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On the cover: David H. Dawson '30 participates in field training exercises with Army ROTC at McKethan Park.—*Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.*

View the latest Institute stories and updates at **www.vmi.edu/vmi-stories**.



Wrestling on Display

The VMI wrestling team held several events as their season approached. Wrestling in Barracks took place Oct. 22 in New Barracks courtyard featuring an intrasquad match with 10 rounds of action. With results going back and forth between the two groups, the red team defeated the black team, 29-17. Several days later, as post was overflowing with tailgaters for Family Weekend, the wrestling team had their practice Saturday morning, Oct. 24, on the northeast end of the Parade Ground. Regular season matches kicked off Nov. 1, hosting University of Michigan.—*VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Jake Falcone '27.*















Smith to Head Finance, Admin, and Support

Col. Jeffrey S. Smith, head of the Department of Economics and Business and the General Edwin Cox '20 Institute Professor of Economics and History at VMI, has been named the new deputy superintendent of finance, administration, and support for the Institute. He fills the role vacated by Dallas Clark '99, who held the responsibility for nine years before assuming the position of chief executive officer for Alumni Agencies last June.

Smith, who retired from the U.S. Air Force as a lieutenant colonel in 2011, earned a doctorate degree in economics from the University of Tennessee, a master's degree in economics from Wright State University, and a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of South Carolina. He first came to VMI in 2011 when he held the position of assistant professor while simultaneously teaching as an adjunct for the MBA program at the University of Maryland University College. Prior to that, he held positions at the U.S. Air Force Academy and the Air Force Institute of Technology, where he was named the Sigma Iota Professor of the Year in 2008. At VMI, he was presented with The Wilbur S. Hinman Jr., 1926 Research Award Arts & Humanities for excellence in stimulating, encouraging, and leading undergraduate research in 2017; and was awarded the VMI Certificate of Excellence in 2021. He has 16 peer-reviewed publications, one National Bureau of Economic Research working paper, and is author of the self-published textbook, "Business Finance—Theory, Techniques, and Tools." He is a regular contributor to the popular finance website, Wallethub. His areas of special interest include market efficiency, exchange-traded products, alternative assets, investment, wealth, retirement, military spending, procurement, and military retirement.


Col. Jeffrey S. Smith

As deputy superintendent for finance and support, Smith will be the chief financial and administrative officer of the Institute. He will be responsible for financial accounting and reporting, preparation and administration of the budget, operation and maintenance of the physical plant, planning and direction of capital outlay projects, procurement, the museum system, infirmary services, cadet counseling, auxiliary services, and government relations. He will report directly to Superintendent Lt. Gen. David Furness '87. Smith will assume responsibilities of the new position full time January 1, 2027. Until then, he will fill the role part time as he finishes out the semester teaching his classes.

Smith shared he is humbled and honored to step into this new role. "VMI provides a world-class education, and we have a great team that makes this happen every day. I am excited to be given the opportunity to lead this incredible group of dedicated individuals as we facilitate the goal of educating men and women of character," he said.

A nationwide search was conducted to identify the new deputy superintendent, with input from numerous departments on post, alumni, and the VMI Board of Visitors.

Institute Honors Cadets Present Creative Works about Southern Literature

VMI Institute Honors cadets Braden Bell '28, Josiah Farrell '28, and Sophia Heinlein '28 traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana, Oct. 15-17, to participate in the annual conference of the American Culture Association in the South (ACAS). Their presentations were based on projects from a spring 2026 Institute Honors seminar on the literature and culture of the American South, taught by Col. Rob McDonald, associate dean for academic affairs; director of the Honors Program; and professor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies.

Titled, "Creative Responses to Southern Literature," the cadets' ACAS session featured an original audiobook of William Faulkner's, "The Bear," by Bell, a psychology major; a poetry chapbook by Farrell, a double major in international studies and modern languages and cultures; and a collection of annotated sketches by Heinlein, a civil engineering major. They were joined by an alumnus of the course, Joel Thomas '19, who traveled from Montana where he currently works as a smokejumper with the U.S. Forest Service, to present a new work of creative nonfiction.

McDonald, who organized the session, received the ACAS's Ambassador Award in recognition of his long-standing membership and service, which includes a term as president and a decade editing the ACAS journal, Studies in American Culture.—*Story and photo courtesy of VMI Office of the Dean of the Faculty.*









Fall Career and Internship Fair

The Fall Career and Internship Fair hosted more than 50 employers Oct. 14 in Marshall Hall. In addition to engaging with those offering a variety of positions, cadets were provided with on-site lunch, sponsored by Gilbane Building Company, and a photographer, sponsored by Crowder Construction Company, took headshots using attire from the professional closet.

New employers this year included Triple Point Security, U.S. House of Representatives, Virginia Spaceport Authority, Omni Hotels & Resorts, and Augusta Health. Graduate programs were on hand from Duke Pratt School of Engineering, Regent University School of Law, University of Virginia School of Medicine, Virginia Tech College of Engineering, and William & Mary Ramond A. Mason School of Business.—*VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.*



Cadet Receives Casey Scholarship

Story and photo by Marianne Hause

Peter "Auggie" Fiorillo '28, a cadet double majoring in applied mathematics and physics with a minor in astronomy, was named the 2026 recipient of the Jack T. Casey STEM Memorial Scholarship at a small reception in Preston Library Oct. 23.

Capt. Jack Casey '19 was one of five Marines killed Feb. 7, 2024, in a CH53E helicopter crash in California during a training flight. He majored in physics at VMI and was India Company commander for the 2018-19 academic year. His family, who live in Dover, New Hampshire, established the scholarship in his memory. It is for a 3rd, 2nd, or 1st Class cadet enrolled in a STEM major with a cumulative GPA of at least 2.8. The award is $2,500 for each academic year, up to three years and is payable directly to VMI.

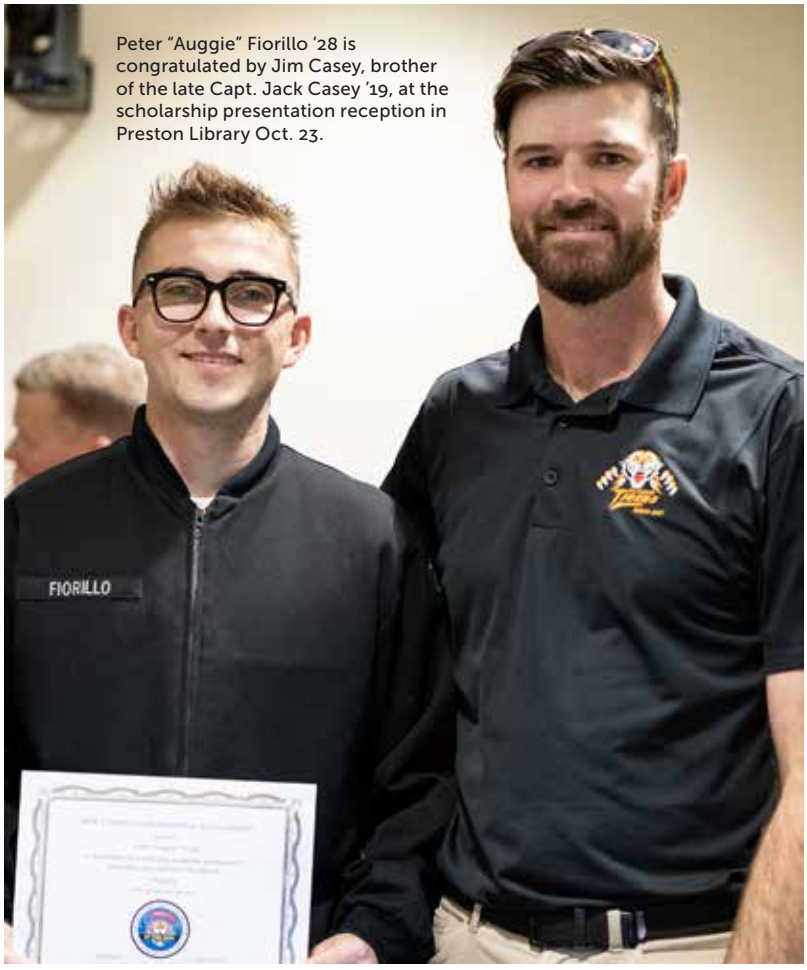
> ***"This award is not only a tremendous source of encouragement, but also a reminder of the responsibility I carry moving forward. I am fully committed to continuing to live out these values so that Jack Casey's legacy will endure through my daily actions..."*** *—Peter Auggie Fiorillo '28.*

Jack's mother, Cathy, and brother, Jim, traveled from New Hampshire to Lexington to present the award to Fiorillo. According to Cathy, VMI developed Jack as a person and brought out the best in him. "He was a model VMI cadet, military leader, and an upstanding person. As a mother, I want people to carry on Jack's positive influence, his enthusiasm, and his contagious smile. With our scholarship, we hope to keep that going, and to have people feel valued and important. We hope Auggie carries on that tradition and helps the guy next to him like Jack did," she shared.

Col. Stacia Vargas, head of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, explained the department faculty nominated Fiorillo in recognition of his commitment to academic excellence as a double major in physics and mathematics, his strong leadership, and his dedication to helping others. "Auggie exemplifies the values of integrity, leadership, and service that the Jack T. Casey STEM Memorial Scholarship seeks to honor."

Fiorillo stated receiving this honor is an incredibly meaningful milestone in his educational journey. "I am profoundly grateful. After learning more about Jack Casey, his remarkable character, and the profound impact he made on the lives of others, I feel a great sense of personal pride knowing that the physics faculty and his family have recognized those same qualities in me. This award is not only a tremendous source of encouragement, but also a reminder of the responsibility I carry moving forward. I am fully committed to continuing to live out these values so that Jack Casey's legacy will endure through my daily actions, my interactions with others, and my future endeavors."

Fiorillo is from St. Petersburg, Florida, and the son of Caroline Fiorillo and Dan Smith and brother of alumni, David "Alex" Fiorillo '23 and Caroline "Abby" Fiorillo '25. He is a member of the cross-country and track and field teams. Upon graduating, he plans to commission into the Navy and work on a nuclear submarine.



Peter "Auggie" Fiorillo '28 is congratulated by Jim Casey, brother of the late Capt. Jack Casey '19, at the scholarship presentation reception in Preston Library Oct. 23.

Australian Defense Attaché Discusses Global Security Challenges

By Col. Jochen Arndt
Photo by Jake Falcone '27

The John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis hosted Air Vice-Marshal Carl Newman, Australian defense attaché to the U.S. and head of the Australian defense staff in Washington, D.C., Oct. 22. In Gillis Theater, Newman participated in a panel discussion about the Australian perspective on current global security challenges, notably in the Indo-Pacific region. Over 200 cadets, faculty members, and staff were in attendance. He answered questions from Col. David Gray, executive director of the Center for Leadership and Ethics, and Col. Spencer Bakich, professor in the Department of International Studies and Political Science, before addressing questions from cadets.



Air Vice-Marshal Carl Newman addresses the audience in Gillis Theater Oct. 22.





Apple Day

The Jackson House Museum's Apple Day was held Oct. 3. The much-loved event welcomed families, friends, and history enthusiasts for a day filled with interactive 19th century activities, traditional crafts, and old-fashioned fun for all ages. Despite the rainy weather, 134 visitors attended and enjoyed cider pressing with a working apple press and hearing period music. Children delighted in making crafts, playing classic historical games, and hearing captivating tales told by talented storytellers—*VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.*







VMI Receives duPont Grant

By Marianne Hause

VMI was recently awarded a grant by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund in the amount of $50,000. The purpose of the grant is to deepen institutional understanding of VMI history by researching, documenting, and publicly sharing the experiences of African Americans and other historically underrepresented populations connected to the Institute.

According to Briana Williams, the Institute's chief diversity officer, the grant was an unexpected result after a group of VMI faculty and staff members participated in the Inclusive History Certificate Program offered by the duPont Fund and the University of Virginia last year. "It was a 12-week remote-learning course about the importance of inclusive history projects and how to implement them successfully. It brought people together from the Department of Economics and Business; the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies; the Department of History; the Office of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion; VMI Archives; and the VMI Museum System." The group's work didn't stop when the program ended. "We kept meeting and developing ideas, and that continued engagement led to an invitation to compete for this grant. For me, this is a story about what we can accomplish when we bring our different perspectives and expertise together, and our cadets will benefit from that collaboration."

Cathy DeSilvey, registrar/curator for the VMI Museum System, explained how the grant funds will be used. "Some of the duPont Fund grant will go toward stipends for cadet interns who will digitize hundreds of archival documents in order to establish a repository on the enslaved to be used for cadet research. The museum will also create a traveling exhibit highlighting the contributions of the enslaved and underrepresented at VMI. What I'm most excited about is our plan to build a webpage of archival resources to share with the greater Lexington community." Additionally, the grant may be used to fund a speaker series as well as field trips open to all cadets.



Employee Wellness Fair

Faculty and staff from across post headed to Marshall Hall Sept. 30 for the annual Employee Wellness Fair. Organizations from the community were on hand to discuss health services, fitness classes, nutrition, and more. Health screenings were available, plus lots of giveaways and door prizes. Parkhurst Dining provided a seasonal lunch and later provided the recipes for each menu item.—*VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.*







Swim and Dive Teams Visit D.C.

The men's and women's swim and dive teams visited the office of Congressman Rob Wittman, who represents Virginia's 1st Congressional District, and toured the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., Oct. 2, one day before they opened their season in a tri-meet against American University (AU) and the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Oct. 3 in Baltimore.

The Keydet men earned a split defeating AU 215-83, while falling to host UMBC 187.5-112.5. On the women's side, the Keydets fell 238-59 to UMBC and 184-103 to AU.

One of their best performances for the final event of the afternoon came from the quartet of Matthew Picard '27, Sam Calder '28, Jack Mills '28, and Ian Lutz '29 who won the 400-yard freestyle relay in 3:06.36, edging UMBC's top relay by just 0.15 seconds.

Head coach Adam Zaczkowski has been working to develop a program that compliments athletics, academics, and military. "When I found out we would be traveling through Washington, D.C., on our way to the tri-meet, I knew it would be a great opportunity for both the men's and women's programs to participate in some civic engagement."

The captain of the women's swim team, Isabelle Haer '28, said she learned a lot about the Capitol during the tour. "As citizen-soldiers, it is important to understand history and to honor the principles we have inherited as we prepare to serve something greater than ourselves."





Harvest Hop

Cadets and their dates enjoy a night of music and dancing in Cocke Hall Oct. 17. The theme of this year's Harvest Hop was Hollywood.—*VMI Photos by Jake Falcone '27.*









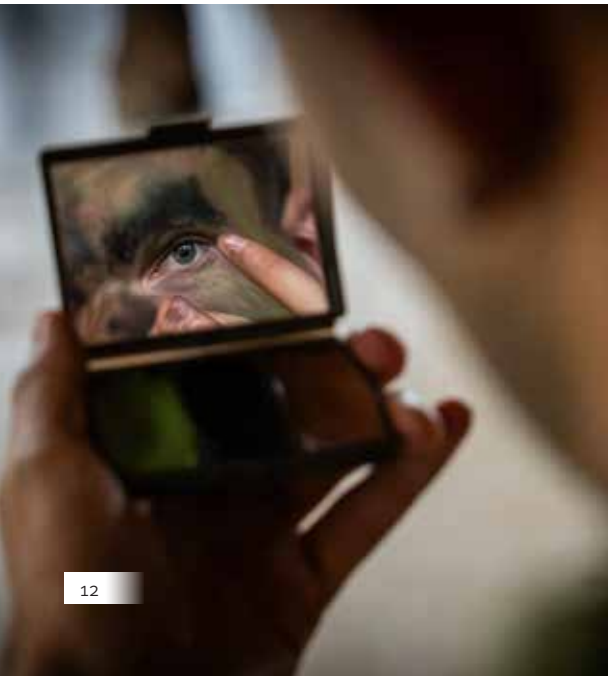






Fall FTX

Cadets participated with their respective ROTC units in what turned out to be a very rainy field training exercises (FTX) Oct. 9-11. Utilizing various locations on post, as well as McKethan Park, cadets learned land navigation skills, participated in team-building exercises, trained in various mission scenarios, and practiced tactical maneuvers. Coast Guard AUP traveled to Smith Mountain Lake to learn boating skills. Non-commissioning cadets heard from a panel of alumni representing more than 50 years of professional experience, who shared practical networking strategies and career insights. Additional panels explored opportunities within the manufacturing sector, provided perspectives on corporate career paths, and highlighted careers that support and intersect with the Department of Defense.—*VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and courtesy of Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein and Naval ROTC.*

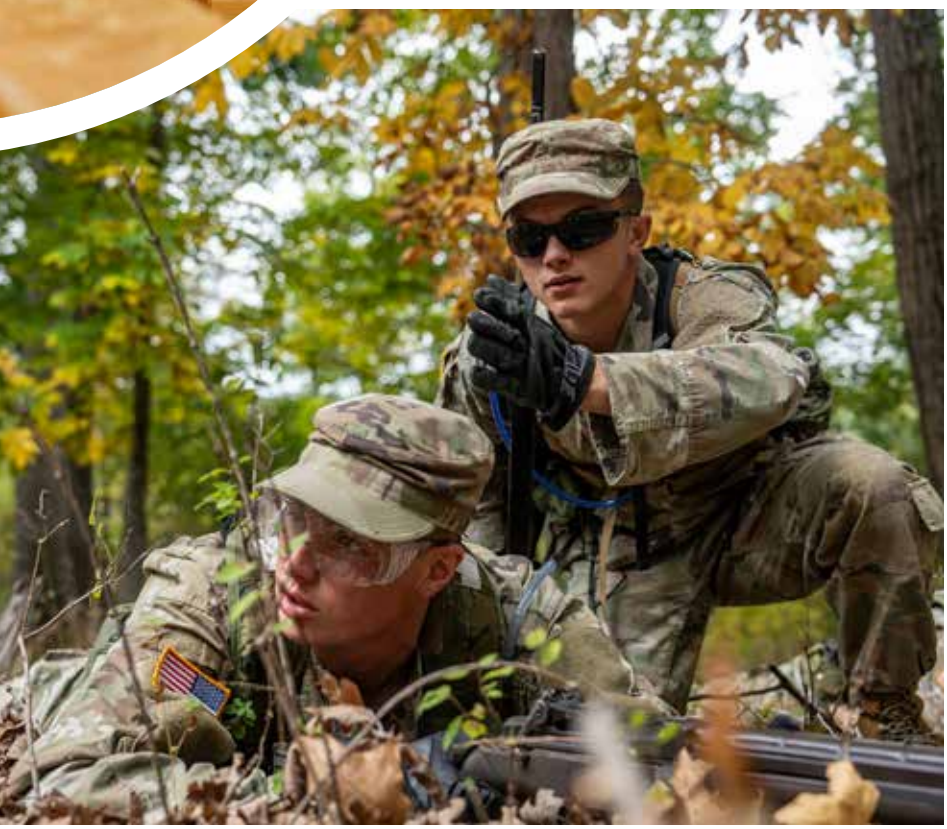













PATRICK
Looney Bin




2007
ONE CORPS
ONE VML

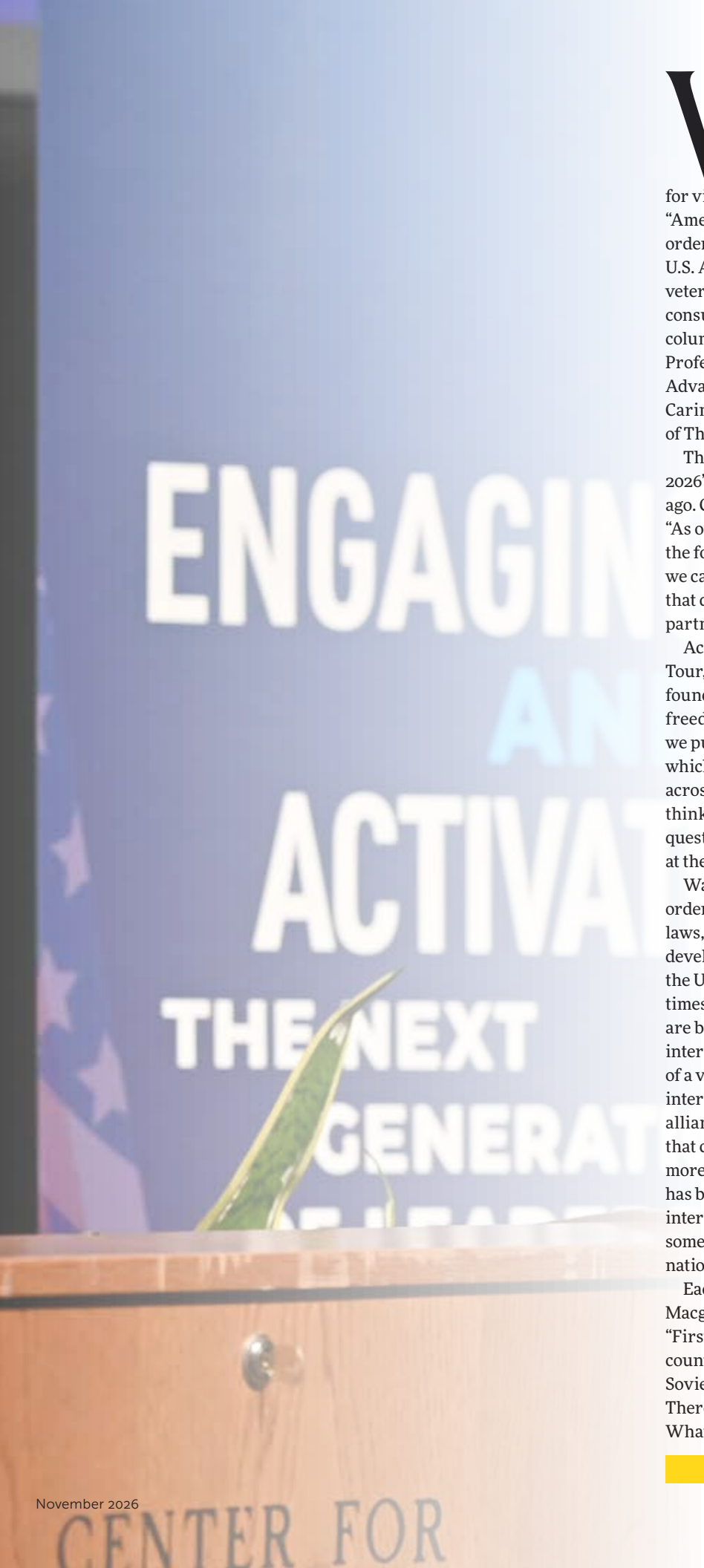


Steamboat Institute Debate Held at VMI

First Stop in Fall Tour

By Marianne Hause
Photos by Kelly Nye

Col. Douglas Macgregor, Ph.D., addresses the audience in Gillis Theater during the Steamboat Institute debate.



VMI's Center for Leadership and Ethics (CLE) co-hosted the Steamboat Institute (SI) Campus Liberty Tour in Gillis Theater Oct. 1, for the first debate of its fall schedule involving multiple college campuses. The debate was livestreamed for viewers all over the world. The resolution debated was: "America benefits from the end of the rules-based international order." Arguing the affirmative of the resolution was retired U.S. Army Col. Douglas Macgregor, Ph.D., a decorated combat veteran, author of five books, and a defense and foreign policy consultant. Arguing the negative was Hal Brands, Ph.D., columnist, author, and the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. The debate was moderated by Carine Hajjar, opinion journalist and editorial board member of The Washington Post and a SI fellow.

The CLE's theme for this academic year is, "American Spirit 2026" as the country continues to celebrate its birth 250 years ago. Col. David Gray, executive director of the CLE, remarked, "As our country was founded on debate and deliberation by the founding fathers, it is only appropriate to demonstrate how we can continue to debate thoroughly and civilly on issues that deeply affect our country. We are proud to continue this partnership with the Steamboat Institute for a third year."

According to Daniel Wagner, director of the Campus Liberty Tour, for nearly 20 years SI has worked to promote America's founding principles and foster a greater appreciation for the freedom Americans enjoy. "One of the most important ways we pursue that mission is through our Campus Liberty Tour, which brings substantive civil debates to college campuses across the country. Our purpose is not to tell students what to think; it is to challenge them to think critically, listen carefully, question assumptions, and decide for themselves. That spirit is at the heart of every Campus Liberty Tour debate," he said.

Wagner went on to explain what rules-based international order means. "It generally refers to the system of international laws, institutions, alliances, agreements, and norms that developed largely in the aftermath of World War II. For decades the U.S. played a central role in building, supporting, and, at times, challenging that system. Today, fundamental questions are being asked about whether that order still serves America's interests and whether it is capable of meeting the challenges of a very different world. One side argues that the existing international order has helped provide stability, strengthen alliances, facilitate economic cooperation, and establish rules that constrain aggression and make relations among nations more predictable. The other side questions whether that system has become outdated or overly constrained, and whether international institutions and longstanding commitments sometimes prevent the U.S. from acting decisively in its own national interest."

Each debater gave an opening statement, beginning with Macgregor, who asked his audience to consider three points. "First, international law does not mean that the most powerful country decides what the rules are. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. found itself in an extraordinary position. There was no clear competitor, and the strategic question was: What should America do with the power that it has? Second,

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the liberal international order—the post-Cold War system after 1991—weakened U.S. national security. The order precipitated the rise of new alliances against us. Third, how much American blood and treasure should Americans invest in trying to organize the rest of the world? A big part of the answer, in my judgment, is to stop." Macgregor continued to discuss that America is one great power among several, not the government of the world, and that a new role for Washington inside the international system needs to be constructed, based on American national interests and respect for the sovereignty, culture, and interests of others. Additionally, he said, the U.S. does not need to rule the world to be secure, prosperous, or free.

Brands followed Macgregor to the lectern. He stated his definition of the rules-based international order is essentially synonymous with the world order the U.S. built dating back to 1945. "That world order involves the promotion of certain rules and norms. For example, the idea that there should be freedom of the seas, or the idea that you shouldn't be able to conquer your neighbor's territory, the idea that basic human rights should be respected, or that we should have a relatively open world economy that works in relatively predictable ways. That concept of international order has always been rooted in U.S. self-interest and living in a relatively stable, civilized world." Brands continued by pointing out that this order has been more good than bad for the world, and for the U.S. "International trade and prosperity reached new levels. Democracy and human rights became more widespread than ever before. There have been plenty of bad things that have happened since 1945, but the last 80 years have been about the best in the history of humanity. The U.S. has had tremendous influence as the country that anchors key alliances and sets the terms of the international system." He did concede that times change and aspects of the rules-based order need to be updated. "It's true the U.S. needs better burden sharing within its alliances, so it's good that countries in East Asia and Western Europe are spending more on defense. It's true China exploited its entry into the World Trade Organization to create preferential status, even as it maintained a protectionist economy. So, the U.S. and its friends will have to find ways of pushing back. It's true certain institutions like the U.N. or World Health Organization have been corrupted by autocratic powers. So, I certainly don't pretend that the current order is flawless or perfect."

> ***"As our country was founded on debate and deliberation by the founding fathers, it is only appropriate to demonstrate how we can continue to debate thoroughly and civilly on issues that deeply affect our country."*** *—Col. David Gray*

His final point was that if the rules-based order collapses or if the U.S. walks away from it, that will lead to a much darker world. "We would see more of the outright aggression we have seen from Russia and Ukraine, and we would have more friction and less prosperity in the global economy."



Col. Douglas Macgregor, Ph.D., defends his position on the resolution debated Oct. 1 as Hal Brands, Ph.D., and Carine Hajjar listen in Gillis Theater.

The two opponents took turns answering multiple questions asked by the moderator, some of which were submitted by the livestream audience as well as those sitting in Gillis Theater.

In his closing statement, Macgregor stated that rather than spending billions of U.S. dollars in other countries' conflicts, America's interests should come first. "This means committing our military power where only our direct security needs are at stake, protecting our own borders, but staying out of regions and conflicts where we have no interests that justify the expenditure of American blood and treasure. Our strategic focus should largely return to our own country. For if we are to survive, we must restore the foundation of economic prosperity."

Brands closed by making three points. "First, we have to be honest that the U.S. makes mistakes in foreign policy, and is guilty of being overambitious at times. The question is whether the role the U.S. has played in the world has been more good than bad. I think the answer to that is a resounding yes. That brings me to my second point. It's easy to fixate on things we don't like about the existing order, but the rules-based international order is meant to protect us from a greater downside, a greater evil, which is what would happen if the American-led system went away. That system has given the U.S. a huge degree of global legitimacy and global convening power. We shouldn't lose sight of how amazing the historical achievements of the American-led order are. And my final point is the question of whether we should wish for the rules-based order to go away has to be followed by the question of what comes next? Yes, the rules-based order has problems, but it is preferable to a lawless system where there are no rules. International orders are never perfect, but this one is still better than the alternatives."

The audience had the opportunity to record their stance on the debate topic in the pre- and post-debate polls. Prior to the debate, 38% agreed with the resolution, 37% disagreed, and 25% were undecided. After the debate, 48% agreed, 40% disagreed, and only 12% remained undecided. The debate in its entirety may be viewed at the QR code below.

Following the debate, the audience was invited to a brief reception in the Hall of Valor to meet Macgregor and Brands.



Hal Brands, Ph.D., presents his opening statement during the Steamboat Institute debate Oct. 1 in Gillis Theater.





Trick-or-Treat in Barracks

Children of faculty and staff were welcomed to a Scooby-Doo-themed barracks Friday, Oct. 30, to match many of the other community Halloween events that also occurred a day early. Cadets, many dressed in costumes, handed out candy to the trick-or-treaters.– *VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.*









Navy Birthday

Naval ROTC cadets gathered in the Hall of Valor to celebrate the 251st birthday of the Navy. Col. Ryan Finn, commanding officer, cut the cake and served the first two pieces to the oldest and youngest members of the unit, per tradition. Afterward VMI Board of Visitors member and retired Rear Adm. Terry McKnight '78 addressed the crowd.– *VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.*





Class of 2016 Presents Reunion Gift

The Class of 2016 presents its 10th Reunion gift of $419,915.03 to the Institute during the football game against Bucknell Sept. 12. Accepting the check are Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers, Institute and Corps sergeant major; Dallas Clark '99, VMI Alumni Agencies chief executive officer; and Lt. Gen. David Furness '87, superintendent. Presenting the check is Murphy Kerner '16, class agent.– *Photo courtesy of VMI Alumni Agencies.*



WWE Recruits at VMI

By Marianne Hause
Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin



WWE Superstar Karmen Petrovic displays her championship belt in front of barracks.



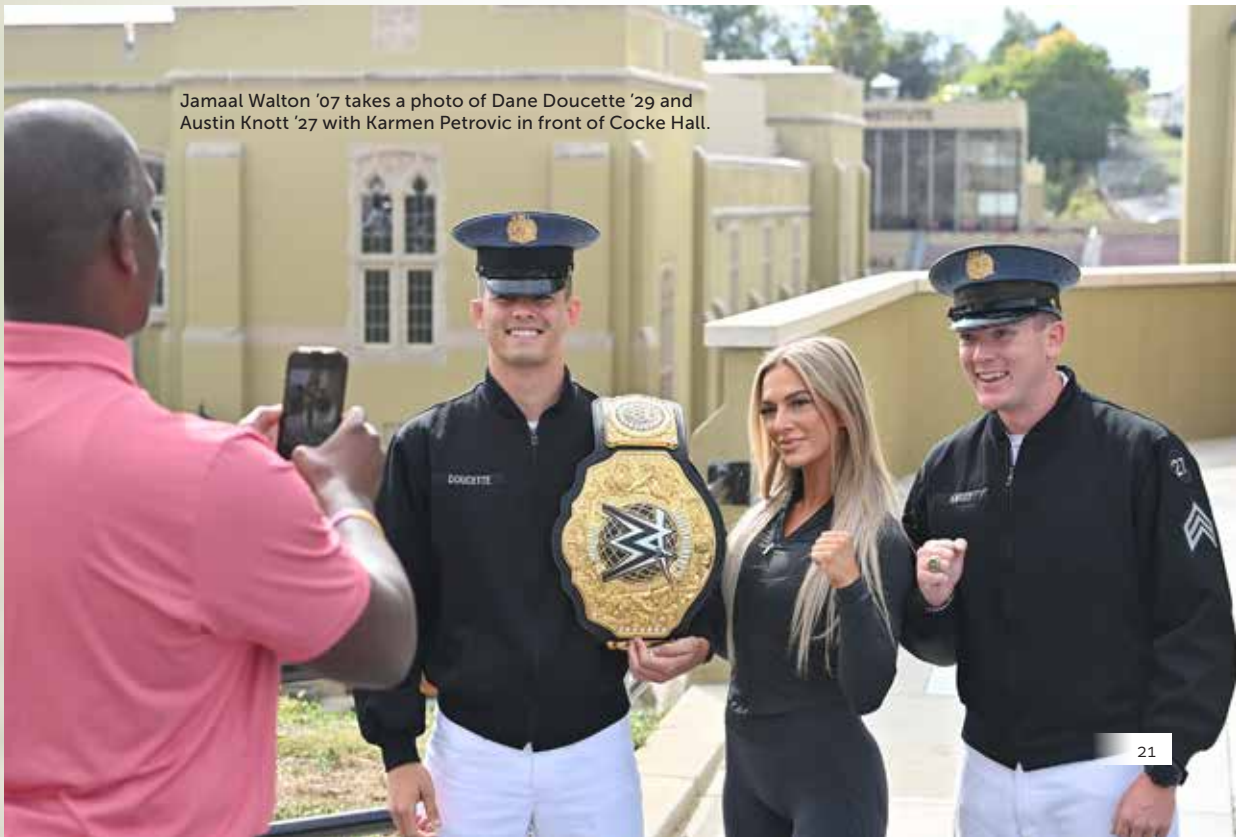
Anna Morris and Karmen Petrovic chat with Tyler Hagan '27 and Braden Bell '28 during DRC Sept. 28.

VMI welcomed World Wrestling Entertainment Superstar Karmen Petrovic Sept. 28 for a recruiting visit in which she promoted WWE's "Next in Line" program, which provides a clear pathway from college athletics to WWE.

Petrovic spent the entire day on post where she met with cadets as they lined up in formation, chatted with them during lunch, attended marksmanship training, toured barracks, observed team sports practices, and gave a presentation in Gillis Theater showcasing the opportunities WWE offers.

Jamaal Walton '07, director of intercollegiate athletics, was glad cadets and the VMI community had the opportunity to learn more about WWE, a well-known global brand. "This partnership is one that I'm excited to continue to build on in order to enhance and boost the VMI brand," he said.

Petrovic stated this was the first time WWE has been to VMI and noted the likenesses between the two organizations. "The ways WWE and a military institute work are so similar. We both must have physical training and mental strength. So, I think being able to put both together is incredible, and hopefully we will create some amazing career opportunities."



Jamaal Walton '07 takes a photo of Dane Doucette '29 and Austin Knott '27 with Karmen Petrovic in front of Cocke Hall.





























Family Weekend

Friends and family were on post Oct. 23-25 to spend time with cadets. Members of Parents Council participated in their fall meeting, and visitors to post had the opportunity to attend multiple athletic events as well as join cadets in class, see a parade, hear musical performances, and attend religious services. More photos from the weekend are available on Flickr.—*VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.*















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