



# INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 52, Number 8, June 2024

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## Alumnus Returns as Athletic Director

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50TH ANNIVERSARY

# Entrepreneurship Program Classes Begin

By Marianne Hause

Classes have begun for the new Summer Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Program (SUEP), for cadets who possess the mindset of an entrepreneur, regardless of academic major. Through the support from the Jackson-Hope Fund, cadets participating in the program receive three tuition-free elective credits, with room and board provided at no cost to them.

According to Col. Clifford West, professor in the Department of Economics and Business, SUEP consists of a five-week summer course, field trips to start-up companies and incubators, and interaction with guest speakers chosen from alumni and business leaders.

Katie Overfield-Zook, entrepreneurial ecosystem builder with Shenandoah Community Capital Fund (SCCF), an entrepreneurial support organization in Staunton, is guest lecturing a portion of the course. "It has been an incredible pleasure getting to work with this group of cadets!

Their excitement about entrepreneurship and dedication to the content is already apparent. So far we've had the chance to learn about what makes a good entrepreneur, how entrepreneurs solve problems in the world, and how they start building businesses that are addressing the problems most near and dear to them. I can't wait to see what we're able to achieve over the next three weeks of the program," said Zook.

One of the eight cadets enrolled in the course is Simon T. Bucknor '25, from Loudoun County, Virginia. As a mechanical engineering major pursuing an aerospace concentration, Bucknor has spent a lot of his time as a cadet repeatedly solving technical problems. "This course allows me to develop an entrepreneurial mindset when approaching different problems. So far, I am enjoying it, and my perspective is already expanding," he said. 🌟



Katie Overfield-Zook speaks to cadets in the Summer Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Program.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



## Employee Recognition

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, recognized VMI staff during the employee breakfast May 10 and family day event May 17. During the employee breakfast, he administered awards for years of service to classified employees, including Dawn Cochran for 40 years of service to VMI. Certificates of excellence were handed out during family day at McKethan Park for exemplary work performances over the past year.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.





# INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 52, Number 8, June 2024

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 Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; 540-464-7207; or [VMIRreport@vmi.edu](mailto:VMIRreport@vmi.edu).  
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On the cover: Kaylyn Kates '24 jubilantly lifts her diploma and smiles to guests in the stands after crossing the stage in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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For the most accurate information and event updates, please visit [www.vmi.edu](http://www.vmi.edu).

# New Officers Commissioned

By Marianne Hause

More than 170 cadets commissioned into the armed services in Cameron Hall May 15 in the annual Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) joint commissioning ceremony. The ceremony was livestreamed for family and friends who could not attend the event in person.

Gen. James C. Slife, vice chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, offered the commissioning officer remarks and administered the oath of office to the cadets beginning their journey of military service in the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, welcomed all in attendance and thanked the ROTC departments, faculty, staff, family members, and guests who supported and encouraged the cadets throughout their time at VMI. He noted that the ceremony is the fulfillment of one of the central purposes of VMI, the preparation and education of citizen-soldiers.

After Wins recognized veterans and current military members in the audience and thanked them for their service, he noted that VMI cadets have always moved toward the sound of conflict to serve the nation. "As we speak, danger persists in many parts of the world, including for our NATO allies. We must have a strong military, led by highly educated and skilled officers, men and women of character, dedicated to defending the freedoms that we continue to enjoy. Cadets, you have developed a foundation based on these skills during your years of study at VMI. There is no doubt you have been challenged, but now you are prepared. It is your turn to take these skills grounded in a firm ethical foundation, and put them to good use," he charged.

Over 38 years ago, Wins made the decision to commission. "And just like you, I was sworn in as a young officer and became part of a great team of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and service families. You too will come to cherish the same experience," he stated.

Wins congratulated each cadet on attaining their commission and told them the Institute could not be prouder. "The profession you have chosen will challenge you, but don't lose focus. Take heart knowing you are following in the footsteps of many alumni that have gone before you to live a life of service to our nation. Our country is fortunate to have citizen-soldiers and leaders like yourselves. Good luck to each of you in the years ahead and please stay in touch."

Col. Nichole K.A. Scott, commander of Air Force ROTC, introduced Slife. As she began to read all of his educational, professional, and military achievements, awards, and honors, Slife got up from his chair, approached Scott at the lectern, and cut short her recitation by meekly stating, "They don't care," followed by a roar of thunderous applause and laughter from the audience.

When the crowd quieted, Slife confessed that he came prepared with a written speech, but felt the moment called for something



Gen. James C. Slife speaks to commissioning cadets at the joint ceremony in Cameron Hall May 15.—VMI  
Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

different, so he chose to speak extemporaneously. He shared with the cadets three nuggets of advice as they begin their career. "The first one I offer you is to never forget that leadership is a burden to be borne, and not a crown to be worn. Leaders get themselves into trouble when they come to believe that it's all about the leader, but it's not. It's about the led: those young men and women who choose to serve alongside you.

"Second, leadership is about becoming and not about being." He quoted Greek philosopher, Aristotle who said, "Excellence is not an act, but a habit." "It's all about becoming more excellent on a day to day basis. When you're faced with a difficult decision or a challenging circumstance, don't think about what somebody else would do in the situation. That's unlimited utility. A more important question for you to ask yourself is, 'if I was a perfect version of myself, what would I do?' Whatever the answer is to that, do that thing. It's about becoming a more perfect version of yourself."

The last piece of advice he offered was to be worthy of the service of those around you. "The thing that makes military service so powerful are the teams that we get to be a part of, doing hard things together with people who you come to love. The worst thing you can do is let down your teammates. Always strive to be worthy of their service."

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

According to Col. Scott Brannon, professor of military science, six cadets who commissioned into the Army stand out as exemplary: Thomas Coble '24, an economics and business major from Annapolis, Maryland; Benjamin Luke Greer '24, a psychology major from Mechanicsville, Virginia; Jacob Kleinschuster '24,

*Continued on next page*

VMI Institute Report



Ulrich Meintjes '24 receives his shoulder boards from his mom and fiancé in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Sebastian Ramirez '24 has his rank pinned on his shoulders during a ceremony in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

an economics and business major from Richmond, Virginia; Paul Murray '24, an international studies major from Falls Church, Virginia; Kate Taylor '24, a civil engineering major from Newton, Massachusetts; and Akhil Thadur '24, a mechanical engineering major from Little Rock, Arkansas. "Kleinschuster executed all aspects of his cadetship and maximized his order of merit score with an outstanding rating at cadet summer training, which ranked him second in the nation, and he is recipient of the John W. and Jane M. Roberts Award. Taylor balanced her cadetship with academics, corps activities and athletics, and earned the Three-Legged Stool award, and received the Earl L. Valentine Jr. Award. Murray has been a top performer all four years, and also served as regimental executive officer for the Corps this past year. Thadur was the Army ROTC battalion executive officer, and led to make things happen for the AROTC. Greer was this year's recipient of the Colonel Thomas St. John Arnold Award and Cmdr. H.M. Mason Military Proficiency Award. He and Coble both led the Army ROTC Ranger Challenge team, which competed in the Sandhurst Military Skills Competition at West Point, and earned a bid to compete at Exercise Cambrian Patrol in Wales in the fall," he said.

Col. Travis Homiak '95, commanding officer of Naval ROTC,

cited two outstanding cadets entering the Navy. Kieran Weldon '24, from Woodbridge, Virginia, is a civil engineering major and this year's recipient of the Chief of Naval Operations Distinguished Midshipman Graduate Award and the Lieutenant Mark R. Wilson Sr. Midshipman Award. "Weldon served as Navy commanding officer during fall semester, and was one of four selected nationwide for Surface Warfare Officer Engineering Duty, and is pursuing dive school. Ulrich Meintjes '24, a mechanical engineering major

from Weston, Texas, has participated in interesting internships throughout his time here including with NASA. He is one out of 23 selected as Naval Postgraduate School Shoemaker Scholar."

Homiak also named two top performers entering the Marine Corps. Russell Crouch '24, a modern languages and cultures major from Liberty, Missouri, and Sebastian Ramirez '24, an applied mathematics major from Ashburn, Virginia. "Crouch served as Marine company commander this past spring, is an NROTC distinguished graduate, and he participated in Project Global Officer to Taiwan. Ramirez served as the Marine company physical training instructor, company gunnery sergeant last fall, Bulldog platoon sergeant this past spring, and



Kate Taylor '24 shares a celebratory moment with Col. Dean Kershaw '68 in Marshall Hall May 15.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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## Change of Command

Mark Shelton '24 ceremoniously hands over leadership of the Corps of Cadets to Brian Pritchard '25 as the next regimental commander and the rest of the 185<sup>th</sup> regiment of cadet leaders during the change of command parade May 14. The class then reassembled in barracks for an Old Yell. —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.





# ECE Cadets Create Apps for Hiking Trails

By Marianne Hause

The beauty and grandeur of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Shenandoah Valley, and the Appalachian Trail are unmatched, and a beacon to all who enjoy outdoor adventure. Campers, backpackers, and day hikers come from all over the country to experience Virginia's natural majesty. But what about those with mobility impairments? Should rocks, slopes, and steep elevations prevent them from enjoying the trails? Not if 12 electrical and computer engineering (ECE) majors have anything to do with it. For the past academic year, they have worked on their senior capstone projects with three external partners to develop a better way to document and assess hiking trails and share information about their navigability.

According to Lt. Col. David Feinauer, associate professor of ECE, Quality of Life Plus (QL+) is a nonprofit organization that challenges STEM college students to create innovative technology to improve the quality of life for injured veterans, first responders, and others who have served the nation. "The engineering capstone experience is an important milestone. It is an academic crucible event where students are challenged and emerge stronger, more confident, and more prepared for their future careers. Quality of Life Plus is a great organization to work with for these projects," he said.

QL+ brought two other organizations to VMI as challengers to the ECE cadets: Move United (MU), a nonprofit which promotes adaptive sports to youths and adults who have physical impairments; and Beneficial Designs (BD), a rehabilitation research and design firm which focuses on creating solutions for people with mobility impairments. The challengers asked the ECE majors to improve the



Sudarshana Rajagopal '24 observes as Jack Liselli '24 and Lynda Toumi '24 demonstrate their hiking trail app.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

High-Efficiency Trail Assessment Process (HETAP) created by BD to map hiking trails, and to make information about trail navigability publicly accessible. "The mapping of trails is the most important feature for those with mobility impairments, as it provides detailed information about each trail, and can make trail hiking a more accessible form of recreation and exercise. While the current HETAP system works, the challengers wished for improvements

to the software compatibility with mobile devices, wireless connections between the sensors and computer, and a way to directly submit the data gathered to ArcGIS, a geographic information system. These changes would make the system easier to use, and increase the data collection without affecting accuracy," explained Feinauer.

The cadets were divided into two teams, each working on a different aspect of the problem. Team A, led by Robert Moran '24 from Lynchburg, Virginia, focused on high-level measurements including trail slope, cross-slope, trail width and distance. They created a mobile device app that is user-friendly, provides GPS tracking, scalable (meaning it can handle an ever increasing number of users), and is ABA compliant in its detections. "Users can mount

their mobile device with augmented reality capabilities to a wheeled cart, stroller, or wheelchair, walk a trail and create a real-time map. Pins can be dropped to mark certain points on the trail, and the camera on the mobile device can be used to take measurements of the trail width at key points. All the data collected is then processed and made available so potential trail users can gauge the difficulty of traversing the trail," said Moran. The team admitted



The HETAP system modified by cadets stands ready for use on hiking trails.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

See Apps for Hiking Trails, page 14

# Class of 2024 Graduates

## Army Secretary Brings Message of Hope

By Marianne Hause

A clear and warm morning set the tone for the elation and celebration in Cameron Hall as degrees were conferred on the Class of 2024 May 16.

The Regimental Band played “Pomp and Circumstance” as nearly 350 cadets marched into the arena to the cheers and applause of thousands of family members, friends, and supporters.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, superintendent, welcomed the assembly, and noted that the great personal achievement of graduating from VMI is not reached alone, but with the help of family, friends, faculty, staff, and coaches who encouraged, guided, and sustained the cadets. He reflected that because of the pandemic, members of the class may not have had a high school graduation ceremony, and when they arrived to VMI in August 2020, they were met with additional challenges and hardships than matriculants in previous years. “You marched up the hill for the first time on a rainy afternoon with your VMI issued masks on. Everything that first semester was done deliberately and with caution under the guidance of the medical community. Our goal was to protect each other and those around us. By November the health experts advised we distance from each other for a season, so you finished your first semester online. Thankfully you were able to return in January,” he said.

Wins shared that their first semester was also his first semester as interim superintendent. “In many ways we have grown together. There was turmoil about our culture that was imposed upon the entire Corp of Cadets when you started. Those challenges were never about you or your class. You were then and are now cadets of character who embody a code, that few, if any, colleges could live up to.”

Wins commended the class for what they have accomplished. “You are one of the few classes at VMI to endure the full effects of the global pandemic. I can say without a doubt, your class showed tremendous grit and resilience. You not only persevered to the end, but you did it with character. Remember this lesson because it will apply to many future challenges you will face. You have a



Virginia Townsend '24 gives her valedictory address in Cameron Hall May 16. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

foundation built on honor, resilience, dependability, and sacrifice. You know that leadership is not easy, but I challenge you to serve the people around you. Take these lessons and become leaders in your family, your community, the commonwealth, and the nation.”

### Valedictorian Talks of Friendships

Wins then introduced Virginia G. Townsend '24, peer-elected valedictorian of the Class of 2024, who also cited the additional burdens

placed upon her class their rat year because of the pandemic, but saw it as a blessing. “It was those difficult times that allowed us to grow closer with each other. The hallmark of any VMI class is the close bond forged between brother rats, but for our class it is even more so the case.”

Townsend shared with her audience that she thought she knew the definition of friendship in high school, but learned from her parents that a friend is someone who would lay down their life for you, someone who would drop everything to put your best interest above their own, and someone for whom you would do the same. “It wasn’t until coming here that I realized how right they were. Never before in my life have I had the privilege and the blessing to be surrounded by so many friends. We helped each other grow in maturity, grace, and confidence. We slowly but surely changed from a loosely connected group of individuals into the class of strong men and women,” she said.

Townsend conceded that the future may be uncertain, but encouraged her peers to never lose faith, and shared a favorite story from Holocaust survivor and Christian writer, the late Corrie ten Boom to illustrate her point. ten Boom used a small tapestry as an object lesson during public speaking appearances. “Our lives are like watching a tapestry being made from the back side. You get occasional glimpses of what the front might look like, but mostly it just seems like a colorful mess of knots and tangled threads. It’s not until the weaver is finished that you can turn it over and look at the front to see the amazing and intricate pattern that was being made there

*Continued on next page*



all along.' As we step out into the world beyond, let us not lose sight of the lessons that VMI has taught us. Let us live each day with purpose and gratitude, for we never know if it may be our last. Let us bring a strong sense of morality and truth to those around us." Townsend concluded her time with a blessing from the Bible passage, Numbers 6:24-26.

President of the Class of 2024, Cole Cathcart '24, shared farewell remarks to his brother rats by telling them to keep in mind the phrase, "look up." "When wrestling with life's challenges, look up at the sky, the clouds, and the mountains. God Almighty created the wonderful world around us, and his plans for us are so much larger than the trivial trials we experience. Look up to those who have helped you along the way: parents, professors, coaches, faculty, staff, roommates, and dykes. While we say goodbye to each other today, we have technology to keep us together. When an old roommate or someone you shared a class with crosses your mind in a few years, look them up, call them, or send them a text or email. Let them know you're thinking about them."

## McCarthy Offers Hope

Cathcart then introduced guest speaker, Ryan D. McCarthy '96, 24<sup>th</sup> secretary of the U.S. Army, who graduated from VMI with a degree in history. McCarthy shared with his audience that despite his success in the military, government, and private sector, he was far from being a model cadet. "I was undisciplined and did not like following the rules. As a result, I spent a lot of time marching alone in the courtyard, in endless confinement, even cleaning latrines. No one would have predicted I would ever graduate, much less lead Airborne Ranger platoons into combat, or serve at the highest levels of industry and government. It got so bad, that after two years I was invited to leave," he confessed to gales of laughter.

After time spent at home in Chicago, and having a heart-to-heart discussion with his parents, McCarthy was given permission to return to VMI, and improved his academic performance. When he received his diploma, he was the first member of his family to attain a college degree.

McCarthy encouraged the graduating class to listen to their mentors, and heed their wise words. Specifically he mentioned Brig. Gen. Mike Bissell '61, who was the commandant of cadets during McCarthy's first years at VMI and was

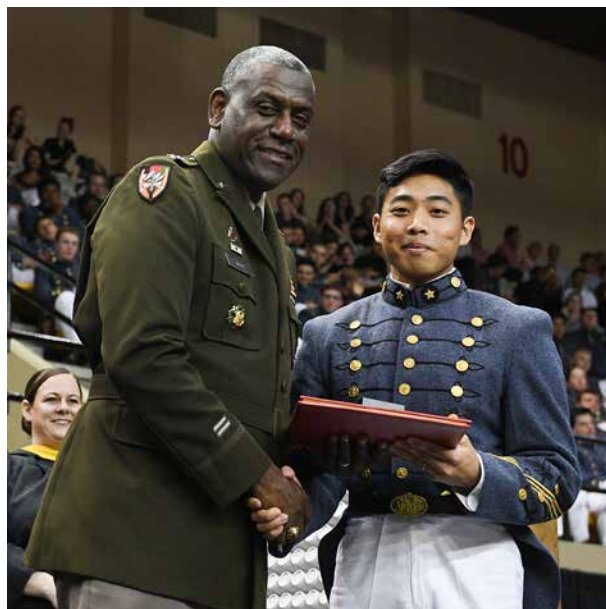


Ryan McCarthy '96 speaks to graduating cadets during commencement in Cameron Hall. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

instrumental in the logistics and changes needed to bring women to VMI. He advised the cadets to cherish their friendships made at VMI, and named several of his own brother rats who went on to lead successful lives including John Adams '96, VMI Board of Visitors president for the upcoming year, and Mark Townsend '96, an eminent cardiologist who sent all four of his children, including this year's valedictorian, to VMI. Sadly though, McCarthy also mentioned that a few of his classmates died prematurely. Fighting back tears he shared, "It is important to note that for my class, the wins and achievements have been accompanied by struggling grief.

Mental health issues claimed the lives of two of my classmates from suicide and alcohol abuse, a painful reminder to never stop looking out for one another for as long as you walk this earth." He further shared that another classmate was killed by a sniper in Iraq.

He concluded by telling the graduating class to consider what faces them around the world, particularly the emerging alliance of China and Russia. "With abundance of



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 awards Joshua Cheung '24 with the Second Jackson-Hope Medal. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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## Graduation Week

Graduation week events included a parade for the regimental change of command, commissioning, the Memorial Parade, and commencement. Nearly 350 cadets graduated in Cameron Hall with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 noting that the Class of 2024 matriculated and endured the entire Rat Line at the height of the coronavirus pandemic. —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Kelly Nye, Marianne Hause, and Laura Shapiro.

More photos from the week of events can be found here. [www.flickr.com/photos/vmiphotos/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vmiphotos/albums)





# 50 Years of the Institute Report: A Wrap Up

By Marianne Hause

The Institute Report officially turned 50 in December. To celebrate the anniversary, milestones, unique news features, and Institute enhancements covered throughout the five decades have been highlighted in each issue during the 2023–24 academic year. This wrap-up story highlights miscellaneous topics from the last 50 years.

For history buffs who want to test their memories, trivia questions follow the article. Answers are found on the inside back cover.

1974—Due to the fuel shortage, only one-third of the Corps of Cadets traveled to Richmond to march in the inaugural parade of Gov. Mills E. Godwin Jr. The Corps was represented by the 100-man Regimental Band, regimental color bearers, the first battalion staff, and three (B, C and E) 100-man companies, selected as a result of their standings in the Institute's Garnett Andrews Cup award competition.

Maj. Carol Hyde, at age 27, was the first woman at VMI to receive a full-time appointment to the faculty and to teach in uniform.

1975—The Virginia Energy Office announced that VMI ranked third in terms of energy conservation based on data collected by the Division of Engineering and Buildings, a preliminary survey of State College Energy Conservation Program.

William Ruley, grounds foreman, retired after 45 years in the Institute's buildings and grounds department. He was



One-third of the Corps of Cadets march in the inaugural parade of Gov. Mills E. Godwin Jr.—  
*Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.*

presented with a 45-year gold service pin set with a diamond and a VMI rocking chair in appreciation for his long years of service.

A nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer, an instrument used for determining the structure of organic molecules, was purchased by the chemistry department with funds provided by an National Science Foundation grant and the VMI Foundation, Inc.

1976—The British Army Polo Club visited VMI during its U.S.

fall tour. Four British Army horsemen competed in a match with the Farmington Polo Club of Charlottesville on the VMI Parade Ground. The match was designated a "Bicentennial

*Continued on next page*



Maj. Carol Hyde joins her male colleagues as the first uniformed female faculty member at VMI.—*Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.*



Event” by the Rockbridge Community Bicentennial Commission and was jointly sponsored by the W&L Polo Club and the Lexington Branch of the English Speaking Union.

Two employees, both lifelong members of the Lexington community, retired after more than 61 years of combined service. Bessie Nicholas was employed for over 28 years as a cook and as a custodial supervisor. M. Leroy Richardson was employed for over 32 years first as a custodian, then later in charge of maintenance in Mallory Hall.

1979—Buick Motors donated a turbocharged V6 engine to the mechanical engineering department for laboratory use by cadets. The engine, which replaced the V8 engine, was considered the engine of the future and had the EPA criteria of the six cylinder engine, but with V8 performance. It was shorter, lighter, and more powerful than the V8.

1980—“General George Washington Kneeling in Prayer,” a 24-inch bronze statue by renowned sculptor Donald H. DeLue was presented to VMI by George P. Frazer '29 in memory of Sir Moses Ezekiel, VMI Class of 1866. Several descendants of Ezekiel were in attendance at the presentation ceremony.

1981—Biology professors, Col. Oscar Gupton and Col. Fred Swope co-authored a nature reference book titled, “Trees and Shrubs in Virginia.” The two put together descriptions and full color photographs of 100 species representing 77 genera and 40 families. It was a companion piece to their 1979 publication, “Wildflowers of the Shenandoah Valley and Blue Ridge Mountains.”

Lt. Gen. Richard L. Irby '39 received a complimentary letter signed by President Ronald Reagan on the occasion of his retirement as superintendent from the Institute.

1982—The chemistry department received an atomic absorption spectrophotometer from the Carter Machinery Company, Inc., of Salem. The instrument was used to analyze trace metals in a wide variety of sample types, including human body fluids.

1987—VMI was prominently featured in the Time-Life Books series on the American Civil War, “The Shenandoah in Flames, The Valley Campaign of 1864.”

Twenty cadets from the rugby club traveled to England where they played three matches during spring furlough. They were guests of the Royal Military College of Science (RMCS) at Shrivenham. The matches were played against the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, with



The Parade Ground temporarily serves as a polo ground in 1976, when the British Army Polo Club visited VMI. —Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

a regional select side of under 22-year-olds representing all of the south of England, and then against their hosts at RMCS.

1992—Dr. William W. Old III retired from full-time duties as the Institute’s physician after 29 years of service.

1998—David Burns '98 and Nathan Blackburn '98 were selected among 15,000 who auditioned for the seventh season of MTV’s “The Real World,” which took place in Seattle, Washington. MTV producers made several trips to VMI during

the casting process. The show’s premise was to bring together a group of strangers to live in the same house, so they were the first two cast members to know each other prior to shooting.

2014—The portrait of Sara Henderson Smith, wife of the first superintendent, Gen. Francis H. Smith, was restored to its original state and put on display in the VMI Museum.

2016—The oil painting, “Attack on the Huguenots” by former VMI professor of fine art William D. Washington, was donated to the Institute by Dr. Roy Steiman of Massachusetts. The piece is believed to be the largest work on canvas by the artist. With the addition of the donation, VMI possessed one of



The portrait of Sara Henderson Smith undergoes the restoration process.—VMI File Photo by Communications and Marketing.

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## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary *continued from page 13*

the largest Washington paintings collection in the country.

VMI was featured in the Historic Lexington Foundation's new book titled, "The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge." The book explored the architectural history of the Rockbridge area.

2019—Col. Jay Sullivan headed the construction of a 16-foot metal whale covered in chicken wire and filled with plastic, for the environmental advocacy group, Shenandoah Green, who used it to raise awareness on ocean pollution.

### Trivia Questions

1. What year was VMI declared a National Historic District and included on the National Register of Historic Places?
2. In 1975, the Summer Study Abroad program began with two cadets, John Verriker '76, and Frank Fountain '78. To where did they travel?
3. In 1977, the biology department received an Akashi electron microscope on loan from what national agency?
4. What year did the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles begin issuing VMI college plates?
5. Following the retirement of Dr. Old, what nickname did cadets give his replacement, Dr. Copeland?



Col. Jay Sullivan and Nathan Baier '23 weld the metal frame of the 16-foot whale, created to raise awareness of ocean pollution.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

## Apps for Hiking Trails *continued from page 7*

there are some limitations to the app including the fact that it currently only works on Apple devices. The team recommended that cadets next year write script for Android device compatibility, and work to make the app available on an app store.

Team Z, led by John Lightfoot IV '24 from Chesapeake, Virginia, focused on providing real-time updates on trail conditions, surface types, and obstacles to enhance the outdoor experience for all users. "The goal was to create a mobile app that enables users to easily document their experience on hiking trails, while capturing the necessary datapoints to be used later for analysis, then communicated to others. Users can report changes in surface type and level of firmness through a simple dropdown menu and mark obstacles by dropping location pins. Additionally, users can supplement their reports with images and detailed descriptions. The app has accurate real-time user location tracking," stated Lightfoot.

Kristie Yelinek, program manager for QL+, has enjoyed working with the cadets. "Many of the students put in an incredible number of hours into the project, which I think speaks to their dedication, commitment, and work ethic. All of that shows in the quality of the final products. We look forward to working with them on future projects that will benefit veterans and others who have served our country who have adaptive technology needs."

Jacob Tyree, training coordinator for MU, is also pleased with the cadets' work. "They did an excellent job. I grew up in Roanoke with

the Appalachian Trail being my backyard to explore and enjoy. I look forward to these apps being used to collect trail data and allow people with disabilities like me, the ability to better plan future outdoor adventures," he said. 🌲



Robert Moran '24 discusses his team's mobile device app.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

natural resources, advanced technology, and above all, resentments against the West and America's position as the world's leading power, both are looking to recover what they lost in territory and treasure. One by force, the other by intimidation, coercion, and lost glory. And while we cannot predict all the crises to arise, or the problems to solve, we know the leaders to solve them. They are in this auditorium."

McCarthy currently serves on the board of directors of CACI International and is an advisor to the U.S. Innovative Technology Fund. He is a member of the board of directors of the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation and is the vice chairman of the board of advisors of the University of Maryland Robert H. Smith School of Business. In 2019, McCarthy was inducted into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame.

## Awards Presented

Three awards are traditionally given at VMI's May commencement exercises. The First



Jacob Kleinschuster '24 receives the First Jackson-Hope Medal from Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Jackson-Hope Medal for highest attainment in scholarship, accompanied by the Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award, went to Jacob R. Kleinschuster '24, an economics and business major from Richmond, Virginia.

Receiving the Second Jackson-Hope Medal, for second highest attainment in scholarship, accompanied by the Colonel Sterling Murray Heflin 1916 Academic Proficiency Award, was Joshua D. Cheung '24, from Brookfield, Connecticut, who double majored in biology and English.

Townsend received the Society of the Cincinnati Medal, for efficiency of service and excellence of character, accompanied by the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards.

Commencement concluded with a benediction offered by Col. John P. Casper '04, chaplain, followed by Brian M. Pritchard '25, the new regimental commander, relieving the Class of 2024 of their duties as they cheered and tossed their gloves in the air. 🧤



Members of the Class of 2024 toss their gloves in the air at the conclusion of commencement.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



## Operation Enduring Warrior Fundraiser

Starting on the evening of April 21, John Gorski '26 set out to follow in the steps of several cadets before him: run around the Parade Ground for 24 hours straight as a fundraiser in support of Operation Enduring Warrior, a non-profit dedicated to helping wounded military and law enforcement veterans. Gorski completed 87 laps around the Parade Ground, which was just shy of 50 miles. At one point, up to 75 fellow cadets were running alongside him. More than \$7,100 was raised in support of Gorski.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



the VMI Delta Company commander. He is this year's recipient of the General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. Sixth Marine Division Award and the Chesty Puller Award, First Marine Division," shared Homiak.

Lt. Col. Cary Wilson, education officer of Air Force ROTC, cited two exceptional cadets entering the Air Force: Abigail Soyars '24, a modern languages and cultures major from Waynesboro, Virginia, and Jacob Johnston '24, a computer science major from Bristol, Virginia. "Soyars was the detachment's spring cadet wing commander. She led the 135-person wing through a challenging semester, and hosted a successful VMI Days, where 195 cadets from 11 colleges and universities received training to prepare them for their summer field training. She and her team exceeded the training objectives and ensured our AFROTC cadets were closer to receiving their commissions after their four years," said Wilson. Soyars is slated to be an intelligence officer and will attend training at Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas.

"Johnston has been a top performer in AFROTC and has led at various levels. He was a cadet squadron commander responsible for the training, mentoring and development of 50 cadets. He has excelled in his studies all four years while juggling AFROTC and NCAA athletics." He is this year's recipient of the Charles R. Martin '55 Award. After graduation, he reports to undergraduate pilot training at Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein, director of cadet activities and VMI liaison for the Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program (AUP), all the USCG cadets have done remarkably well this year. Hannah White '24, an international studies major from Point of Rocks, Maryland, and one of the original founding members of the AUP, was instrumental in the public relations for the group.

Slife holds a Bachelor of Science degree in aerospace engineering from Auburn University in Alabama, where



Col. Nichole Scott presents Abigail Soyars '24 with an award in Memorial Hall.—VMI Photo by Laura Shapiro.

he commissioned into the Air Force through the ROTC program. He has spent the bulk of his career in special operations aviation assignments, deploying extensively around the world. Additional degrees he holds include a Master of Aerospace Science, Aeronautics from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, and a Master of Administrative Science, Organizational Management from The George Washington University, in Washington, D.C. He is the recipient of multiple awards and decorations including the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Bronze Star Medal with oak leaf cluster, the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and the Combat Action Medal. He was named Air Force Special Operations Command Pilot of the Year in 1998, and Major General John R. Alison Special Operations Educator of the Year in 2008. 🌟



Hannah White '24 commissions into the U.S. Coast Guard and receives her rank from her parents in Memorial Garden May 15.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

# Alumnus Named New Athletic Director

By VMI Athletics Staff

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, named Jamaal Walton '07 as VMI's next director of intercollegiate athletics. A decorated graduate of the Institute, Walton assumed the role in early June.

"Jamaal Walton brings a wealth of experience to the athletic director position, and as a VMI alumnus, provides a unique perspective. He is not just passionate about VMI athletics, but is passionate about the VMI experience," said Wins.

"Jamaal clearly demonstrated a solid understanding of the changing NCAA landscape that will help VMI Athletics compete to win soon and for the foreseeable future."

Walton succeeds Jim Miller, who announced his retirement in January. Miller came to VMI as the interim director in October 2021 before assuming the permanent tag on July 1, 2022.

Walton returns to post after serving as the University of Washington's senior associate athletic director for strategic initiatives since July 2021. In that role, Walton was a key member of the Athletic Director's Senior Leadership team, oversaw various sports, ensured NCAA compliance, and assisted with the donor engagement efforts of Washington's Tyee Club.

Walton's fiscal oversight at Washington included programs such as men's basketball and baseball, the athletics partnership with Adidas, its equipment department and the Husky Band and Spirit programs, among others.

Walton began his athletics administration career at Savannah State, before stops at Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Alabama, where he was involved with each respective institution's athletic marketing initiatives. Walton then worked at the College of Charleston from 2017 to



Jamaal Walton '07

2021, where he assumed the role of associate athletic director for external operations.

As a cadet, he was class president, and earned the General George C. Marshall Citizen-Soldier Award, the Lemuel Mackennie Long Jarman Award. He was also a four-year letterwinner and captain of the VMI football team.

Walton and his wife, Marci, have two children: daughter, Zadie, and son, Krew.

"I would like to thank General Wins and the search committee for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading Keydet athletics," Walton said. "This is a dream come true, and I'm humbled and thrilled to serve my alma mater as the next director of athletics. VMI changed my life, and my goal is to help serve and inspire future VMI graduates to be citizen-soldiers who embody the VMI spirit. The VMI family is special, and Marci and I cannot think of a better place to raise our family. Rah Va Mil!" ❄



Jamaal Walton '07 stands on the Parade Ground as a cadet in 2005.—VMI File Photo by Communications and Marketing.

## 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Gift From Class of 1974

The Class of 1974 presented its 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion gift of \$8,891,974 to the Institute during the reunion parade April 27. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, and David Prasnicki, VMI Alumni Agencies chief executive officer, accept the check from Chip Beaman '74, class president; Lane Toomey '74, Campaign Committee chair; Gary Trinkle '74, Attendance Committee chair; and Snookie Parker '74, Reunion Committee chair and class agent. Joshua Vissicchio '25, also in attendance at the parade, is the recipient of the Class of 1974 Scholarship.—Photo courtesy of VMI Alumni Agencies.





# VMI Bestows Highest Honor to Minor

By Marianne Hause

The late G. Gilmer “Gil” Minor III ’63, was awarded posthumously, the New Market Medal, VMI’s highest honor, during the annual Memorial Parade May 15. The Board of Visitors (BOV) established the New Market Medal to recognize exceptional individuals who have demonstrated in their lives the qualities of duty, honor, devotion, and leadership which carried forward the VMI Corps of Cadets at the Battle of New Market May 15, 1864. Minor is only the 17<sup>th</sup> recipient of the award since its introduction in 1962. His widow, Charlotte, daughter, Cameron, and son, Gilmer Minor IV ’93, were present to accept the honor on his behalf.

Under a under a cloudy sky, the Memorial Parade commemorated the bravery and sacrifice of all alumni who died on the field of honor. Reading all 591 names were Emma Cameron ’25, Angelina Garcia ’25, John Kennedy ’25, and Thomas Reagan ’25. A wreath was laid at the foot of the monument, “Virginia Mourning Her Dead,” as well as at the three barracks arches, followed by the firing of a



Tom Watjen '76 and Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 present G. Gilmer Minor IV '93 with the New Market Medal awarded to his father posthumously.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

three-volley salute. A stirring echo rendition of “Taps” was played, followed by the Pipe Band leading the Regimental Band in an emotional delivery of “Amazing Grace.”



The Minor family takes review of the Memorial Parade with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, Tom Watjen '76, and Col. Adrian T. Bogart III '81.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

In an emotional, sometimes tearful message during the parade, Minor IV addressed the BOV, his fellow alumni, friends, guests, and the Corps of Cadets. “I never could have imagined I would be here speaking on behalf of a man who so graciously dedicated much of his life, time, and energy to supporting and upholding the long standing traditions and values of VMI. I’m able to reflect on the spirit that he exuded, the pride he had, and the memory and sheer joy my father felt being with and part of this community. My father lived his values of honor, duty, service, loyalty, integrity, and community. This honor today is about my father’s commitment and loyalty to VMI, and also what VMI gave him that enabled him to be the man he was. Were he here today giving these remarks himself,

*Continued on next page*

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he wouldn't speak of any of his accomplishments or contributions. He would simply say it was his duty and responsibility as a citizen-soldier. I can say without hesitation, that while he was recognized and honored for so many things throughout his life, this is the honor that would have meant the most," he said.

Minor, who passed away last May, graduated from VMI with a degree in history and received an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business. He served a term on the Keydet Club's Board of Governors, was a member of the VMI Foundation's Board of Trustees from 1993 to 2000 and served as its president from 1997 to 2000. In 2000, he became a member of the Board of Visitors and, from 2005 through 2008, served as president. He was a recipient of the VMI Distinguished Service Award in 2008. He also received the Spirit of VMI Award, the VMI Keydet Club's highest honor recognizing outstanding support of VMI's intercollegiate athletic programs. He was inducted as a member of the VMI Sports Hall of Fame in 2011.

During an interview in 2014 with Amy Goetz, chief communications officer for VMI Alumni Agencies, Minor became emotional as he reflected on his time as a cadet, and all he experienced and learned at VMI. He described what he referred to as a "toolkit" of skills and abilities available to all cadets and alumni throughout their lives: the skills to make good decisions, recover after failure, and the ability to meet the next challenge. "The toolkit starts with integrity, and living a life that is completely encapsulated with honor and integrity, and being able to put your head on the pillow every night and go to sleep, and know that you've done the right thing. VMI also teaches you time management, because you never have time at VMI to do everything, but you have to make choices and priorities. VMI teaches you to not give up. You're going to falter, you're going to fail, but get up and keep moving forward," Minor



During a luncheon May 15, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 presents the Minor family with a framed photo collage of G. Gilmer "Gil" Minor III '63 from his cadetship through his years of support of VMI. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

said. He went on to share that he considered it an investment each time he made donations to VMI. "I want to keep a good thing going. Whether its \$10, or \$100, or \$500, every investment means giving up something as an individual, but investing in something that lasts forever."

Minor was a leader in Virginia business. He joined the family business, Owens & Minor, a health care distribution and logistics company, in 1963 and served in numerous sales, management, and operations roles before becoming its president in 1981, its chief executive officer in 1984, and in May 1994, chairman. Minor was active in many civic, charitable, and industry organizations including the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Virginia Health Care Foundation, the University of Virginia's School of Nursing, Virginia Commonwealth University's Massey Cancer Center, VCU's School of Business Foundation, Virginia Business Higher Education Council, and Virginia Business Council.

The Minor family joined Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent; Mr. Tom Watjen, BOV president; and Col. Adrian T. Bogart III '81, commandant, in taking review of the parade as the Corps marched from the Parade Ground down Letcher Avenue toward barracks. 🇺🇸

## Trivia Answers from Page 14

1. 1974
2. Athens, Greece
3. NASA
4. 1989
5. Dr. New



Past issues of the Institute Report can be found in the digital VMI Archives.





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## Biology Societies Share Research

By Marianne Hause

The Department of Biology hosted a joint meeting of the Helminthological Society of Washington and the Southeastern Society of Parasitologists in April. Over 100 biologists met in Marshall Hall.

According to Col. Ashleigh Smythe, professor of biology at VMI, the meeting brought together undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and other researchers from seven states who presented and discussed their research on parasites. “Dr. Holly

Gaff, professor and chair of biological sciences at Old Dominion University, opened the conference with the keynote address. The next two days were filled with presentations on a variety of parasites, such as nematodes, trematodes, tapeworms, ticks, and lice. Researchers discussed parasites in a vast diversity of hosts, including oysters, sharks, bats, otters, and turkeys,” said Smythe.

Jenna Kirkland ’24 and Katherine Orndorff ’24, who both graduated in May with degrees in biology, gave presentations on

the research they conducted with Smythe on beetle attraction to tapeworm-infected rat feces. Kirkland found the meeting an excellent opportunity for a young biologist. “Presenting research allowed me to showcase my work and get feedback from other students, professors, and scientists. Other research projects opened my eyes to topics in ecological dynamics, a subject I am interested in,” she said.

Orndorff won the best student presentation award from the Helminthological Society of Washington.

The conference concluded with dinner and square dancing. 🌿



Jenna Kirkland ’24 presents research on beetle attraction to tapeworm-infected rat feces in Gillis Theater in April.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Katherine Orndorff ’24 speaks at the podium in Gillis Theater during a multi-society meeting hosted by the Department of Biology.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.