

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA 24450-0304

Board of Visitors Executive Committee Meeting July 13, 2023

A meeting of the VMI Board of Visitors Executive Committee was held in Lexington, Virginia on July 13, 2023, pursuant to public notice.

Members present:

Thomas R. Watjen '76, president
Hugh M. Fain '80
Thomas E. Gottwald '83

Members participating remotely:

Gussie Lord '01 (from Michigan)

Members excused:

Lt. Gen. (ret.) Charles E. Dominy (medical)

Others present:

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85
Patrick O'Leary '90
Col. Tom Timmes '92
Col. John Young
Col. Bill Wyatt
Andrew Deal '12
Amy Goetz
Jackie Hart
Cory Hart
Nancy Harvey
Doug Harwood
Thierry Lemercier '98
David Prasnicki
Lisa Rowan

1. Tom Watjen called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Board members Fain and Gottwald joined Watjen in Lexington. Board member Gussie Lord joined virtually from Colorado in accordance with the VMI Board of Visitor Bylaws. Mr. Watjen disclosed that Lt. Gen. Dominy's absence is excused due to medical reasons.
2. Mr. Watjen provided welcoming remarks and an overview of the agenda. He stated he continues to improve board communications and has instructed the acting board secretary to create a board portal for the exchange of information. Watjen said he has been working on committee assignments for new members of the Board of Visitors and has instructed the chairs of the Academic Affairs Committee, Audit, Finance and Planning Committee, and the Inclusive Excellence Committee to schedule meetings prior to the beginning of the academic year. Finally, Watjen thanked the VMI Alumni Association for hosting a virtual town hall with the



superintendent and dean last month.

3. Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins '85, VMI superintendent, provided an update to the executive committee on a number of topics:
 - a. Summer Session I is complete. Summer Session II and the Summer Transition Program are underway. 179 students including most incoming new football players are participating in STP. New head football coach, Danny Rocco, is very supportive of the Summer Transition Program and wanted his players to take full advantage of the program.
 - b. Current full and partial reservations for Matriculation Day total 515. The admissions team is working to stave off any “summer melt” prior to matriculation. The number of new cadets expected on Matriculation Day is projected to be between 500 – 505. The goal set for this year was 450.
 - c. VMI just acquired a list of 105,000 high school freshman – senior JROTC cadets that will be used for new cadet recruiting. VMI is the only school with access to this list.
 - d. Financial aid strategies, in partnership with the VMI Alumni Agencies, have aided our success recruiting new cadets this year.
 - e. Commandant has been working on cadre procedures for the upcoming Rat Line. First class is finishing work on the Rat Bible. The commandant is working to codify some of the “professionalization” strategies that were implemented for the Rat Line last year.
 - f. The administration is working on policies and procedures to accommodate transgender cadets on post. VMI already has policies that cover discrimination and harassment (GO 13 and 16). Procedures for housing, physical standard, uniforms, etc. are in development.
 - g. VMI budget situation is more favorable than when the Board of Visitors met in April. Administrators made a series of cuts while the anticipated admissions numbers also help. VMI is much closer to a balanced budget.
 - h. VMI has received a grant from the commonwealth to increase the number of Pell Grant-eligible cadets.
 - i. SACSCOC interim report was submitted last year. The report has been evaluated and VMI recently learned of two minor, administrative issues that required correction.
 - j. VMI will not meet its small, woman-owned, and minority-owned business (SWaM) goal of 42% of total expenditures this year. This is because VMI does not have any major capital projects. Expenditures related to the Nichols Engineering Building project next year will bring VMI back into compliance. There is no penalty for not meeting the agencies’ goal.
 - k. The team is currently working on the strategic plan. The plan will seek to make VMI a first-choice destination for cadets, faculty, and staff, develop a leadership education model for the nation, teach students to think critically and ethically, and mentor and graduate honorable young men and women who want to serve the commonwealth and nation. Five initiatives of the strategic plan include 1.) academic excellence, 2.) leadership development,



- 3.) esprit de corps, 4.) recruiting top cadets and enriching success, and 5.) improved facilities.
4. Patrick O’Leary, assistant attorney general and VMI legal counsel, briefed the executive committee on the recent Supreme Court decision in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*. The case effectively bans the use of race as a factor in college admissions. Maj. Gen. Wins said VMI has never used race as part of its admissions decisions and will not be able to see an applicant’s race or ethnicity via the CommonApp until an appointment decision is made. Mr. Gottwald reminded the group that the Board of Visitors needs to approve admissions standards.
 5. Mr. Gottwald raised concerns about the administration’s continued conflict with *The Cadet* newspaper. Five news articles have been written regarding a challenge to the Virginia Press Association’s awards given to *The Cadet*. Mr. Watjen suggested a conversation be had to better understand the administration’s involvement with the news articles.
 6. Mr. Watjen made a motion, that was seconded by Mr. Fain to enter closed session. The motion passed unanimously, and the executive committee entered closed session at 3:20 p.m. to discuss:
 - a. Matters related to the employment, assignment, appointment, or performance of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the public body, and evaluation of performance of departments or schools of public institutions of higher education pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711 (A.) (1.) relating to review of the superintendent’s performance objectives.
 - b. Consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711 (A.) (8.).
 7. The executive committee returned to open session at 4:40 p.m. Mr. Watjen made a motion seconded by Mr. Gottwald to certify the closed session. The motion passed unanimously. Each executive committee member was then asked, via roll call, to certify that only matters lawfully exempted from public disclosure and only those matters identified in the closed session motion were discussed in closed session. Board members Fain, Gottwald, Lord, and Watjen all voted yes, thereby certifying the closed session.
 8. Mr. Watjen mentioned the board will have a future discussion about Sir Ezekiel Moses’ Confederate Memorial currently located at Arlington National Cemetery.
 9. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

