



# INSTITUTE REPORT

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

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## 'Challenge Yourself Personally and Professionally' Nearly 350 Cadets Graduate in Outdoor Ceremony

By Mary Price

Gen. Gustave "Gus" Perna, a U.S. Army four-star general who served as chief operating officer for Operation Warp Speed, a public-private partnership to facilitate and accelerate the development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations,

offered life lessons for graduating cadets in commencement exercises held Sunday, May 16, in Foster Stadium.

Just under 350 cadets received degrees in VMI's first in-person graduation ceremony since December 2019. While

graduation on the Parade Ground was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this year's event was VMI's first outdoor graduation in decades. A sprinkling rain fell

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A socially distanced crowd attends the commencement ceremony in Foster Stadium May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

## Love Named Chief Diversity Officer at VMI

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

After nearly two decades of experience in student engagement, behavioral intervention, and accountability in higher education, Dr. Jamica N. Love has been named the chief diversity officer at VMI.

She was chosen from a competitive pool of candidates in a national hiring search. The decision to create a permanent chief diversity officer position was made by the VMI Board of Visitors in late October 2020. Following that decision, a search committee

was created with representatives from Institute leadership and the Board of Visitors, along with faculty and staff from a wide variety of areas across post.

"She stood out and will be the right person at the right time," said Michael Hamlar, a member of the VMI Board of Visitors and also a member of the search committee. "It's an honor to

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# Recent Graduate to Teach in France

By Mary Price

“It’s been quite a journey, but I’m very happy with where I am now. I never imagined these kinds of opportunities when I was coming in.”

That’s what Noah Lawing ’21 had to say about the course of his cadetship, which has involved a change of major, a change of heart about commissioning, and now, an accepted invitation to participate in the Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF). This program, which is sponsored by the French government, recruits approximately 1,500 American citizens and permanent residents each year to teach English in French public schools, not only in France itself but also in French-speaking countries.

For Lawing, who matriculated as a chemistry major, teaching overseas was the farthest possibility from his mind during his rat year. He’d had four years of French in high school, but he didn’t sign up for language classes immediately upon matriculation. He’d planned to commission in the Navy and thought that a STEM major would make him more appealing to that branch of the service.

By the end of the first semester of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Class year, though, Lawing could see that his plan wasn’t working. His grades were low, and the Navy didn’t seem as appealing. He then switched his major to modern languages and cultures (French) and tested his way to placement in a 300-level class.

Right away, Lawing felt at home in the department, and he quickly developed a rapport with Lt. Col. Jeff Kendrick and Lt. Col. Abbey Carrico, both associate professors of modern languages and cultures.

“They both care so much about education and about their students,” said Lawing. “They’re the best professors that I could have asked for.”

The professors, meanwhile, return the admiration. For Kendrick, there’s enjoyment in having an independent learner such as Lawing in his classes.

“It’s a lot of fun to teach a student like that because they’re always challenging you,” he said.

“His French is already at a very good level,” said Carrico. “This [experience] will help build his confidence speaking it.”

In the spring of 2020, Lawing studied abroad in Aix-en-Provence, an ancient city in southern France. “It was the time of my life,” he recalled, with fellow students from around the world and plenty

of time to explore a new country. Sadly, the coronavirus pandemic brought his study abroad experience to an early halt, as it did for thousands of students around the globe.

Less than a year later, Lawing found himself applying to TAPIF. He’d learned about the program from Carrico, who participated in the program herself as a graduate student in 2009, working with elementary schoolers at three schools south of Paris.

“This program usually attracts French majors from colleges,” she noted.

“It’s often people who want to work on their French, have a cross-cultural exchange, and also want to see, ‘Hey, is teaching for me?’”

That’s exactly the appeal for Lawing, who is now leaning toward graduate study and possibly earning a doctorate in French.

“I think the main reason I wanted to do this program is so I can get some experience teaching before I decide if I want to go to graduate school,” he stated.

Lawing has yet to receive his official school assignment, but he’s requested to

be placed in a small to medium-sized city near Toulouse, which is in the southern part of France north of Spain. It’s a city he visited while he was in France last year, and one that he remembers fondly.

Another attraction is the traditional language of the region, Occitan, which is a Romance language that’s considered endangered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Red Book of Endangered Languages.

“I’m just fascinated by it. I like old languages,” said Lawing, who added that he might study Occitan in graduate school.

Lawing has learned a few things about studying a language—among them, that just going to class and doing the assigned work aren’t enough if one wants to become truly proficient.

“I’ve done a lot to immerse myself... in French, even before I went to France,” he stated. In his spare time, Lawing likes to read books in French, and also watch French TV shows and movies. He’s also dipped his toes into teaching by facilitating the Miller Academic Center’s group study session for cadets in lower-level French courses.

Thinking over his cadetship, Lawing is surprised and pleased at the direction he’s taken, especially as he contemplates following his mentors into the teaching profession. “It’s not something I’d ever expected out of myself, but now I’m kind of thinking about it.” 🌟



Noah Lawing '21



The Institute Report, VMI's monthly newsletter, 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 [VMIReport@vmi.edu](mailto:VMIReport@vmi.edu). © 2021 Virginia Military Institute.

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**Header photo on page 1 by**  
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## Cadets Attend BEYA Conference

By Mary Price

Earlier this semester, 10 cadets attended the BEYA STEM conference, which was held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. BEYA, which stands for Black Engineer of the Year Award, is an organization dedicated to helping minorities pursue careers in the STEM fields. VMI has been sending cadets to the BEYA conference since 2014, with the goal of helping them find internships and employment opportunities.

"The cadets who attended BEYA virtually were able to go to talks from people in industry—technology, communications, computer science, health care, etc.—from large corporations including Amazon, Lockheed Martin, Walmart, Raytheon, etc.," said Col. Troy Siemers, professor of applied mathematics, who organized this year's cadet group.

Jordan Ward '21, a mechanical engineering major and a member of the Honor Court, attended the BEYA conference for three consecutive years, including this year. "I got my summer internship out of it [last year], and that was just from me showing up and presenting myself," said Ward, who plans to pursue graduate study after VMI. Ward's internship was with Raytheon Technologies in Northern Virginia. "It was a little different because of COVID—some days in the office, some days working from home—but I was still able to get a full experience out of it," he said.

Siemers noted that the cadets also showed up in numbers at the Stars & Stripes event, which spotlights high-ranking African-American officers in all branches of the military. Three years ago, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, was selected as the Army recipient of the Stars and Stripes Award at the BEYA STEM Conference. That same year, retired Air Force Col. Timothy K. Bridges '79 won the BEYA Career Achievement in Government Award.

"Cadets should attend [BEYA] primarily because this organization specializes in working with companies who are specifically recruiting STEM talent," said retired Army Maj. E. Sean Lanier '94, a member of the VMI Board of Visitors who has been involved with BEYA for many years. "The majority of these companies do not recruit on campus at VMI, so it's an opportunity for cadets to earn internships and post-graduation employment opportunities in cutting-edge companies."

In addition to Ward, cadets attending the BEYA STEM conference this year were Alan Wyche '21, Rafael Mas '22, Mariah Woods '22, Xavier Frederick '23, Solomon Harris '23, Dontray Brown '24, Brian Jackson '24, Martin Parnell '24 and Mark Shelton '24. 🇺🇸



### Retirement Parade

Col. Timothy Hodges '80, Col. D.T. "Todd" Smith '85, Gary Levenson '80, and Col. Craig Streeter '91 take review of the Corps of Cadets with VMI superintendent Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85. The retirees were honored at a retirement parade on April 16 for their many years of service to the Institute.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

# ROTC Commissionees Stress Challenges, Growth

By Mary Price

Under blue skies in Foster Stadium, more than 180 young men and women, most of them VMI cadets, commissioned into the armed services May 15 in the annual ROTC Joint Commissioning Ceremony. The ceremony was also livestreamed for family and friends who could not attend the event in person.

Every commissionee has a story and a unique path. Many have dreamed of military service since childhood, but some discovered that calling later in life. What unites them is a desire to serve and give back.

Air Force 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Will Nicholson '21 followed his brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Tom Nicholson '19, to VMI. "Seeing him come home—he stood up a little taller, talked a little bit different, a little bit more spring in his step—it did a lot of good for him," said Nicholson. "He spoke very highly of it, so I decided to follow him here."

Like his brother, the younger Nicholson knew he wanted a military career—ideally, one modeled on that of their father, who served in the U.S. Air Force for 27 years.

When he was very young, Will Nicholson had thought of becoming an Army Ranger like his grandfather. Then one day his father took him to an air show. "It just puts that rumble in your chest, and it just kind of stays there," recalled Nicholson, who earned his private pilot's license when he was a sophomore in high school.

Now, he's graduated with a major in electrical and computer engineering and commissioned into the Air Force, where he's secured a pilot slot. The next step will be pilot training at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas, where he'll take part in the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training program.

Nicholson said he's looking forward to many things about being in the service, among them the sense of community and the chance to travel. Plus, doing something he already loves to do will be an essential part of the job.

"There's very few jobs that let you fly for free," he said.

Over the course of his cadetship, Nicholson was involved with many activities, among them Rat Challenge, the Cadet Superintendent's Advisory Board, and the Cadet Investment

Group. This year, he served as president of the Officer of the Guard Association, an organization dedicated to resolving disputes among cadets and enforcing VMI's anti-hazing policies. It's a big job any year, but an especially big one this year as cadets spent more time in their rooms due to COVID-19.

"It's been a lot of personnel management and learning how to keep a team motivated, especially for a whole year of lockdown."

In contrast, Air Force 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Jackson Jennings '21 didn't know VMI existed until he was a junior in high school. What's more, the branch of the service he'll eventually join, the U.S. Space Force, didn't exist until December 2019, when Jennings was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class cadet.

Originally, Jennings wanted to follow his father into the U.S. Air Force, and he'd hoped to become a pilot. When that didn't work out, he applied for the Space Force instead.

Jennings said he was "pretty surprised" when news of his acceptance came through. "I'm happy it all worked out like this," the electrical and computer engineering major commented.

His first assignment will be in Los Angeles, working on space and missile system development.

"I'll be working hand-in-hand with people at SpaceX and people at NASA," he stated. "They'll be working on projects, and I'll be communicating with them."

It's also a field in which the next big challenge is very likely extraterrestrial.

"It's so unknown the opportunities that are going to come up in the next 10, 20 years. ... With SpaceX ramping up their spaceships going into space, and all of these other companies coming in, it's only a matter of time before we go to Mars, start going to the moon again," said Jennings.

But achievements like that won't come without setback after setback, perhaps with a dose of catastrophic failure along the way. Luckily, VMI has taught Jennings a valuable lesson in how to react when things don't go as planned.



Lt. Gen. Leslie C. Smith administers the U.S. Army oath to cadets during a joint commissioning ceremony in Foster Stadium May 15.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



“My big takeaway from VMI was that life’s going to suck,” he stated. “It’s going to throw you under the bus. ... And I’ve learned there’s two options: quit or go to work. If you go to work, once you’ve faced that adversity, you’re ready for the next one, and the next one. Soon, adversity is like second nature to you. It doesn’t even faze you.”

Austerity and the challenges of adversity also attracted Marine Corps 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Vincenzo Ferrari to VMI. He visited the Institute as a high schooler, and right away, he knew VMI was his top choice.

“It’s the austere conditions,” he commented. “They’re not trying to tell you you’ll be all right here. They’re telling you need to be ready when you show up.”

Because he’d enjoyed physics in high school, Ferrari chose to major in that subject at VMI.

“Physics allowed me the option to take the classes that I wanted because there were so many free and technical electives that I could take,” he stated. “I’ve taken classes in almost every department that VMI has because the physics department really allows us to broaden the scope as we please.”

Over the course of his cadetship, Ferrari has taken classes in computer science, psychology, and applied math, among others.

As a result, Ferrari has found a career path that he might have otherwise not taken. After completing the Basic School, which all newly commissioned Marine Corps officers must attend, he will serve as a cyberspace officer.

“The Marine Corps sends their cyber officers to the Army’s Cyber [Basic Officer Leadership Course], so I’ll be with all of the Army guys down in Fort Gordon, Georgia,” he explained.



Second Lt. Jackson Jennings '21 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Marilyn Cardenas-Paredes '21 congratulate each other after joining the U.S. Space Force.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Away from academics, Ferrari has been heavily involved with supporting cadets in their spiritual lives. This year, he’s served as president of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and been a cadet chaplain.

While cadet chaplains support their fellow cadets year-round, Ferrari found that his assistance was needed most during Matriculation Week.

“It’s a lot of support,” he explained. “People are getting into situations they’ve never been in their whole lives, and they don’t necessarily know how to handle that. It just boils down to caring

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Maj. Gen. David J. Furness '87, Rear Adm. Michael Steffen, and Maj. Gen. John D. Caine '90 address cadets in Foster Stadium May 15.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

about people and empathizing with their situation.”

That people-first emphasis is something Ferrari will carry with him once he begins his military career.

“Life is about people, and the most important thing in the Marine Corps is its people,” he stated.

Like Ferrari, Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ryan Cahill '21 looked at other schools, but realized quickly that VMI was the best fit for him.

“When I came for an overnight, the cadets were personable,” he said. “You could talk to them. The people here actually cared.”

Coming from a family with a long tradition of military service, including his father’s time in the Army, Cahill also knew right away that he wanted a military career. During his cadetship, he’s participated in Ranger Challenge, and this year, he’s been the command sergeant major for Army ROTC.

“I worked with the cadet battalion commanders, just to make sure we’re fulfilling the commander’s intent, like what Col. Brannon wants us to do for PT, for control time,” Cahill explained.

Cahill has also held rank within the Corps, serving as 1<sup>st</sup> platoon guide sergeant for Company F his 2<sup>nd</sup> Class year and as 1<sup>st</sup> platoon leader this year.

A computer science major, Cahill will commission into the infantry. He’s looking forward to spending time in the field guiding soldiers.

“To be honest, I don’t want to sit behind a desk,” he stated. “The major I chose is a lot of sitting around at a computer, but I’m a very hands-on type person.”

As he enters the service, Cahill is looking forward to giving back by mentoring others, just as he was mentored at VMI.

“I’m looking forward to being able to lead soldiers and have an influence on their life goals, being able to guide them toward whatever path they want to go down,” he stated.

“Even if it’s only one or two people that I can have an impact on, I would be happy with that.”

Unlike most of his brother rats, Navy Ensign Dane Chandler '21 came to post as a toddler.

“I was 2 when my mom was in law school [at Washington and Lee University], so she’d take me to the parades and stuff like that,” said Chandler, a biology major. “There are pictures



Second Lt. Vincenzo Ferrari '21 poses with his family after commissioning into the U.S. Marine Corps.—VMI  
Photo by Mary Price.

of me from all over Lexington.”

As he grew up in Roanoke, Chandler felt the pull of a military career. “I wanted to have experiences in life that you don’t necessarily get anyplace else, and the military is a good way to do that. I like the water, so the Navy seemed like the best fit for me.”

During his cadetship, Chandler sought experiences that would help him develop as a leader. He was a member of cadre for three years, and he held positions of increasing respon-

sibility in Company E, culminating this year as executive officer. He followed the same path in Naval ROTC, where he served this year as battalion executive officer.

Thanks to these experiences, Chandler has picked up a life lesson. “If something doesn’t challenge you, it doesn’t change you,” he stated. “There’s a lot of pressure on you to perform [at VMI]. If you can rise to those expectations, it changes you.”

Chandler will serve as a surface warfare officer on the USS *Nitze*, an *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer based out of Norfolk, Virginia. 🌊



Ensign Dane Chandler '21 signs his paperwork to commission into the U.S. Navy.—VMI  
Photo by Mary Price.



## Army Jacket Goes to Third Generation

In many families, it's not unusual for jewelry or a wedding dress to be handed down from one generation to the next. But an Army dress blue uniform that's on its third generation of Army aviators? It's an incredible story that might not have happened had the coronavirus pandemic not intervened—and one that unfolded on post this spring after Lance von Rinteln '21 found himself in need of a uniform to wear for his Army ROTC commissioning ceremony May 15.

Along with thousands of other cadets nationwide commissioning this spring, von Rinteln ordered his uniform online earlier this year. He did so in January, thinking he had plenty of time, but then in March, he received an email saying that the factory was running well behind due to COVID-19.

At first, von Rinteln wasn't sure what to do, but then he remembered a gift his uncle, retired Maj. James "Jim" von Rinteln, had given him this time last year: an Army dress blue uniform. Jim von Rinteln, who served as an Army aviator during the post-Vietnam era and the first Gulf War, had received the uniform himself as a hand-me-down from his uncle, retired Col. Robert "Bob" St. Louis, when Jim von Rinteln graduated from the University of Maryland and commissioned through Georgetown University's ROTC program in 1979.

St. Louis, the original owner of the uniform, had purchased the dress blues upon his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy in 1956. Now 86 years old and living in McLean, Virginia, St. Louis was likewise an Army aviator who served two tours of duty in the Vietnam War. The family had hoped he'd be able to travel to post for Lance's commissioning as he did when Lance's first cousin, David "Drew" von Rinteln Jr. '18, commissioned into the Navy three years ago, but St. Louis was unable to attend the ceremony this time.

And while there are now three generations of St. Louis/von Rinteln Army aviators who've worn the dress

blues, there was a fourth whose service preceded the family uniform: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Benjamin Brew, half-brother to St. Louis, an Army Air Corps fighter pilot who was killed in action while fighting the Axis powers in Europe in World War II. In each case, an older Army officer has influenced a younger family member to aviation.

"It just worked out that this is one of the Class A uniforms that [Lance] can wear," said Jim von Rinteln of passing the uniform down to his nephew.

In many ways, it's the culmination of a long mentoring relationship, as Jim von Rinteln, who does not have children, has enjoyed watching Lance grow up, and the two have been able to stay in touch over the years since they live half an hour from one another in Florida.

"Uncle Jim has been a heavy influence on me to pursue aviation," said Lance von Rinteln, who's been planning a military career since

middle school and will report to Ft. Rucker, Alabama, for flight training in July. For Lance, it'll be the next step after a cadetship in which he completed a double major in international studies/modern languages and cultures (Spanish) and served as a platoon lieutenant with Delta Company his 1<sup>st</sup> Class year.

Getting the family uniform ready for commissioning involved James "Jim" Hudson, operations manager at the VMI military store, and the employees in the VMI tailor shop. With their expert assistance, Lance was able to get the jacket looking sharp, with only minor alterations needed. The pants, though, were slightly large on Lance, so he wore a new pair of pants for his commissioning ceremony.

Lance von Rinteln mentioned that staff in the military store and tailor shop noted the high quality of workmanship on the jacket. At first, they were a bit reluctant to alter the sleeves, for fearing of uncovering faded fabric, but were pleasantly surprised to see that the fabric underneath hadn't faded at all.

"They were really impressed because it's the company that used to make VMI's old uniforms, too," he stated. "They pressed it for me and tailored it. It was really nice of them."

Hudson, who has worked at the military store for 15 years, had never seen a jacket that old come through the door. "It's quite a unique item," he said. "It fits him very nice."

The uniform jacket, Jim von Rinteln noted, tells an Army story as well as a family story. Army aviation wasn't established as a separate branch until 1983, so both he and St. Louis commissioned into other branches.

"The sleeve colors have been changed three times," Jim von Rinteln stated.

St. Louis commissioned as a field artillery officer, so the jacket originally had a scarlet red stripe on the wrist. Jim von Rinteln was an armor officer before aviation became a branch halfway through his career, so the wrist stripe was cavalry

yellow for a time before being changed over to aviation blue.

As of early May, Jim von Rinteln was planning a trip from his Marco Island, Florida, home to Lexington. At the commissioning ceremony, he administered the individual oath of office to Lance, just as he had for Drew in 2018, while Lance's parents looked on. Drew von Rinteln, the only non-aviator in this story, who followed his grandfather into a Naval career, serves below sea level as a submarine warfare officer. He's currently stationed on the attack submarine USS *Charlotte*, based at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"It's very much an honor," said Jim von Rinteln of his family's legacy. "It's very touching. We're real proud of both Lance and Drew's accomplishments, and this year we're especially proud of Lance as he continues the Army aviation tradition."

— Mary Price



Second Lt. Lance von Rinteln '21 shakes hands with his uncle, retired Maj. Jim von Rinteln, after administering his Army oath May 15 in Marshall Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

throughout the ceremony, and umbrellas and rain-coats were common sights among families and friends in the stands.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, noted that 326 of the graduates were members of the Class of 2021 and just under 170 of them commissioned into the armed services May 15. This year's graduating cadets came from 30 states and two foreign countries, and the three most popular majors were civil engineering (43 cadets), economics and business (38), and international studies (37).

Wins used his time at the podium to reflect on the unusual events faced by the Class of 2021, which matriculated just before the solar eclipse in August 2017 and graduated as the threat of the coronavirus pandemic was receding. This academic year, cadets were challenged by having to attend some classes remotely, stay socially distanced in nearly all situations, and sometimes be confined entirely to post and/or go into isolation or quarantine as health conditions dictated.



Anna Armfield '21 returns to her seat after receiving her degree in Foster Stadium May 16.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Despite this, Wins said, the Class of 2021 not only succeeded in completing their own cadetships but also in running a professional Rat Line for the Class of 2024.

"VMI's history will record the events of your class as a tremendous success," said Wins. "You did not give up or compromise your honor or integrity. A crisis brought on by COVID-19 stared you down, but you

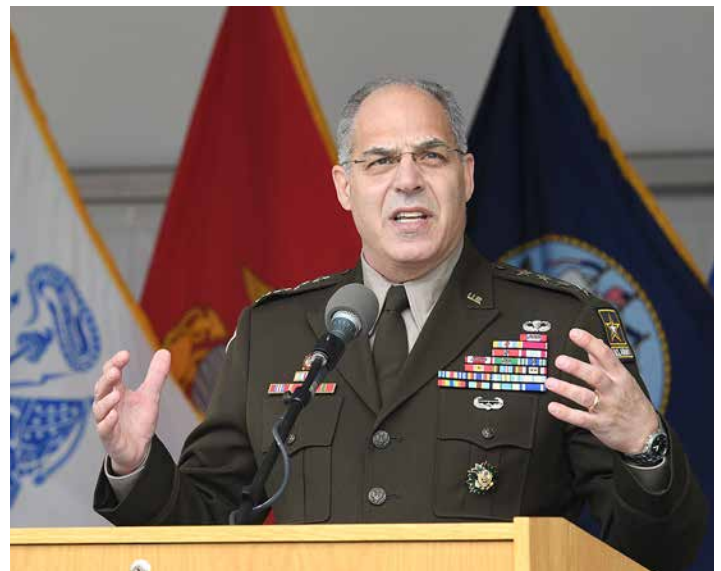
succeeded as citizen-soldiers, putting the safety of your neighbors, family, and friends ahead of your desire to socialize and travel."

Perna, who was Wins's supervisor when Wins was on his last active-duty assignment with the Army, congratulated the graduates

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Dylan Stoltzfus '21, president of the Class of 2021, introduces Gen. Gustave "Gus" Perna during the commencement ceremony.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Gen. Gustave "Gus" Perna, chief operating officer for Operation Warp Speed, gives the commencement address in Foster Stadium May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.





Cadets toss their gloves in the air after being dismissed from duty during the commencement ceremony in Foster Stadium May 16.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

on their achievements and Wins on assuming the superintendent's role, which Wins did in April after roughly four months as interim superintendent.

Perna then shared three quotes with cadets and discussed the life lessons of each. The first was from the well-known 19<sup>th</sup>

century American writer Mark Twain: "The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you figure out why."

Finding a purpose—the impact graduates will make and their contributions to humanity—is critical, said Perna. Occupations,

whether military or civilian, are not a purpose, he elaborated; rather, they are the "how" of a purpose.

"Your purpose should be your driving force behind what you do and how you do it," he stated.

The second quote came from retired Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore, author of the book, *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young*, which details Moore's experience as a battalion commander during the Vietnam War. Asked how he'd succeeded in a very difficult battle, Moore replied, "I just kept asking myself, 'What am I doing that I shouldn't be doing, and what am I not doing that I should?'"

The answer to the first question is often that leaders do things that should instead be done by subordinates, Perna noted, and thus they deprive others of the opportunity to learn mission-critical skills.

The answer to the second question has to do with priorities. Being busy is a far cry from being productive, so having goals and a purpose is paramount. "You will have more things in life to do than time to do them," Perna told the cadets. "You will have



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 presents Eric Munro '21 with the First Jackson-Hope Medal for highest attainment in scholarship.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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to prioritize things to make sure you do the most essential things first.”

The third quote, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish missionary Dr. David Livingstone, well known for his exploration of Africa, spoke to the need to establish direction. One day in Africa, Livingstone’s team encountered a river that they could not navigate by boat. After considering the situation, Livingstone’s subordinates presented a recommendation to the doctor, who replied, “I will go in any direction, as long as it is forward.”

Perna drew on this lesson himself as he led Operation Warp Speed. “Many thought that it could not be done,” he stated, referring to the effort to develop a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 in a matter of months rather than years, as is typical with vaccine development.

Perna’s phone calls and emails, he noted, often conveyed both congratulations at

being given such a high responsibility and sympathy at being tasked with something widely believed to be impossible.

The general’s response was always the same: “I will do my best. I will always

move forward, and I will not quit until we are done.”

That attitude will reap rewards, Perna believes. “My challenge to you is never fall back,” he said. “Challenge yourself personally and professionally to

be uncomfortable.”

Jordan Chaulklin ’21, peer-elected valedictorian of the Class of 2021, discussed the brother rat spirit that sustained members of the class throughout their cadetships, particularly as the coronavirus pandemic dragged on this academic year.

“As we go our ways in the next few hours, we must remember that genuine brother rat spirit,” he said. “As we go on into the military, the workforce, graduate schools, and wherever life may take us, we will carry that loving connection.”

President of the Class of 2021, Dylan Stoltzfus ’21,



Leslie Giron-Molina ’21 holds up her degree and Bible after crossing the stage in Foster Stadium May 16.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Troy Smith ’21 receives the Second Jackson-Hope Medal from Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85 during the commencement ceremony in Foster Stadium May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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introduced Perna, but first had a message for his audience and his brother rats. He expressed gratitude to those who brought him to where he is today. He also took time to highlight some of his special memories of each of his four years at VMI.

“You were the ones I led with,” Stoltzfus said to his fellow graduates about their final year. “We experienced highs and lows, the likes of which we’ll remember for the rest of our lives. But at the end of it all, I’m proud to say, it was us that took the challenge... and, against all odds, achieved success.”

Three awards are traditionally given at VMI’s May commencement exercises. The First Jackson-Hope Medal for highest attainment in scholarship, accompanied by the Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award, went to Eric Munro ’21, an electrical and computer engineering major who earned a minor in mathematics and was a distinguished Air Force graduate.

There was a grade point average tie for the Jackson-Hope Medal this year, and just one credit hour separated the recipient of the Second Jackson-Hope Medal for

second-highest attainment in scholarship. Receiving the Second Jackson-Hope Medal, accompanied by the Col. Sterling Murray Heflin 1916 Academic Proficiency Award, was Troy Smith ’21, a computer science major and distinguished military graduate who served as regimental commander during the 2020–21 academic year.

Smith also received the Society of the Cincinnati Medal, which recognizes efficiency of service and excellence of character. The Society of the Cincinnati Medal is accompanied by the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards. ❁

## Valedictorian Speaks of Love, Brotherhood of VMI

Drawn to a life of public service since childhood, the valedictorian of the Class of 2021, Jordan Chauklin ’21, knew as the end of his high school years approached that he wanted to follow his grandfather, Herold R. Hofheimer ’53, to VMI.

“I’ve always had that service-oriented mindset,” said Chauklin, a native of Mechanicsville who graduated with an international studies major and two minors, one in national security and the other in economics.

Once the Rat Line was over, Chauklin wasted no time in looking for opportunities to serve. In February 2018, just a few weeks after Breakout, he began volunteering with the South River Volunteer Fire Department, and he’s been there ever since, doing everything from fighting fires to responding to medical calls and car wrecks on Interstate 81.

“I’ve just found that helping people in such a diverse amount of situations is what I really like,” Chauklin explained.

While he’d originally planned on an active duty

Army career or one in law enforcement, Chauklin found he loved the varied work of a firefighter so much that he’s decided to pursue that as a career while serving in the National Guard. He’s currently interviewing for firefighter positions in the Richmond area.

On post, Chauklin was a member of cadre for Company F, serving as a corporal his 3<sup>rd</sup> Class year and a first sergeant his 2<sup>nd</sup> Class year. “That

was a really fun experience,” said Chauklin. “It teaches you a lot about planning and execution.”

Chauklin also found that serving in company leadership positions deepened his friendships. “The company-side stuff was really big for me.”



Jordan Chauklin '21 addresses graduates during the commencement ceremony May 16 in Foster Stadium.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

This year, he stepped away from company leadership to focus on another role: battalion commander for Army ROTC, which includes more than 800 cadets. Even leading such a large number, Chauklin wasn’t fazed.

“I’m just a people person, so getting to work with people was really fun,” he observed. “It was a great leadership experience all around.”

Near the end of April, Chauklin found out that he’d been elected by his brother rats as valedictorian.

“I was definitely not expecting that whatsoever,” he stated. “It was definitely an honor and a humbling experience.”

In his remarks to his brother rats at graduation, Chauklin stressed the bonds that VMI creates.

“For a lot of us, this year hit harder than the Rat Line,” he stated. “After three long years of waiting for our turn... the drawbacks were more than substantial.”

Dealing with uncertainty, being confined to post, and the sense of having an incomplete 1<sup>st</sup> Class year all weighed heavily on the Class of 2021.

But in the end, unity and cohesion prevailed. “With depressing times and anguish throughout the barracks, love and selflessness emerged, bringing our class closer together,” said Chauklin. “The rough days didn’t cease, but neither did the love and brotherhood we came to know. ... We were all there for one another.”

— Mary Price

# Memorial Parade Honors Fallen Alumni

By Mary Price

As a multitude of families, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of the Institute looked on, the Corps of Cadets paid tribute to the almost 600 VMI alumni who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the nation's wars in a Memorial Parade on Friday, May 14.

The ceremony, which was redesigned this year to focus on all alumni who have fallen in war or as a result of war, began at 1 p.m. as a team of four cadets took turns reading the names of those fallen, beginning with the four who died in the Mexican-American War and ending with the 14 whose deaths were due to the global war on terror. Those reading the names were Julius Chung '24, Alexander Ezzelle '24, Jarrod Larosa '24, and Alexis Motko '22.

Reading the names took approximately one hour, after which time the Memorial Parade stepped off. Once the Corps was formed on the Parade Ground, the commander of each company stepped forward for a roll call of deaths from each war, with a report given from one company at a time.



Cadets fire a three-volley salute during the Memorial Parade May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Band Company took the lead, with Company Commander Kevin Rae '21 calling out, "Mexican-American War, report," and a 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet from that company replying, "Four died on the field of honor, sir." This pattern was repeated all the way through the war on terror, with the highest number of deaths, 255, coming in the Civil War. At the end, Company I Commander Harrison

Smith '21 called for a count of noncombat deaths in service to the nation, and the reply came back, "Countless others, sir."

After the roll call, wreaths were laid, one in front of *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* and one at each of the barracks arches that contain plaques with the names of alumni

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Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col. Enoch "Woody" Woodhouse II addresses a group of Air Force and Army ROTC cadets during a luncheon held in Crozet Hall May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Julius Chung '24, Alexander Ezzelle '24, Jarrod Larosa '24, and Alexis Motko '22 read the names of almost 600 fallen alumni and cadets prior to the Memorial Parade May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



The Corps of Cadets marches down the parade ground.





Cadets march in the Memorial Parade May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

who have fallen in battle. Col. Robert “Bob” Phillips ’87, Institute chaplain, then offered a prayer, which was followed by a three-volley salute and renditions of *Taps* and *Amazing Grace*.

The Corps then marched south toward Moody Hall and turned north on Letcher Avenue before passing in review before Col. William “Bill” Wanovich ’87, who is retiring as commandant as of July 1, and Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, superintendent.

A special guest at both the change of command parade and Memorial Parade was retired Lt. Col. Enoch Woodhouse II, one of the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of predominately African-American fighter pilots who fought in World War II and paved the way for the integration of the armed forces in 1948.

Now 94, Woodhouse was 17 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army at his mother’s

See Memorial Parade, page 21



A wreath sits at the Virginia Mourning Her Dead statue after the Memorial Parade May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Marching band on Letcher Avenue during the Memorial Parade May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



# Last Tour Ended

## Wanovich Retires After 11 Years at VMI

By Mary Price

As a cadet, Col. Bill Wanovich '87 wasn't on the commandant's radar—and he never marched in an inaugural parade, as the parade he was scheduled to participate in, the Jan. 20, 1985, inauguration of President Ronald Reagan, was canceled due to extreme cold.

But life has a funny way of taking us back to places we've been before—and offering second chances as well. Wanovich, who will retire July 1 after seven years as commandant of cadets, has not only overseen the military training and discipline of the entire Corps, but also accompanied the Corps to Washington, D.C., as they marched in the presidential inaugural parade in 2017.

It's a unique memory of a unique day. At the end of April, the lock screen on his computer in the commandant's office was displaying a photo from that day—endless parallel lines of cadets marching down Pennsylvania Avenue in the evening dusk.

"Their performance in the inaugural was wonderful," he stated. "It really highlighted the discipline and the hard work of the Corps. I thought it was such a wonderful tribute to them and a wonderful tribute to the school that they were able to do that."

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Wanovich had never heard of VMI until he attended a college fair one day—and just happened to talk to a handful of cadets who were representing the school.



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 congratulates Col. Bill Wanovich '87 during his retirement parade April 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

"For whatever reason there, I came across three cadets standing there in gray blouse and all that, and that was it," he recalled. "I came home that night and told my Dad that was where I wanted to go to school."



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 and Col. Bill Wanovich '87 take review of the Corps of Cadets during a parade in Wanovich's honor April 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

During his cadetship, Wanovich majored in economics and business and held rank in the Corps. He was also the class treasurer on the Ring Figure Committee and a member of the Cadet Investment Group. Upon graduation, he commissioned as an infantry officer in the Army, but he didn't plan a long military career.

"I didn't plan to be a career officer," he explained. He'd planned to stay in for three years—and wound up staying for 27 instead.

"I loved the responsibility," Wanovich stated. "Every day was a little different. I loved the troopers and the soldiers."

Over the course of his Army career, Wanovich deployed to Operation Desert Shield/Storm in 1991 and the next year served as a battalion supply and logistics officer in Homestead, Florida, providing humanitarian assistance as part of Operation Hurricane Andrew. He served in a number of leadership

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and staff positions and in a security assistance role for Egypt, Africa, and Iraq.

He served as both the secretary of the Coalition Joint Staff and later as the special troops battalion commander in Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, deploying to Iraq for 12 and 15 months. This included command of Task Force Dragon, which provided security, support, and services to more than 4,100 members of the Multi-National Force and Multi-National Corps in Iraq staffs.

He then attended the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, before coming to VMI in the summer of 2010 as head of Army ROTC, a position he held until retiring from the Army and becoming commandant in the summer of 2014.

As expected, Wanovich treasures the memories of the special occasions—he was there when cadets marched in both a presidential and gubernatorial inaugural parade, and he made the trip when the VMI Band participated in the 2016 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. He also fondly remembers the October day in 2019 when the Keydet football team brought the Silver Shako trophy back to VMI after beating the Citadel in Charleston.

“The Corps looked, acted, and performed well... and we won the day,” he said.

But it’s the quieter, day-to-day satisfactions that have mattered most.

“I’ve really enjoyed working with the cadets,” said Wanovich. “I’ve enjoyed the professionalism I see in them. I feel like I’ve seen continued improvement and continued progress in cadets over the years, which is good.”

This spring, as the football team rolled to its first winning season since 1981, Wanovich decided to emulate a former commandant, Col. Frank R. Pancake ’38, and give cadets a break as part of an Institute-wide celebration.

In November 1953, Pancake had told the Corps that if the football team beat Virginia Tech in the traditional Thanksgiving Day game held at Victory Stadium in Roanoke, he would cancel all penalty



Col. Bill Wanovich '87 does a penalty tour on the Parade Ground after VMI football beat the Citadel for the Southern Conference Championship.—VMI Photo by Eric Moore.

tours for cadets and walk them himself. The team came through with a 28-13 victory, and Pancake, accompanied by his dog, held up his end of the bargain the following Saturday.

An alumnus friend of Wanovich’s, Bolling Williamson ’60, had filled the commandant in on this bit of VMI history.

Not one to let a good idea slip by, as the final game of the season against archrival the Citadel approached in mid-April, Wanovich shared his plan with members of the football team: “If you guys win this Saturday, I’ll let the Corps off restrictions next Wednesday... and I’ll march their [penalty tours].”

When the roll was called for penalty tours that Wednesday, Wanovich answered for every name that was called—and then got down to business.

“I marched the full first tour,” he related. “The second one, instead of just marching in a circle,

I marched down to see the team, which was practicing. I marched around the field and then came back up.”

Very soon, marching will be a part of Wanovich’s past—unless he chooses to march around the golf course. He and his wife, Tina, are retiring to Hilton Head, South Carolina, where they’ve been vacationing for almost 20 years. Tina Wanovich, a special education teacher at Rockbridge County High School, will retire herself this spring after a 35-year career in education.

The Wanoviches are also looking forward to spending more time with family, including their four children and two grandchildren. ❁

## Visiting Scholars

By Mary Price

A number of visiting scholars and chairs have been announced, some for the fall 2021 semester and some for the 2021–22 academic year. Holding the Economics-Mary Moody Northern Chair will be Col. Robert “Bob” James Jr., Department of International Studies

and Political Science. Claudia Smigrod, Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, will hold the Edwin P. Conquest ’14 Chair. Col. Dean Kershaw, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, will hold the Wachtmeister Chair. Holding the Eugenio Lopez Visiting

Chair for Asian Studies will be Dr. Glenn Shive, Department of International Studies and Political Science. Col. James E. Turner ’65, Department of Biology, will hold the Thomas Bahnsen and Anne Bassett Stanley Professorship in Ethics and Integrity. ❁

# Virtual URS Highlights Numerous Projects

By Mary Price

Held virtually on Monday, April 26, the annual Undergraduate Research Symposium showcased the work of just under 50 cadets, plus a small handful of students from other colleges and universities in the area.

Ongoing at VMI since 2001, the symposium is designed to encourage and recognize outstanding research by undergraduates in all academic disciplines.

English major Joseph Murray '21 presented his honors thesis, "The Unity of the Virtues: The Role of Virtue Prioritization in Moral Reasoning," which he completed with the guidance of Dr. Reshef Agam-Segal, associate professor of philosophy.

Murray began his presentation by explaining that his work is in the field of virtue ethics, which traces its roots back through Christian moral theology as put forth by St. Thomas Aquinas, a medieval Catholic theologian, to the works of Aristotle and Plato.

The two fundamental doctrines of virtue ethics are that virtues adhere to a hierarchy and are thus ranked in importance and that virtues are unified—that together, they comprise a coherent whole.

But there are situations in which one virtue might seem to be in conflict with another.

"Under the doctrine of hierarchy, Aristotle places prudence at the top of the pyramid," said Murray. "But why should there be any hierarchy at all? Can we really agree that prudence is more important than justice?"

Furthermore, the ideas of unity and hierarchy could be seen as opposed to one another.

"However, as I will show, these two doctrines may seem to the modern mind to be difficult to reconcile—and perhaps even mutually exclusive," said Murray.

The difference, he explained, has to do with how ancient and medieval people thought versus how modern people think. The former group emphasized the character of an individual, whereas the latter stress the actions of a person.



Thaddeus Wegrzyn '22 discusses his findings on preventing falls among the elderly during the Undergraduate Research Symposium April 26.—VMI Photo by Mary Price.

Bridget Hughes '22 presented her work, "The Blood of Patriots and Tyrants: Examining the Justifications of the American Revolution," which she completed with the help of Col. Ryan Holston, professor of international studies and political science. The work is the beginning of her Institute Honors thesis.

Hughes, who is majoring in international studies, began by explaining just war theory, which gives guidance as to when armed conflict is morally justified and when it is not.

"In order to have a just war, three criteria must be fully satisfied," Hughes explained. "There must be a just cause;

there must be right intention and not something self-serving; and the war must be declared by a legitimate authority."

By most interpretations, especially those of the time, the American Revolution fulfills the first two criteria.

"The rights of the colonists as Englishmen had been violated," said Hughes. Problems show up, though, when one considers the third criterion.

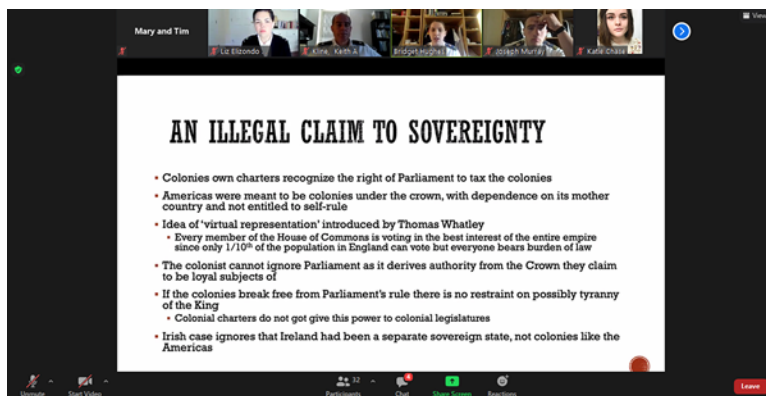
"However, I argue that the American colonists failed to establish a legitimate authority," she stated. "I believe they also used a misinterpretation of Romans 13 to set up the colonial legislators as a proper authority on religious grounds."

This chapter of the Bible, she noted, says that Christians should respect the authority of government.

Colonial pamphleteers got around this by saying that a government not working for the good of the people is illegitimate; however, Hughes argues, the theologian Martin Luther believed that the authority to punish bad leaders resides with God, not man.

"The American Revolution comes close to the standard of a just war... however, I contend that the colonists did not have legitimate authority to take up arms," Hughes concluded.

Thaddeus Wegrzyn '22 had originally planned a Summer Undergraduate Research Institute project involving human subjects, but COVID-19 altered his plans. Instead, he did a literature review to produce his paper, "An Evaluation of the Factors that Contribute to Gait Instability during Asymmetrical



Bridget Hughes '22 presents her research on justifications for the American Revolution during the Undergraduate Research Symposium April 26.—VMI Photo by Mary Price.

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Loaded Ambulation,” with Col. Michael Krackow, professor of physical education, as his mentor.

Wegrzyn explained that he’d hoped to study how asymmetrical loading, or carrying an unbalanced load, increases gait instability and thus the risk of falling in elderly individuals.

“Falls are actually the most common cause of injury in the elderly,” he said, adding that one third of individuals over the age of 65 fall each year, and half of those fall more than once.

Both extrinsic factors such as snow and ice and intrinsic factors such as gait instability can cause a fall. Gait disorders increase with age, Wegrzyn noted, and by the age of 80, approximately 40 to 60 percent of people have a gait disorder.

While many factors can cause this, among them joint pain and obesity, weakness in the gluteus medius, one of the main muscles

running through the buttocks, is a main cause. Individuals who have weakness in this muscle exhibit the Trendelenburg sign and exhibit a waddling gait.

“Over time, this could lead to pain in the lumbar spine and hip area,” said Wegrzyn. Carrying an unbalanced load, of course, makes those issues worse. “Carrying asymmetrical loads results in body compensations that may lead to injury,” Wegrzyn commented.

Giving the closing speech at the symposium was Capt. Fredrick Walker '15. Walker, who presented at the symposium during his cadetship, urged his listeners to use their research to make a difference in the world. “Scholarly research should be prompted by a passion for some cause to be furthered as it relates to human flourishing,” he stated. ❁

## Brother Rat Marks VMI Theatre’s Return

By Mary Price

Mounting a comeback after the coronavirus pandemic made the theater go dark in 2020, the VMI Theatre rallied this spring to stage *Brother Rat*, a classic play about barracks life, April 23–25. In-person attendance was limited to members of the VMI community, with a virtual option available for others.

Members of the cast, many of whom were 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Class cadets, began rehearsals in March, taking precautions to keep themselves safe, including limiting the number of people in Gillis Theater at any one time.

During the performances, cast members wore clear masks so audience members could see their faces.

Adapted and directed by longtime VMI Theatre director Joellen K. Bland, *Brother Rat* was the creation of John Monks Jr. '32 and Fred Finklehoffe '32. In her director's

notes for the play, Bland wrote that the two “were serving confinement and looking for some way to pass the time” when they wrote *Brother Rat* as their senior thesis project. This spring’s production marked the fifth time *Brother Rat* has been staged at VMI since 1979.

“This good-natured vision of cadet life reminds us all that our college years and the friendships they foster play a decisive role in forming our characters and values,” Bland wrote in the play program.

“Every college student undergoes this maturation, but at VMI the ties formed through the ‘brother rat’ system take on almost mystical significance. Nowhere else do the joys shared, the anguish suffered, the obstacles overcome, the loyalty felt by cadets find fuller expression than in this unique play.”

During the 1930s, the play went on to success well outside of Lexington, as it was staged on Broadway more than 570 times between December 1936 and April 1938. In 1938, it was made into a movie directed by William Keighley. The movie starred future president Ronald Reagan and his soon-to-be first wife, Jane Wyman.

While cadet theatrical performances have been staged for decades, the VMI Theatre as it’s known today has been in existence since 1970. Prior to the pandemic, Bland, who’s been involved with the theater since 1978, had been planning a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration involving VMI Theatre alumni from many decades. It’s a dream and a plan that Bland is determined to keep alive.

“We still hope to safely celebrate, but it may be our 52<sup>nd</sup> or 53<sup>rd</sup>,” she said recently. ❁



Cadets Alexander Salisbury '24, Major Fick '23, Ethan Severns '21, and Matthew Frazier '23 rehearse for an upcoming production of *Brother Rat* in Gillis Theater in March.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Joellen Bland congratulates the cast of *Brother Rat* after their performance April 24 in Gillis Theater.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

# BOV Takes Action on Recommendations

By Col. Bill Wyatt

In its first two-day, in-person meeting since the pandemic began, the VMI Board of Visitors took action on a number of important items, including setting tuition and fees for the 2021–22 academic year, electing new officers, and contextualizing a number of features on post.

The Board of Visitors considered three proposals for 2021–22 tuition and fees, including a 3% increase, 2.3% increase, and 0% increase. Based on the need to cover increased costs in the coming fiscal year including VMI's share (60%) of a state-initiated 5% salary increase for all employees, the Board of Visitors voted to increase tuition and fees by 2.3%. This amounts to a \$762 increase for in-state cadets and a \$1,408 increase for out-of-state cadets.

The Board of Visitors also took action on a number of recommendations from the Commemorations and Memorials Naming and Review Committee. The committee, which is made up of board members, cadets, alumni, faculty, and historians, has been working for several months to ensure that the VMI post presents an inspiring and inclusive landscape for all members of the VMI community and the post's memorials properly reflect VMI's core values. Among the actions approved by the Board of Visitors:

- » The Board of Visitors voted to remove the embossed name of Stonewall Jackson from the front of Old Barracks and has directed the Commemorations and Memorials Naming and Review Committee to determine whether it would be appropriate to provide a formal new name for the archway and, if so, what that name might be, at the next meeting of the Board of Visitors scheduled for September 2021.
- » The Board of Visitors voted that the name Jackson be removed from Memorial Hall and directed the Commemorations and Memorials Naming and Review Committee to determine an appropriate new name of the building at the next meeting of the Board of Visitors scheduled for September 2021.
- » The Board of Visitors voted to preserve the Clinedinst mural currently located in Memorial Hall for public display. Additionally, the board directed the VMI Museum to develop a system to provide visitors with appropriate context for the mural.



Bill Boland '73, president of the VMI Board of Visitors, leads the May 1 meeting in Marshall Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

- » The Board of Visitors voted to expand the symbolism of the sculpture *Virginia Mourning Her Dead* to honor all former cadets who have died in wars and military conflicts since 1839.
- » The Board of Visitors voted to remove the attribution to Stonewall Jackson of the quote, “You may be whatever you resolve to be,” from the second stoop of Old Barracks. The board further instructed VMI to install a plaque inside the arch that attributes the quote to William Alcott and the Rev. Joel Hawes, who included the quotation in publications in 1834 and 1851, respectively. The plaque will also include a statement that former VMI professor Thomas J. Jackson included the quote in his book of maxims.

Additionally, the Board of Visitors selected a new slate of officers. Tom Watjen '76 was elected to serve as board president. David Miller '70, Gene Scott '80, and Lara Tyler Chambers '03 were elected to serve as board vice-presidents. Lt. Gen. Charles Dominy was elected to serve as the non-alumni member of the Executive Committee. The board members' new positions are effective beginning on July 1, 2021. ✪

## 24-Hour Run for Operation Enduring Warrior

Starting on the morning of May 12, Will Duffy '22 set out with an audacious goal: to run around the Parade Ground for 24 hours straight as a fundraiser in support of Operation Enduring Warrior, a nonprofit dedicated to helping wounded military and law enforcement veterans. The next morning, he completed that goal, logging 124 laps and more than 75 miles, while raising more than \$6,500 in the process. Duffy, a native of Portland, Oregon, has been running for most of his life, but before this year, he'd never tackled a run as arduous as this. “What I will be doing on this run is nothing compared to what veterans have endured,” he stated the week before. “That’s one of the main thoughts that will be in my mind—if I feel I can’t go one more mile, I can go one more mile, because there have been people I’m supporting right now that have been through way worse than me.”—VMI Photo by Eric Moore.





# Sorensen Gift Impacts Post

By Mary Price

A significant gift from the estate of Bettie Sorensen, wife of the late Richard “Dick” Sorensen '44, has brought a donation of art and furniture to 402 Parade, the Institute's VIP quarters that was recently renovated by Physical Plant, and may enable a renovation of Moody Hall.

The story of the Sorensens, who made their home in Hudson, Ohio, is one common to many of the Greatest Generation, with themes of education, character, community service, and philanthropy.

The couple met in Japan in the waning days of World War II. Dick Sorensen, who had left his studies at VMI to serve his country, was a liaison pilot with the Army Air Corps, and Bettie Mae Tucker, his soon-to-be bride and the daughter of a North Carolina tobacco farmer, was working with the Red Cross after graduating from the College of William & Mary. They were married Aug. 6, 1946, in Japan.

Shortly thereafter, the Sorensens moved to Lexington so Dick Sorensen could complete his degree in electrical engineering at VMI. His career took them to South America. They spent many years in Venezuela, where Bettie Sorensen quickly became fluent in Spanish. In 1965, they moved into their home at 106 Aurora Street in Hudson, Ohio, and began filling that historic Federal-style house with art and antiques.

The couple also loved to travel all over the world. Their home was frequently the location of many spirited gatherings, popular among the Hudson residents. The Sorensens were central figures in the community, and they relished the gatherings and the discussions resulting from bringing the community into their home frequently.

On the wall above her crystal decanters, Bettie Sorensen hung a framed recipe for a proper mint julep—a recipe that



Much of the furniture in 402 Parade was donated by the Sorensen estate.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

came from Lt. Gen. S.B. Buckner Jr., VMI Class of 1906.

Dick Sorensen, a loyal alumnus and generous supporter of the Institute, died Sept. 13, 2010, but not before a last remembrance of VMI. When it became apparent that Dick would not live much longer, Bettie Sorensen called the Alumni Association,

requesting a recording of “The VMI Spirit.” The CD arrived in time for Dick Sorensen to hear the familiar song several times before he died, and it was even played at his funeral.

Bettie Sorensen, who died on Christmas Day 2019 at the age of 97, was a gregarious hostess, so a renovation of Moody Hall, the home of the VMI Alumni Association and site of many Institute celebrations, is a natural consideration for the Sorensen estate.

“It’s the kind of space Bettie Sorensen would have loved,” said Meade King '85, chief operating officer of the VMI Foundation.

King noted that Wiley|Wilson, an architectural firm with a long history of work on post, has begun a study of Moody Hall.

Furniture from the Sorensen home is already in place at 402

Parade, and that residence may be occupied by the Institute's superintendent while the Superintendent's Quarters is renovated. Among the notable furnishings from the estate are numerous pieces in the Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Queen Anne styles, plus Persian rugs and many curiosity pieces, among them a butter mold, a whale oil lamp, and more.

“The impact of this estate gift is extraordinary and would have delighted the Sorensens, especially Bettie's grand and gregarious persona,” said King.

The Sorensen home in Ohio has been left to Western Reserve Academy, a co-educational boarding and day school. ❀



The dining table, chairs, and the rug they sit on in 402 Parade were among the many donations from the Sorensen estate.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

# Honors Week Showcases Cadet Research

By Mary Price

Held virtually the week of April 5–9, Honors Week returned to VMI after a one-year absence due to the coronavirus pandemic, with presentations by more than 20 cadets participating in the Institute Honors Program. As usual, a number of cadets were also inducted into academic honor societies during Honors Week.

International studies major Jose Nunez '21 presented his senior thesis, "The Demographic Impact of Immigration on U.S. GDP Growth." Nunez, who was advised by Lt. Col. Patrick Rhamey Jr., associate professor of international studies, argued that immigration is a net benefit to the United States and thus positively affects gross domestic product (GDP) because immigrants tend to be younger and the United States, like many other countries around the world, has an aging population.

"There's plenty of literature that says you can't maintain an efficient labor market unless you have enough workers between the ages of 16 and 65, and we already know that aging workforces have lower labor force participation rates," Nunez stated.

In the United States, Nunez noted, labor force participation has dropped 5 percent over the past decade, largely due to baby boomers retiring.

Nunez presented several common arguments against immigration, among them a potential loss of jobs by native-born citizens and less investment in schools, roads, etc., as governments can't afford to provide services for so many people.

"Unskilled immigrants, there's this idea that they are going to lower the wealth of the average citizen," he stated.

However, after studying the data, Nunez has concluded that in the long run, immigrants are a force for economic good because without them, the share of citizens in the labor force will continue to drop as the population ages. In just nine years, he stated, nearly a quarter of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65.

"The hypothesis is that despite the short-term cost of immigration, an increase in unskilled labor within a developed country will lead to long-term GDP per capita growth," said Nunez.

Applied mathematics major Emily Gothard '21 took an interest that began in high school and developed it into a senior thesis project, "Modeling the Ebola Virus," with mentoring assistance from Col. Dimplekumar Chalishajar, professor of applied mathematics, and Lt. Col. Geoff Cox, associate professor of applied mathematics.

Gothard had first learned about Ebola, a zoonotic virus affecting West Africa, after reading *The Hot Zone*, a book about the Ebola virus. The disease is contagious only when symptoms are present, but it can also be spread after death through unsafe funeral practices, such as close contact with a dead body. First discovered in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 1976, the disease kills approximately half of those infected.

To model how the Ebola virus spreads, Gothard used differential equations to create a compartmental model showing groups such as susceptible, infected, and recovered.

"This is useful because it can model infectious diseases to predict things like the peak of an outbreak and the end of an outbreak, and we can look at the reproductive number and herd immunity," she said.

She then applied two models, with Model #1 focusing on how to shorten the duration of the outbreak by manipulating four contributing factors.

"The disease is eradicated faster when the vaccination rate is increased, the isolation rate is increased, the infection rate is decreased, or the treatment time is decreased," Gothard noted. While the most effective factor in preventing spread of the disease, isolation in Africa typically involves hospitalization, and a shortage of hospital beds can make this option impractical.

Gothard's Model #2, which she considered for its theoretical implications only, did not include the effects of vaccination or isolation. Rather, in this model she focused on the reproductive number or "r naught," which is the number of people each infected individual is expected to infect. Normally, the reproductive number is predictive of an outbreak; however, this model also accounted for environmental contaminants that when present, decreased the significance of the reproductive number.

"A major difference between Model #1 and Model #2 is that Model #1 focused on the controllable effects of hospital isolation and vaccination. Conversely, Model #2 focused on the uncontrollable effect of environmental contaminants," Gothard stated.

Because of its relevance to her research, Gothard created a mathematical model for COVID-19 blending aspects of Model #1 and Model #2. This new model could be used to see the effects of vaccination,



Walt Kitson '21 presents his senior thesis on the personal security vulnerabilities of smart home devices during Honors Week.—VMI Photo by Mary Price.



environmental contaminants, asymptomatic spread, and limited immunity on the length of the pandemic.

Interestingly, Gothard selected this topic prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. She explained, “My proposal was happening just before COVID. Then I incorporated COVID, since that’s so relevant today, and it can be modeled similarly.”

Darren Pitts ’21 likewise deepened an interest in his honors thesis, “The Commercialization of Major League Baseball during the Great Depression and World War II.” Pitts, a history major and avid baseball fan, did his research and writing with the guidance of Col. Timothy Dowling, professor of history.

Pitts began his presentation by explaining that while much has been written about baseball, most of this literature is nostalgic in nature rather than a true historical analysis of the sport’s evolution over time.

In the 1920s, Pitts noted, baseball was very heavily dependent upon ticket sales, but once the Depression hit and incomes plummeted, ticket sales fell by 40 percent. The consequent loss of revenue threatened the sport’s survival, and teams had to do what they could to stay afloat financially. In the case of the Philadelphia Phillies, that meant laying off the grounds staff and replacing them with sheep to keep the field mowed.

Soon, though, American ingenuity came through, with changes such as electric lights so games could be played at night, when working-class fans could attend. At the same time, concession stands were added because fans and their families were coming to the ballpark hungry at the end of the day.

Broadcasting games via the radio also helped the sport reach a wider audience, and selling broadcasting rights brought in even more revenue. Lastly, franchising players helped Americans connect with the sport’s stars such as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, who in 1934 became the first player to appear on a Wheaties box.

“These changes, which included the introduction of radio, night baseball, concessions, and the emphasis on franchised players, all led baseball to survive the Depression, but they ultimately drove baseball to dominance in the postwar years,” Pitts concluded.

After his presentation, Pitts was asked what his research revealed about American history beyond baseball. “It really reflects American society at that point,” he replied. “It really follows the trends of the Depression and then postwar society as the average family income is going up. Baseball follows that trend. ... The explosion of baseball in the 1950s—it didn’t happen by accident.”

Electrical and computer engineering major Walt Kitson ’21 used his honors thesis to explore a problem of the modern era: personal information security. His project, “Exploring Security Vulnerabilities in Commercial Smart Home Devices,” centered around the Internet of Things, which includes in-home devices such as light bulbs and thermostats that are connected to the Internet. Such devices are now commonly available both online and in stores.

“The average consumer has little to no understanding enabling them to judge a device’s security,” said Kitson, who was advised by Col. James “Mac” Baker Jr., professor of electrical and computer engineering.

Kitson began his project by purchasing and researching five differently branded smart light bulbs. He set up his own Wi-Fi network to study device communications and reverse engineered the light bulbs to transmit their memories to a Raspberry Pi, which is a low-cost, credit card-sized computer.

“Network traffic analysis showed that all of these devices had communications with the cloud,” said Kitson. In one instance, he was able to find an unencrypted Wi-Fi password stored in plain text. Another vulnerability was that all the devices used microcontrollers from the same Chinese company.

“If someone got physical access to your device, they could flash it with a malicious firmware enabling them to basically do whatever they want on your device,” Kitson stated.

Despite this, Kitson recommended that for the average consumer, selecting devices with built in authentication protocols and paying attention to safe disposal practices is likely enough. Because hackers tend to look for the most easily available and profitable information, “the risk of smart devices in the home being targeted only goes so far.” ❁

## Memorial Parade *continued from page 13*

urging after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. He went on to serve in the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group as a paymaster, also known as a finance officer.

After retiring from the U.S. Army Air Force, Woodhouse attended and graduated from Yale University. He then studied law at Yale Law School and at Boston University, receiving his J.D. from the latter. He worked as a trial lawyer in his native city of Boston for more than 40 years, and in the State Department and for the City of Boston as well.



A wreath sits in Marshall Arch after the Memorial Parade May 14.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Among his many awards, in 2007 he and the other Tuskegee Airmen received the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest honor, from President George W. Bush for facing two wars: one abroad and the other at home in terms of racial intolerance.

Between the two parades, Woodhouse had lunch with a small group of cadets from Air Force ROTC and Army ROTC and offered brief remarks. ❁

# Ethics Team Takes Top Spot

By Maj. Catherine Roy

On April 24, VMI's Ethics Team turned in its first-ever win, defeating three of the five federal military colleges—the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the U.S. Military Academy—at the 2021 Military Ethics Case Competition, hosted by the Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership at USNA and funded by the Class of 1964. This year's Keydet team, led by Benjamin Ashmore '21, cadet in charge, was unable to travel to the Naval Academy due to COVID-19 precautions and so participated via Google Meet with a pre-recorded presentation, followed by a round of live judging. Retired armed forces personnel comprised the judges' panel. After each pre-recorded presentation, the judges would confer off camera for about 10 minutes and had 10 minutes to question each team. Each team watched the others present.



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 poses with the Ethics Team after congratulating them on their trophies.—VMI Photo by Mary Price.

The groups from VMI and the U.S. Military Academy presented ethical arguments on the same case study: the sentencing of Beaudry Robert “Bowe” Bergdahl, a U.S. Army soldier who deserted his post in June 2009 and was subsequently captured, held, and tortured by the Taliban until 2014, when the U.S. arranged for a prisoner exchange.

The task was to determine whether or not leniency was appropriate in the chosen case. The original prosecution had suggested jail time for Bergdahl, but due to his time spent as a POW in Afghanistan, the judge ruled against it. Bergdahl was dishonorably discharged from the U.S. Army in 2017. For its ethical argument, the VMI team argued against the judges' decision, concluding that leniency was not appropriate and that Bergdahl should have served prison time for his violations of Articles 85 and 99 of the Uniform

Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). They recommended Bergdahl complete all 14 years, less the five years of his captivity and the two years spent while at trial. They also upheld his original punishment of a \$10,000 fine, reduction in rank to E-1, and the dishonorable discharge, plus the completion of the remaining seven years of his prison sentence.

“The key for our strategy was looking at his decision to desert his post objectively and drilling down into the pure ethics of the case itself,” said Ashmore. While the team understood the reasoning for the judge's original ruling in the case, they argued that Bergdahl's decision to desert his post was made with a sound state of mind and that he deliberately went against his obligations and duty as a U.S. soldier. The judges felt the VMI team provided the best ethical, legal,

and leadership arguments on the case in the initial pre-recorded presentation. The VMI team received perfect scores by two of the judges in each of the rounds of the competition. Recordings of both sessions will be posted by the Stockdale Center at a later date at [www.usna.edu/ethics](http://www.usna.edu/ethics).

Ashmore explained that pre-recording the presentation forced team members to be much more concise in presenting their

arguments. “It took us about two and a half hours to record a 30-minute presentation,” he said.

Ashmore has also tried to help out next year's team by keeping copious notes as a kind of written record to pass along. “When I came into the role, I didn't have any documentation,” he stated. “That's what has been so difficult for a lot of leadership roles for the 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadets. Due to COVID, we didn't have the benefit of meeting with the outgoing leadership for any kind of debriefing, so I wanted to make sure there was something to hand on to the next group of leaders.”

In addition to Ashmore, the team consisted of Yavor Aleksiev '22, Harris Burton '23, Travis Ropella '23, and Brandon Marks '23. Faculty mentors for the team are Col. Patrick Looney, deputy director, VMI Center for Leadership and Ethics, and Dr. Duncan Richter, Charles S. Luck III '55 Institute Professor, philosophy. ❁





## Change of Command

Troy Smith '21 ceremonially hands over leadership of the Corps of Cadets to Kasey Meredith '22 during the change of command and graduation parade on the morning of May 14. Meredith, from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is the first female regimental commander in VMI history and plans to commission into the Marine Corps. All members of the Class of 2021 were celebrated for their leadership during a very unique academic year.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





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## Love *continued from page 1*

recommend her for this position, and we are excited to see what she accomplishes.”

Through the development of programs and initiatives, Love is tasked with a mission focused on guiding the strategic direction of the Institute’s diversity, equality, and inclusion initiatives. Her office will be located in Smith Hall, and she will report to Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, superintendent.

“Her experience and education will bring a wealth of good ideas and meaningful change to VMI,” said Wins. “I look forward to working closely with Dr. Love to bring new opportunities to the Corps of Cadets and the entire VMI community to connect and grow.”

Love earned both her doctoral degree in higher education administration and her master’s degree in counseling psychology from Northeastern University. She earned a bachelor’s degree in general experimental psychology from Emmanuel College, also in Boston.

She has held roles at Roxbury Community College, Pine Manor College, and Eastern Nazarene College, among other schools,



Dr. Jamica N. Love

where her responsibilities often focused on student life, campus morale, compliance, suicide prevention, and the implementation of multicultural and social justice programs. Most recently, she has served as a keynote speaker for national and regional conferences addressing diversity, equality, and inclusion in education.

“I desire to guide students to be principled individuals and responsible citizens as it pertains to their development and understanding of equality, equity, and inclusion,” said Love.

On a more personal note, Love discussed her interests and the big move to Virginia. “I enjoy driving, so I’m looking forward to the 10-hour road trip from Massachusetts to Virginia. I’m usually at the gym five to six days a week, my home away from home. Other fun facts include that I’m vegan, fascinated by the tiny home movement, and enjoy cold-weather activities. However, I

won’t miss the frequent snowstorms of Massachusetts.”

She goes on to say, “‘Virginia is for lovers,’ and I’m a Love.”

She’s also thinking about getting a feline friend in the near future.

Love will assume this position July 9 and will be appointed a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia Militia. 🌟

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