



INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 52, Number 3, November 2023

Silver Shako Returns

Page 13

Family Weekend

2023

Page 8

Fall FTX

Page 10

50TH ANNIVERSARY



50 Years of the Institute Report: Academics

By Marianne Hause

To celebrate the Institute Report's 50th anniversary, milestones, unique news features, and Institute enhancements covered throughout the five decades are being highlighted in each issue during the 2023–24 academic year. This issue features a selection of academic news featured in the publication.

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

1973—VMI, along with Madison College, Blue Ridge Community College, Germanna Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, and Dabney Lancaster Community College, formed the Valley of Virginia Consortium for Higher Education designed to maximize higher educational opportunities for all citizens in the Shenandoah Valley.

1974—"Science and Society" was introduced in the physics department. The three-hour course took a close look at the cultural, technological, and social impact of science on society.

The chemistry and physics departments offered a three-credit course dealing with interfacing computers to laboratory instruments for data acquisition and experimental control.

1976—Hundreds of sleepy and insomniac cadets volunteered as subjects for the VMI Sleep Research Laboratory. Subjects were placed in a dome-shaped chamber called the Dormomat, which tried to keep volunteers awake and alert by subjecting them to external stimuli. Other machines used, such as the Rotabed, Center-of-Gravity Turning Environment, and the MUSE were designed to induce sleep.

1978—Dr. John L. Lievsay, professor emeritus at Duke University, assumed duties as visiting professor of English and occupant of the Mary Moody Northen Chair in the Arts and Social Sciences during spring semester. He offered a three-hour course titled, "Spenser in his Age (1550–1600.)"



Cadets work in a new computer lab in 1985.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

1980—The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia approved the new degree granting curriculum for the Department of Mechanical Engineering. The new curriculum would become effective in the 1982–83 academic year.

1981—The Computer Center gave a course to faculty and staff giving them an opportunity to become acquainted with

the Burroughs B6800 computer and learn how terminal use can make many jobs easier.

1984—The mathematics department began offering a concentration in computer science for math majors who plan careers in that field or in the computer-related area of applied mathematics.

The electrical engineering department was renamed the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering to reflect more accurately the area of study and the career goals of cadets.

A new management program was offered as a concentration for economics majors or as a minor for cadets pursuing other degrees. In addition, cadets in all degree programs were able to pursue a minor in psychology or in the international studies program, which was also offered as a concentration for majors in history and politics.

1986—Lt. Collin J. Millar was the first exchange student at VMI. He was from England's Royal Military College of Science

See Academics, page 4



Members of faculty and cadets pose after the announcement of the new SURI program in 2002.—VMI File Photo.

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The Institute Report, VMI's news magazine, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; 540-464-7207; or VMIRreport@vmi.edu. © 2023 Virginia Military Institute.

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



Contents

50 Years of the Institute Report: Academics	2
New Inspector General No Stranger to VMI	5
Post Briefs	6
Gold Star Memorial Dedication	6
A Riley Rally for Women's Soccer Over Citadel	7
Family Weekend	8
Fall FTX	10
Japan's National Security Strategy Discussion	11
Baseball Field Almost Complete	11
Fall Open Houses	12
Alumni Career Networking Forum	12
Silver Shako Returns to VMI	13
Cadets Excel in Fortune 500 Company Internships	14
Class of 2013 Presents Reunion Gifts	14
Fall Career Fair	15
Trivia Answers from Page 7	15
Harvest Hop	16

On the cover: Ryan O'Connor '24, the regimental drum major, marches in the Family Weekend parade Oct. 21.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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For the most accurate information and event updates, please visit www.vmi.edu.

Academics *continued from page 2*

at Shrivenham. The Highlander's uniform included a kilt, which caused many area citizens to do doubletakes.

1987—SAT scores for the 407 matriculants represented the highest differential ever between the national average and that of the new 4th Class, whose average SAT score was just over 1080, up 44 points from the year before and 175 points above the national average of 905. It was the highest SAT average for an entering VMI class in more than 20 years and the fifth best in VMI history.

1992—A computerized system for checking out books at Preston Library was implemented. Library staff, assisted by volunteers, had to put bar codes on 180,000 books.

1995—Cadets were able to connect their notebook computers to the VMI local area network through newly installed connections in the barracks study room in the barracks concourse.

2002—The Summer Undergraduate Research Institute held its inaugural session.

2005—Over 2,500 students and faculty from across the nation came to Lexington as VMI and Washington and Lee teamed up to host the National Conference of Undergraduate Research, with 75 cadets presenting.

2009—The academic catalog went to an online version only.

2012—Three new telescopes outfitted with cameras to allow for the capture of data were installed at the observatory.

2013—A pilot program introducing tablet computers into classrooms began.

2014—VMI's herbarium, the biology department's collection of 30,000 dried plant materials, was removed from storage and made re-accessible with the completion of Maury-Brooke Hall renovations.

Mandarin Chinese was added to the curriculum of modern languages and cultures.

2015—An isotope ratio mass spectrometry lab and its accompanying peripheral equipment arrived at Washington & Lee to be used by both W&L and VMI biology students. The equipment was paid for by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

New concentrations were added to the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies. They included literary studies, philosophy, rhetoric and writing, and art history and visual culture.

2016—The Department of International Studies launched a new Asian studies minor.

Karate was added as a physical education elective. Col. Mike Krackow, who was a second-degree black belt, led the class.

2017—Two new photography courses were offered in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies.

VMI and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Britain's training ground for future Army officers, swapped professors in a faculty exchange program. History professor Col. Geoff Jensen traveled to England, and Dr. Klaus Schmider, senior lecturer at Sandhurst, came to VMI for an academic year.

2018—The largest graduating class in VMI history with 355 members, received their diplomas in Cameron Hall.

A solar telescope was installed on the roof of Maury-Brooke Hall, giving astronomy students a new tool to aid in their studies.

The Department of Computer and Information Science acquired a Microsoft HoloLens, a portable head-mounted display used for augmented reality, and an Oculus Rift, another head-mounted device used to view a computer-generated environment.

2019—The Department of Physical Education acquired an Anatomage Table, meant for study of the human body and virtual dissection, allowing cadets to see ultra-high resolu-

tion 3D images of the body's circulatory, nervous, and lymphatic systems, plus internal organs.

Maj. Kevin Braun and cadets in his chemical archaeology class, visited the VMI Museum to swab Little Sorrel, his riding blanket and saddle, looking for traces of arsenic. Up until the 1980s, taxidermists routinely used arsenic to preserve specimens, and it was common practice for museum curators to spray or paint any organic items such as leather and cloth with arsenic to keep rodents and insects from damaging them. No arsenic was found on the horse, but some was found on the saddle and blanket.

2020—Cadets left post for spring furlough March 12, not knowing that would be the last time they would be on post together for the semester thanks to the outbreak of COVID-19. Multiple spring and summer events were either canceled or held virtually. Faculty and cadets adapted to distance learning.

William Taylor '22 made national headlines as he participated in virtual classes from a tent on his family's farm in



Then-Lt. Col. Greg Topasna assists a cadet using one of the new telescopes in the VMI observatory in 2013.—VMI File Photo by John Robertson.

See Academics, page 7

New Inspector General No Stranger to VMI

By Marianne Hause

Alyssa Astphan was recently promoted from deputy inspector general and Title IX coordinator to inspector general (IG) and Title IX coordinator at VMI.

The IG undertakes official investigations not specifically delegated to other agencies, or as assigned by the superintendent, reporting findings as directed, consistent with legal requirements. Additionally, the IG serves as the Title IX coordinator, and coordinates the development and review of policies, procedures, and training programs for cadets and employees. The IG is responsible for overseeing the investigation of all reports of alleged discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct. The IG does not serve as an advocate for either the complainant or the respondent, but explains to all parties the rights and procedures, and provides information to them regarding medical and counseling services, making a criminal report, and receiving advocacy services.

Astphan grew up in Rhode Island and attended Norwich University, a senior military college in Northfield, Vermont, where she majored in political science. After graduating in 2002, she commissioned into the Army and was active duty for five years, after which she began serving in the Virginia Army National Guard (VAARNG). Her current rank in the VAARNG is lieutenant colonel.

She first began working at VMI in 2016 as an assistant professor of military science in the Army ROTC department, as well as serving as liaison for the VAARNG.

After two years in that position, she was reassigned to a job with the VAARNG in Richmond. Her family remained in Lexington, the city they had grown to love, necessitating Astphan to make a weekly commute, which grew tiresome after two years. "We really loved Lexington, and this is where we wanted to put down our roots," she said. So, in 2020 she applied to and was hired as VMI's assistant director of auxiliary services, which oversees the barbershop, laundry, tailor shop, mailroom, military store, bookstore, armory, and dining services. "In the Army, and in the Guard, my job has always been in logistics management, and that skill set is very similar to the responsibilities I had with auxiliary services," she explained.

In addition to her auxiliary services duties, she also worked as an assistant Title IX coordinator part-time for a year and had enjoyed it, so in June 2022, she accepted the position of deputy inspector

general and Title IX coordinator. She, however, put those responsibilities on hold for a year, in order to attend the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, for the 2022-23 academic year.

Again, she had to leave her family in Lexington and temporarily move back to Rhode Island. There she earned in a master's degree in national security and strategic studies, and a graduate certificate in leadership and ethics.



Alyssa Astphan

Upon returning to VMI last July, Astphan was prepared to assume her new position in the Inspector General's office, but a month earlier, the sitting IG had resigned from her position, so Astphan stepped in as interim IG, and immediately applied for the vacated position. "I competed for the job, went through the interview process, and was selected," she said.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, stated that Astphan brings a wealth of experience to the position. "I am excited for Alyssa's new role as inspector general and Title IX coordinator. By its very nature, this role is a challenging one. I have every confidence that she will approach it with the greatest integrity, compassion, and excellence she has shown in her previous positions at VMI," he said.

Astphan explained that her primary focus as IG is to increase engagement with the VMI community. She plans to hire a full-time staff member to help carry out that task. "The role of that position will be prevention, training, and outreach, working primarily with cadets, but with faculty and staff as well. I want to ensure

that our office is visible, that people know how to make reports to us, and that we are increasing the effectiveness of our training. It is preferable to prevent things from happening through good training and engagement and identifying issues before they become significant," she stated. In addition, she plans to make record keeping more efficient, and take a hard look at policies in order to ensure that her office is providing resolution processes that are transparent, fair, and impartial.

Astphan enjoys quilting, and cross-stitching. She and her wife have a 12 year-old daughter who adores dancing. As a family, they enjoy gardening, hiking, and camping, especially at national parks. They have been to Redwood, Crater Lake, Pinnacles, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Acadia, Grand Canyon, Zion, Bryce, and Joshua Tree. ❀

POST BRIEFS

Baur Paper Published

Lt. Col. Dan Baur, along with Capt. Katie Baur, Beverley Buchanan '23, Abaigeal Doody '23, and Miles Ortiz '24, had a paper published in the European Journal of Applied Physiology in September. The paper titled "Load Carriage Physiology in Normoxia and Hypoxia" focused on effects

on the body with load carriage under varying conditions. The study, done in the Department of Human Performance and Wellness, featured 12 healthy males completing the exercises while their cardiorespiratory efficiency was monitored.

Economics Professor on WalletHub Website

Col. Jeffrey S. Smith, professor and head of the Department of Economics and Business, has been featured several times on the personal finance website, WalletHub. Smith has provided valuable expert information

regarding credit scores, percentage rates, personal loans, and the best credit cards for recent college graduates.

Holston Discusses His Book on Podcasts

Col. Ryan R. Holston, professor of political theory in the Department of International Studies and Political Science, and holder of the Jonathan M. Daniels '61 Chair for Academic Excellence, was recently featured on the "Hermitix" podcast and "The Sower," a podcast of The Ciceronian Society, in which he discusses his recently published book, "Tradition and the

Deliberative Turn: A Critique of Contemporary Democratic Theory." The book is a study of tradition, and a critique of utopianism as it pertains to modern democratic theory and the way people deliberate in political life. According to Holston, the need for roots and communities to understand one another is often overlooked. ✪



Gold Star Memorial Dedication

Several cadets joined community members at Jordan's Point Sept. 24 for the dedication of a Gold Star Families Memorial Monument, a tribute to the families of Capt. Andrew Ross and 1st Lt. Chase Prasnicki, who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in Afghanistan. These brave individuals, both local West Point graduates, have strong ties to VMI. The memorial was made possible by the Woody Williams Foundation, the vision of Hershel "Woody" Williams, a Medal of Honor recipient. There are just over 130 of these monuments across the country.

Capt. Eli Facemire '19, associate chaplain, led the ceremony in prayer, and the National Anthem was sung by Benjamin Salp '26. Cadets stood tall, united in honoring these heroes, and the color guard paid a moving tribute to their memory.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Academics *continued from page 4*

Pennsylvania in an open spot ideal for his mobile hotspot, and for a quiet space to study, away from his nine siblings. He braved late-winter chilly weather including snow, and feisty chickens and goats that would roam over to check on him.

Despite the pandemic, the largest class ever—522—matriculated.

Cadets returned to post for fall semester, wearing masks and ending the longest absence since the Civil War.

The Department of Computer and Information Sciences received a grant from the Department of Defense to establish a cyber defense laboratory on post, bringing \$1.45 million to VMI in the first year of funding, and establishing VMI

as a participant in the DoD Senior Military Colleges Cyber Leadership Development Program.

2021—Nearly 350 cadets graduated in an outdoor ceremony in Foster Stadium in May. The spectators were socially distanced.

Approximately 35 people, mostly students and faculty members from the nation's six senior military colleges, participated in Senior Military College Cyber Fusion 2021, a first-of-its-kind conference on post in August.

2022—A new altitude chamber which can simulate altitudes up to 20,000 feet was added to the Baur Lab.

Studying abroad for cadets came back to life over the summer, after a two-year interruption due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.



Cadets in Col. Mike Krackow's class observe the new Anatomage Table in 2019.—VMI File Photo by Kelly Nye.

Trivia Questions

1. In 1975 the first summer study abroad trip was offered to cadets to what country?
2. In 1984 a pilot program was introduced for 4th Class cadets in hopes that within five years every member of the Corps of Cadets would have working knowledge of what device?
3. In 1986, the diploma of John Hastings Winston Jr., VMI Class of 1885 valedictorian from Bristol, Virginia, was finally awarded posthumously. Why was he denied his diploma at graduation?
4. What year did Saturday classes come to an end to allow more time for Reserve and National Guard duties and varsity athletics?
5. What year did the first female graduates receive their diplomas?



A Riley Rally for Women's Soccer Over Citadel

Riley Boucher '26 scored two goals in the final 20 minutes of the women's soccer match against The Citadel Oct. 1 to mark VMI's first women's soccer regular season Southern Conference victory since Oct. 2017. The half-time score left VMI down 2-0, but the Keydets fought back. With Boucher's two goals and a goal by Sedona Dancu '25, the final score of the afternoon was 3-2. Head coach Chris Haught-Thompson emphasized how proud he was of the team for the rival victory and the resilience they displayed.—Photos courtesy of VMI Athletics.

Family Weekend

By Marianne Hause

VMI hosted Family Weekend Oct. 20–22 with a variety of events and activities. Friday’s activities included the Parents Council fall meeting in Marshall Hall. In addition, parents were able to attend Friday classes with their cadets, and meet with faculty members and advisors. That afternoon, ROTC held open-door sessions in Kilbourne Hall, and a talk titled, “Fostering Resilience in Your Cadet” was given by the counseling office in Nichols Engineering Building auditorium. That evening, as the rains cleared out for the remainder of the weekend, a Jewish Shabbat dinner was held in the Turman Room of Preston Library, and the Commanders Jazz Band and the Glee Club gave a concert in Memorial Hall. VMI Theatre performed a collection of one-act western plays called “Best of the West” in Gillis Theater to enthusiastic audiences throughout the weekend.

On Saturday morning, barracks were open to visitors, and an invitation-only reception for Honor Cadets and their families was held at the home of Brig. Gen. and Mrs. Robert Moreschi. Tailgating filled the Parade Ground starting in the early hours. The rest of the day was filled with pageantry and sports, as the Corps of Cadets marched on the Parade Ground, the men’s and women’s rifle teams set multiple records in a win against The Citadel in Kilbourne Hall, and the Keydet football team fought vigorously against Samford University in Foster Stadium, but fell short with the final score of 14-27.

Brad Holley, whose son Garrett matriculated in August enjoyed the weekend. “We were able to meet our son’s dyke, Andrew



Cadets march down to the football game Oct. 21.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Partridge '24. It's comforting to know that Garrett has someone to turn to for advice and guidance throughout the rigors of the Rat Line. We got to see his room in barracks, and loved meeting his brother rats. The parade, tailgating, and football game were a lot of fun. Most of all we enjoyed some much needed family time with our son,” he said.



Virginia '24, Margaret '27, Ali, Mark '96, David '27, Annie '24, and Yoo-hoo Townsend relish time together during Family Weekend.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Ali and Mark Townsend '96 have all four of their children enrolled at VMI. “Family weekend will definitely be featured on our Christmas cards and holiday greetings this year! The weekend was not only a chance for our kids to catch up with us and our family dog, but also a chance for us to catch up with our larger VMI family,” stated Mark.

The weekend ended reverently with Catholic and Protestant worship services in Memorial Hall, followed by Col. John Casper '04, Institute chaplain; Capt. Eli Facemire '19, associate chaplain; and Al Soltis, Fellowship of Christian Athletes VMI area director, baptizing a dozen cadets in the chilly Maury River with family and friends in attendance. ✝



Garrett Holley '27 and his father, Brad enjoy the day with Garrett’s dyke, Andrew Partridge '24.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Cadets perform in “The Best of the West” in Gillis Theater during Family Weekend.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Col. Joyce Blandino hands an assignment back to Casey Maggi '27 while his family visits class.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Fall FTX

Cadets participated with their respective ROTC units in fall field training exercises—FTX—Oct. 6–8. Using various locations on post, as well as McKethan Park, cadets on a commissioning track learned land navigation skills, participated in team-building exercises, trained in various mission scenarios, and practiced tactical maneuvers. Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program cadets traveled to Smith Mountain Lake to train.—VMI
Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Andrew Partridge '24, and courtesy of Hannah White '24.





Japan's National Security Strategy Discussion

Japanese Defense and Naval Attaché Rear Adm. Takaaki Hayamizu led a panel discussion focused on Japan's new national security strategy Oct. 19 in the Hall of Valor, which was sponsored by the John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis. His presentation outlined recent changes to Japan's strategy in the context of the U.S.-Japanese alliance and the evolving geopolitical situation in East Asia. Following introductory remarks, Hayamizu took questions from Col. David Gray, director of the Center for Leadership and Ethics and Col. Spencer Bakich, director of VMI's National Security Program, before opening the floor to questions from cadets. More than 300 cadets, faculty members, and staff were in attendance for the engaging discussion.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Baseball Field Almost Complete

The finishing touches are happening on the updated turf baseball field at Gray-Minor Stadium. An important contributor to this project is Mike Lamore '85, who was named Southern Conference Freshman of the Year at the end of his rat year, and is still tied for the No. 4 rank in all-time batting average and No. 3 in all-time on-base percentage. The project included replacing the natural grass with all-weather AstroTurf. During the summer and early fall of 2023, the field was stripped bare and then covered with AstroTurf, creating an all-weather playing surface. For Lamore, seeing players on the field will be the highlight of his spring. "I don't think there's a better place to give back to than VMI and its mission to develop responsible future leaders, which our country needs," he said.—VMI Photo by Lexie West.

Fall Open Houses

Prospective cadets and their families take advantage of the interactive experience of the admissions open houses this fall. The three fall open houses, one in September, one in October, and the last in early November, offered a two-day program for students and their guardians to meet current cadets, hear from administration, visit academic departments, and eat in the mess hall. Prospective cadets have the opportunity to stay in barracks for a night with a rat host. —VMI
Photos by Kelly Nye and Andrew Partridge '24.



Alumni Career Networking Forum

Nearly 1,100 cadets and more than 50 alumni gather in Memorial Hall and Cocke Hall Sept. 30, for the annual Cadet—Alumni Career Networking Forum. This event offers cadets the chance to meet alumni representing a wide range of fields including health care, information technology and cybersecurity, law enforcement, banking and finance, government, National Guard/reserve, and more. New this year was an event specially designed for the Rat Mass to hear two alumni discuss the process of preparing for life after VMI. —VMI
Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.





Silver Shako Returns to VMI

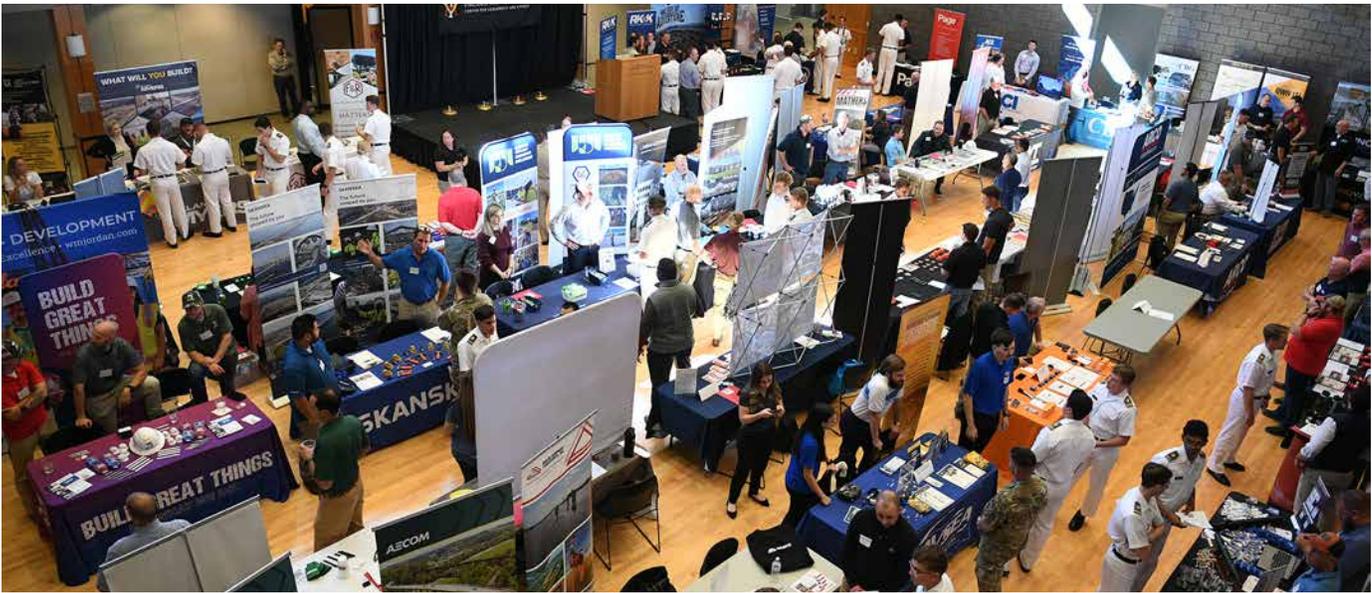
After a week of spirited fun preparing for the big rivalry game, including an energetic pep rally in barracks on the evening of Oct. 12, the Keydet football team was energized to head to Charleston, South Carolina, to compete against The Citadel in the Military Classic of the South Oct. 14. It was a tight game, going into half time with a tie at 10-10, but VMI held on to win 17-13. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 was presented with the Silver Shako trophy to bring back to Lexington.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye and courtesy of Anna Yemelianova '25 and VMI Athletic Communications.





Fall Career Fair

Nearly 100 employers were on post Oct. 25 for a fall career fair. The event, which was open to all cadets, was split into a STEM fair and a non-STEM fair with employers discussing both career and internship opportunities. Notable employers included the CIA, Virginia Department of Transportation, Army Corps of Engineers, Luck Stone, Target, Delta Airlines, U.S. Navy JAG, Wintergreen Resort, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, and GE HealthCare. Several graduate school program representatives were also on hand. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Trivia Answers from Page 7

1. Greece
2. Computer
3. Winston didn't receive his diploma until 101 years later because during his valedictorian address, he uttered excoriating remarks to the faculty and administration.
4. 1996
5. The first two female graduates, Chih-Yuan Ho '01 and Melissa K. Graham '01, received their diplomas in 1999. Both were transfer students from other colleges.



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



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Harvest Hop

Cadets and their dates enjoy a night of music and dancing in Cocke Hall Oct. 14. The theme of this year's Harvest Hop was Evening in Greece.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.