



INSTITUTE REPORT

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Cadets Benefit from BEYA Conference

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Nine cadets attended the BEYA STEM Conference in February, an event that brings together science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) K-12 and college students, as well as corporate, government, and military professionals for three days. This year's event took place in National Harbor, Maryland.

BEYA stands for Black Engineer of the Year Award, but also stands for Becoming Everything You Are, incorporating a more inclusive audience to their events, which are dedicated

to helping minorities pursue careers in STEM fields. VMI has been sending cadets to the BEYA STEM Conference since 2014, with the past two years being virtual. "It was great to be back in person. This is the first time several of these cadets have had an opportunity like this, to engage with two- and three-star generals, executives in STEM industries, and peers at the other service academies," said Col. Troy Siemers, professor and head of the Department of Applied Mathematics. Siemers has helped organize the participation in the conference for several years.

Mark Shelton '24 has participated in the conference each year he has been at VMI. He was greatly influenced as a 4th Class cadet by Jordan Ward '21, who took the lead in making it possible for cadets to benefit from the conference's opportunities and networking. Since then, Shelton has taken an active role in making sure cadets have the funding and arrangements to attend. "I hope the cadets who attended the event were able to grasp the enormous amount of opportunities that await them post-graduation and were able to make connections that will help them when that time comes," he said. "I hope they put themselves out of their comfort zone and learned something new each day."

Shelton, a computer science major, walked away from the conference with an offer for an internship. "The



Cadets pose with Sean Lanier '94 at the BEYA STEM Conference in National Harbor, Maryland.—Photo courtesy of Mark Shelton '24.

influential people who run the BEYA STEM Conference recognize VMI for producing honorable leaders who can be trusted to get the job done the right way. They want and need us," he said. "To them, we are an investment worth making."

In addition to Shelton, VMI attendees included Wesley Barbara '23, Fatoumata Diallo '23, Xavier Frederick '23, Rose Ly '23, Vy Nguyen '23, Joshua Kent '24, Daniel Lee '24, and Jonathan Tumwikirize '24.

E. Sean Lanier '94, a former member of the Board of Visitors who has been involved with BEYA for years, knows the power of the BEYA STEM community. "I've championed cadets attending the conference for five years and will continue to advocate strongly for their attendance." He went on to say, "There has been no year that I have hosted cadets who did not get multiple offers for internships and post-graduate opportunities."

Getting more cadets to the conference is a big goal for Lanier. Not only are they coming away with a remarkable network of contacts, but they also can represent VMI to the younger attendees. "Cadets get to tell the VMI story as ambassadors from their perspective to these leaders in academics, and to the high schoolers and middle schoolers from across the country," he said.

Lanier and Shelton are already looking forward to next year's event that will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, in mid-February. "It's never too early to think about and plan for your future. See what's out there, you might be surprised," said Shelton. 🌟



Mark Shelton '24 chats with Gen. Dennis Via, the 18th commanding general of the United States Army Materiel Command, at the BEYA STEM Conference on Feb. 10.—Photo courtesy of Mark Shelton '24.

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On the cover: Cadets fire Little John in New Barracks on the morning of Feb. 13, kicking off Breakout activities.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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NFL Legend Brings Message of Courage

By Marianne Hause

VMI welcomed Shaquem Griffin, retired NFL linebacker who played for the Seattle Seahawks, as he kicked off the Center for Leadership & Ethics (CLE) 2023 Courageous Leadership Speaker series Feb. 1 before a packed house in Gillis Theatre.

The theme of this year's speaker series is "Courage of Convictions," and according to Col. Pat Looney, deputy director of the CLE, Griffin is a living testament to that theme. Born with a rare disorder called amniotic band syndrome, Griffin suffered so much pain in his left hand that by the

time he was four years old, he attempted to cut off his own fingers with a kitchen knife. His parents found him in time to prevent the calamity, but surgery was required to have his hand amputated.

The loss of his left hand did not deter Griffin from keeping up with his identical twin brother, Shaquill, who currently plays cornerback for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Soon after his surgery, Shaquem was eager to play with his twin outside. His mother let him, but warned him not to get his bandages dirty. Playing football though, requires catching, which resulted with him coming back in the house with a bloody bandage. "That bloody bandage was the best thing that could have happened. I could dream and I could play," he reminisced. Even at four, he did not let his "limb difference" devalue him.

Griffin has what he calls a "belief tool," that is the mindset that one can accomplish anything he sets his mind to. "Our belief tool is strong as a young child. Kids truly believe they can be a fire fighter, or an astronaut, or a football player. But as we get older, our belief tool gets attacked from others doubting us, and from our own doubts. We need to keep it sharpened by overcoming all doubt," he warned.

The twins played youth football. When they were 8, their team made it to a playoff game, but the opposing team's coach tried to prevent Shaquem from playing, arguing that football is a two-handed sport, and if he got hurt, he would be a liability. The twins' coach let Shaquem decide if he should play, and of course he chose to play. He played defense, intercepting the ball and sealing victory for his team. He gave the ball to the opposing coach so he would always remember the one-handed boy who never doubted his own abilities.

The twins grew up best friends and were inseparable. "When we were 9, we made a pact. We would go to the same college, get the same degree, and marry twin girls," Shaquem recounted. After the audience laughter subsided, he continued. "We continued to play football, and by the time we were high school seniors, we were big



Shaquem Griffin speaks to a full house in Gillis Theater on the evening of Feb. 1.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

men on campus. College recruiting went well, and I got offers, but Shaquill got more. True to our pact, he turned down scholarships to Florida, Alabama, and Texas A&M because they didn't offer one to me. Finally, the coach from the University of Central Florida (UCF) came along and said, 'I can't take one without the other.' So, we committed on the spot."

The first year of college, Shaquem didn't play football. He was diligent in working out and attended every practice, and being a freshman, accepted that the older and more experienced team members played. In his second year, the coach still didn't play him, and he started to question why. He did everything he was told to do, but still had to sit out games. He grew discouraged and doubted his abilities. Meanwhile his

twin was flourishing in football.

Once during that season when the team was out of town for an away game, Shaquem stayed behind and tried to watch his brother play on his laptop, but the internet was down. He became disheartened and broke down in tears. He reached out to his support system for help, and called his mom. "My mom has seven sisters, so she immediately called them all, along with my grandma, and they started what we call a prayer line. I learned faith through my family, and right then and there, on that phone call, they all prayed for me, and reminded me of all the accomplishments I have already achieved. When I got off that phone, I was recentered. It was a lesson for me that I am not alone," he recollected.

Griffin's optimism was infectious as he advised his audience of cadets, school-aged children and their parents, and other community members, "Everyone faces adversity and difficulties throughout life. It may be an injury, it may be heartbreak, it may be bad grades, but do not allow those setbacks to stop you from following your dream. It takes grit, hard work, and determination to reach our goals. Rely on your support system. Mine is my family, but you have one too. Use them. No one can accomplish things on their own."

Going into his third year of college, Griffin thought it would be his best year yet, but he was wrong. "The coach called me into his office and told me they were sending me home. I accepted that, thinking he meant my dorm room, and just for the day. The following day, I was back working out in the weight room. The coach called me back to his office and asked me why I was still on campus. He told me if I didn't leave campus immediately, they would call the police. Heartbroken, I called my mom, and she picked me up. Being sent home tested my faith." Shaquem learned later that the coach

Continued on next page

separated the twins to see if Shaquill could succeed without his brother on campus.

At home, Griffin kept busy working two jobs: cleaning offices for his older brother's janitorial business, and towing cars for his father's towing company. "I appreciated my support system, and Shaquill called me every day to see how I was doing, and to encourage me to keep working out and to stay in shape. My brother believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself,"

Shaquem confessed. He hit a low point when he had to completely submerge himself into a puddle in order to hook up a car to be towed. When he successfully delivered the car to its owner, he was offered a five-dollar tip, but before the bill was handed over to him, the man tore it in two with the words, "This is a lesson, if you want something bad enough, you gotta go get it." Shaquem still has that bill as a reminder to the life lesson.

Soon after that incident, Shaquem received a call from the coach at UCF, inviting him back, but learned that offer came at his brother's sacrifice. When Shaquill heard the coach wanted Shaquem



Shaquem Griffin takes time to chat with cadets and other guests after his remarks in Gillis Theater as part of the Courageous Leadership Speaker series.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

to play junior college (JUCO) football, he once again honored the pact the twins had made many years earlier, and informed the coach if Shaquem was forced to play JUCO, then he would too. Since the coach wanted and needed Shaquill where he was, he agreed to let Shaquem play on the team as well. "I had forgotten that everything happens in God's time, not my time," said Shaquem. The twins were thrilled to be back together. In Shaquem's final season, the UCF Knights went on to be undefeated, with Shaquem being named the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl Defensive MVP. The twins then went on to play together for

the same NFL team, the Seattle Seahawks.

Griffin closed his speech by encouraging his listeners to never give up on their goals and dreams, and never give in to self-doubt. "Have faith, believe in yourself. You have people who love you, reach out to them for help, and use them as a sharpening tool. The Lord works in mysterious ways and with each failure, there is a lesson to learn, and with each lesson, good things follow."

Following the talk, Griffin autographed copies of the book he and Shaquill wrote called, "Inseparable—How Family and Sacrifice Forged a Path to the NFL." ❄



Taking the First Dip

The Keydet swimming and diving teams and the water polo team joined together in a big ceremonious splash into the new Aquatic Center pool on Feb. 9. The evening practice was arranged to make sure everyone jumped in together. The Department of Human Performance and Wellness began classes in the Aquatic Center on Feb. 13.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



The Arsenal Now Open

By Marianne Hause

A ribbon cutting was held on Feb. 8 for the new cadet activity center located on the ground floor of Crozet Hall. The center has been dubbed “The Arsenal,” through a vote by the Corps of Cadets, and is for their use to relax, socialize, and enjoy televised events. They chose the name as a nod to VMI’s history. The Virginia State Arsenal in Lexington was established in 1818, then converted into the Institute in November 1839, with the goal of educating the young men who manned the arsenal. For more than a decade, students were housed in the old arsenal barracks.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, superintendent; Col. Adrian T. Bogart III ’81, commandant; Garrett Petruskie ’23, captain of the S7 staff; Blake Smith ’23, regimental commander; and Cameron Cavanaugh ’23, 1st Class president, made the ceremonial ribbon cut together, officially opening the facility.

Wins pointed out the importance of the facility. “Cadets need and want a place to spend some time together to talk, relax, and take in some entertainment. I think this is a great space, and it’s going to be fully utilized by the Corps. We also know that it only has a capacity for 85. There’s a good reason for that,” he quipped humorously, referring to 1985, the year he graduated from VMI.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne D. Rubenstein, director of activities, there has not been a cadet-only relaxation space on post



Derrick Jackson ’23 shoots pool in the new cadet activity center, The Arsenal.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

since the old Lejeune Hall was razed to build Third Barracks in 2007. “The previous space was a TV room with no amenities, other than seats and a rear projection screen TV. The Arsenal has a billiards table, two large screen TVs with gaming, cable, and internet hook-ups. There are sectional sofas, and café tables and chairs. A bar and grill, run by Parkhurst Dining, VMI’s food services vendor, offers sodas, sports drinks, and specialty food items.” She also expressed gratitude for gaming accessories and other items gifted by parents and anonymous donors.

Lee Clark ’93, director of auxiliary services, reported that planning for the center began in earnest in 2021. “Class officers, the Institute planner, auxiliary services, physical plant, facilities management, and the commandant’s staff were all involved.”

Petruskie stated that the S7 staff, who is in charge of morale, welfare, and recreation, is tasked with manning the space. “The Arsenal will go a long way in raising morale. Cadets work very hard academically and physically.

There is a lot demanded of them, and this center will be a real ‘shot in the arm’ in raising spirits,” he said.

The first official event for the space was a Super Bowl party on Feb. 12. Regular hours of operation are 6:45 p.m. to 10 p.m., Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The space may become available for other post events. ❁



Andrew Henderson ’23 and Lauren Kattmann ’23 play a video game in the cadet activity center, The Arsenal.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Col. Adrian Bogart III ’81, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, along with cadets Cameron Cavanaugh ’23, Blake Smith ’23, and Garrett Petruskie ’23 cut a ribbon to ceremoniously open The Arsenal Feb. 8.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Cadets Receive Direct Commissions with Coast Guard

By Marianne Hause



A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter crew visits post during 2022 spring field training exercises.—VMI File Photo by Kelly Nye.

For the first time in VMI history, cadets have received active-duty direct commissions to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) by way of the Auxiliary University Programs (AUP), and will take their oath of office and receive their first salute at the Joint Commissioning Ceremony on May 15. The momentous achievement has been earned by three cadets, all from Virginia: Aidan Rice '23, an electrical and computer engineering major from Mechanicsville; Sarah Robertson '23, a computer science major from Richmond; and Aidan Simmons '23, an international studies major from Aldie, who also serves as the AUP unit commander. Emma Pratt '21, an alumna from Floyd, will also commission, and Conner Jorgensen '23, a civil engineering major from Glen Allen, received a commission into the USCG reserves.

The USCG falls under the Department of Homeland Security, unlike other military

branches that fall under the Department of Defense. The USCG does not offer a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program like the other branches, but instead offers AUP for cadets interested in commissioning upon graduating. In addition to their AUP activities, cadets are still required by state law to participate in four years of Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Air Force ROTC. Many USCG AUP cadets choose to participate in the Navy ROTC program.

According to Simmons, the program at VMI was established in 2020 as a club. "Stephen DeCoster '22 and I, along with the commandant staff officer-in-charge at the time, all worked together to get it started. A lot of phone calls and networking led us to retired Commander Dick At Lee at USCG Auxiliary Roanoke Flotilla at Smith Mountain Lake, who guided us through the process to establish the AUP on post, and who now serves as Auxiliary liaison

for the AUP. In addition, a graduate of VMI who is currently in the Coast Guard, Lieutenant junior grade Madeline Moger '20, serves as our active duty liaison," he said.

Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein, director of cadet activities and VMI liaison for the AUP, reports that the club has grown from a few members to 43 members in less than two years, and has become one of the largest AUPs in the United States. "The AUP provides our cadets with an academic and practical curriculum that will effectively build their resumé. Since VMI is a senior military school, the USCG offers cadets a few different pathways: direct commissioning, the traditional officer candidate school, or enlistment with a four year degree. Having these cadets selected for direct commissioning is incredible. We are very proud of that accomplishment," she remarked. ❁



Breakout

Two weeks after Little John was fired in barracks for a fake out, the real Breakout took place on Monday, Feb. 13. The weekday Breakout was different from the Saturday events that had taken place in recent years. Cadre woke up the Rat Mass at 5:30 a.m. for training activities before breakfast, then they participated in a normal academic day. Breakout activities resumed in the afternoon, including a log march, a crawl across the Parade Ground, and stoop workouts. Col. Bob Phillips '87, Institute chaplain, was the guest speaker at the Breakout dinner. The evening concluded with the first Old Yell for the Class of 2026.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.



Sowers and Timmes Recognized by SoCon

By Marianne Hause

Col. Tom Timmes '92, professor of civil and environmental engineering, and Institute and Corps Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers, were recognized at the Keydet basketball game on Feb. 15 in Cameron Hall for being named members of the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team for the 2022–23 academic year. With two representatives chosen from each of the Southern Conference's 10 member schools, the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team recognizes in-

for Environmental Health Research in Fort Detrick, Maryland, and served as Director for Environmental Health Sciences and Engineering at the Army Public Health Center before retiring from active duty to join VMI's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. As a volunteer diving coach, Timmes has helped the VMI men's and women's teams grow in number and skill, and provide critical points to the swim/dive team scores. Timmes dove for



Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers and Col. Tom Timmes '92 are recognized in Cameron Hall on Feb. 15, as they stand with Brig. Gen. Robert Moreschi, Col. Jay Johnson, and Jim Miller.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

dividuals who have demonstrated service to their schools and made contributions to campus life and the local community.

Timmes served for over 25 years in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps. His academic and research interests include water quality, electrocoagulation, military field drinking water, water treatment plant optimization, and water system vulnerability assessments. As an Army environmental engineer, he conducted extensive drinking water and wastewater system characterizations and public health threat assessments throughout the U.S. and overseas. He commanded the Headquarters Company of the U.S. Army Chemical Activity-Pacific on Johnston Atoll during its closure as a chemical agent demilitarization site and served as a Jumpmaster with the 82nd Airborne Division. He taught a variety of academic subjects on the faculty at the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) for six years. Timmes commanded the U.S. Army Center

VMI during the 1988–89 season and finished the season as the Tri-State Champion for both the 1-Meter and 3-Meter diving boards. His 4th Class year total score for 11-dives on the 1-Meter board remains in the VMI record books. "I appreciate being selected for this award. It is very inspiring to see the motivation and drive of our cadet-athletes in the academic classrooms, during their daily practices, and especially when they compete to win," said Timmes.

Sowers retired from the United States Marine Corps in June 2018 and assumed his duties as the Institute and Corps Sergeant Major for VMI. The 30-year veteran of the Marine Corps assumed much of the day-to-day oversight of the Corps of Cadets and is responsible for administering the New Cadet Military Training Program and overseeing cadet leaders, among many other duties. Sowers came to VMI after having served as 1st Marine Division Sergeant Major at Camp Pendleton, California. He served five combat tours: one in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, one in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and three in Operation Enduring Freedom. His awards include the meritorious service medal, the bronze star medal with combat distinguishing device and one gold star, the Navy and Marine Corps commendation medal with combat distinguishing device and two gold stars, the Navy and Marine Corps achievement medal with three gold stars, and the combat action ribbon with two gold stars. "I am humbled and honored to be recognized by the Southern Conference as well as Virginia Military Institute. I will continue to assist the Institute in meeting its mission of developing honorable men and women," said Sowers. ❄



Promaji Celebrates Black History Month

Throughout the month of February, the Promaji Club celebrated Black History Month with the theme "African American Leadership: Past, Present, Future." Events included a trivia night, sip and shirt design activity, and an alumni panel. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, attended the sip and shirt night, in which cadets drank mocktails and painted T-shirts.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



POST BRIEFS

Goen Named Chair for NAFSA Academy

Todd Lee Goen, director and senior international officer in the office of global education, has assumed the role of chair for the NAFSA Academy for 2023. NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world's largest and most comprehensive nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange. It serves the needs of more than 10,000 members and international educators worldwide at more than 3,500

institutions in over 150 countries. The academy is an intensive yearlong training program with networking opportunities designed to expand and deepen understanding of international education. Patricia Hardin, assistant director of the office of global education, was selected as a participant for the academy this year.

Wolfe Receives Leadership Award

Sam Wolfe '23 has been selected as a 2023 Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States (AMCSUS) Leadership Award winner. The award, which consists of a \$1,000 check and a plaque, was presented at the organization's scholarship and awards ceremony held on Feb. 27. Each year, this honor is awarded to two top leaders at the collegiate level

and two at the preparatory school level. AMCSUS consists of nearly 40 military colleges and high schools, including the nation's senior and junior military colleges, and advocates on behalf of its member institutions, and promotes high military and ethical standards.

Women in Physics Represented at Princeton

Four physics majors, who are also members of the Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE) group, participated in the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics (CUWiP) at Princeton University in January. Grace Waters '23, Talli Tarring '24, Abby Fiorillo '25, and Angelina Garcia '25 were sponsored by the American Physical Society to attend

the conference. Tarring is the president for WiSE and Fiorillo is the vice president. Col. Daniela Topasna is advisor for WiSE. Waters presented her Capstone research results, "Multi-wavelength Polarization Measurements of Be Stars," which she worked on with Col. Gregory Topasna. ✨

Institute Physician to Retire

By Marianne Hause

After 31 years of treating the Corps of Cadets, Dr. David Copeland is retiring in May from his position of Institute physician.

Copeland grew up in the small rural town of Carthage, Texas, surrounded by extended family. "It was an idyllic childhood. My two brothers and I spent a lot of time outdoors. We were taught to garden and work with livestock. Both my parents, as well as my aunt, were teachers at the school we attended, so I had them all as teachers," he reminisced.

Copeland attended Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas where he earned a bachelor's degree in English, then went to the University of Memphis in Tennessee and earned a master's degree. He then volunteered in the Peace Corps. With his farming background, he requested to work on an agricultural project, which placed him in Benin, a French speaking West African nation for two and a half years. Living among the people of Benin gave him a different perspective on the world. "I taught the people to use oxen to pull plows instead of using handheld shovels to turn the soil to sow seeds. The average annual income at that time in that part of the country was about \$50. By using oxen, it enabled the people to make a little more money. It was a very basic way of life, which I found very appealing, rid of all the excesses of the Western world. There were no throwaway people there, everyone was cared for. I remember a middle-aged man whose legs were paralyzed, and every day his family would carry him out to the field, where he would get down on the ground and work the crops with a hand shovel. He contributed to the community, and was a valued member.

There was no medical care, just a small clinic run by a retired man who had served in the French army. The only drug at his disposal was aspirin," he said.

Upon returning to the United States, through a mutual friend he met a young lady who was attending medical school, and who would later become his wife. "She was in her last year of medical school when we were introduced by my closest friend in the Peace Corps, who turned out to be her closest friend in middle school when she was growing up," shared Copeland.

Unsure of his next direction in life, Copeland's brother urged him to attend veterinary school because of his love for animals. "So, I actually started taking pre-vet classes, which fortunately are the same core classes as pre-med. I was spending so much time hanging around the hospital when my wife and I were courting, that it was a natural transition for me to switch to medical school," he mused. Copeland received his medical degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and served both his internship and residency at Beth Israel Hospital, now called the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts. He worked in internal medicine at an HMO in Boston for two years after completing his training.

Copeland and his family moved to Lexington for several reasons: the close proximity to his older brother who lived in Washington, D.C., the opportunity to live in a rural area, and the temperate

Continued on next page

climate. He worked as an internal medicine physician in Lexington for seven years. "It turns out I was a terrible businessman, and they don't teach you how to run a business in medical school. I was actually struggling because I would treat patients who didn't have any money, and I wouldn't charge them. I worked long hours. If it snowed and patients didn't show up, I didn't have any income, but I still had to pay my staff, and that was disheartening." Copeland got to know Dr. William W. Old III, the previous VMI physician, since Old often referred patients to him. So, when he heard Old was retiring, he applied for the position. "I liked the fact that this was a salaried position with retirement benefits. It gave me a fixed schedule, so I had more time for my family. I had two young children at the time, so that was very important to me. I felt welcomed at VMI right away, and the cadets referred to me as 'Dr. New,' since I replaced Dr. Old," he quipped.

Having no personal military experience nor any familial military connections, Copeland was initially anxious about adapting to the culture at VMI, but over time has learned a lot about the VMI culture, and appreciates the directness, honesty, and goodwill he finds on post. "The Honor Code rubs off on everyone who works here, and it makes you very conscious of the importance of being rigorously honest," he said.

Under Copeland's tenure, the infirmary has grown with more services offered. "When I first started, we had four full-time nurses and one administrative person. Over time, we have increased our services, and I think we're doing a better job. We now have three full-time administrators and eight full-time nurses covering round-the-clock shifts. First thing on Monday mornings, we used to have 50 to 60 cadets show up waiting to be seen. Now, we encourage appointments, and have an average wait time of less than five minutes. We know how busy the cadets are, so we strive to get them seen and back to their duties as quickly as possible," Copeland explained.

The addition of family nurse practitioner, Jenny H. Crance, DNP, FNP-C, in 2011 also helped Copeland with his practice. "Not only does she share the load of patient care, but it is so helpful to be able to discuss ideas with her, and to get second assessments from her. Her presence here has made a big difference," said Copeland.

The VMI infirmary has 18 beds, but is not a hospital. "The usual maladies we treat here, are things like stomach viruses. Normally a college student with that type of illness would go back to the dorm room to recuperate, but for a cadet, it's hard to be sick in barracks. Allowing cadets to stay here until they recover is more of a convenience for them, and it also helps to protect their roommates from catching the virus. The nurses assess cadets and have me or Jenny Crance see patients they are concerned about. The nurses make sure the patients are getting their fluids and medications. If cadets

are more seriously ill, or if they need an X-ray or IV fluids, they are referred to the hospital in Lexington," said Copeland.

According to Copeland, COVID-19 first hit VMI the same time it did at schools all over the country. "We were very busy, but the staff here pulled together and got the job done. Jenny Crance was instrumental in restructuring the efficiency of the office. Caitlin Perry, the head nurse, worked out how to swiftly communicate with the commandant's staff, primarily Sergeant Major Suzanne Rubenstein, in isolating COVID-19 positive cadets and providing them proper medical care. Alerting and quarantining close contacts added to the workload. "We were following CDC guidelines about how to quarantine and isolate, and it was almost overwhelming. But the staff maintained calm, and developed a protocol on the fly, which

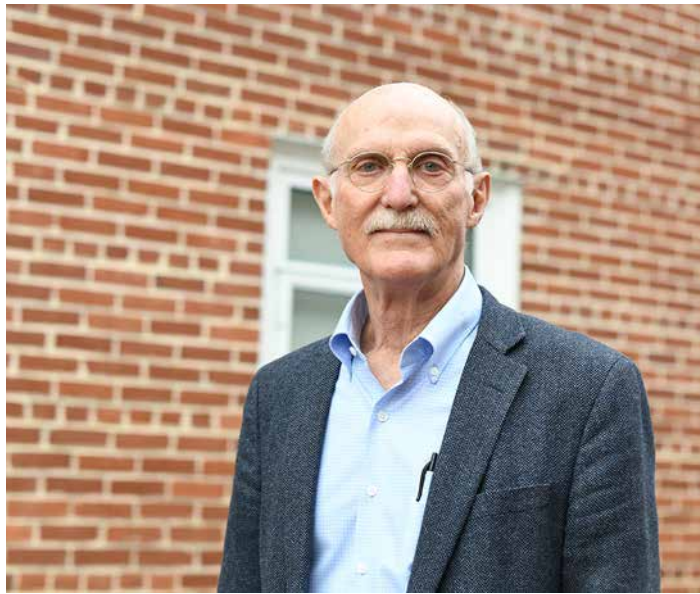
became very useful as we all came back in the fall of 2021. It was a great exercise on how to deal with a slow moving emergency," he said.

Copeland admits his decision to retire was not an easy one. "I love coming to work, and working with the infirmary staff. I've known my office manager, Lorie Kingery since 1985, when she was a student in high school, and she's been with me off and on since. I've known Jenny Crance since she was 15 and a friend of my daughter. Most of my nurses have children, so for me it's like those children are all my grandchildren. I'll miss them," he lamented.

He and his wife built a house on 30 acres, and his plans include working on the property and enhancing his vegetable garden. He also plans to cultivate his hobby of shaping stone into artwork. Two of his stone works, a human face and a small statue of Biblical patriarch, Abraham, and his wife Sarah, are carved out of pink alabaster and on display in his office. "I like the feel of shaping stones and polishing them. It's a mental challenge, which I enjoy. It's very tactile," he explained.

Copeland and his wife, who still practices pediatrics in Roanoke and Staunton, plan to travel. "My goal is Greece. I'm a great fan of ancient Greece. I want to see some old ruins, and the Parthenon, and the country has great weather and great food." The couple have two children who they would like to visit more often: a daughter in New York who is a professional oboist and often plays with the Metropolitan Opera and the American Ballet Theatre, and a son in San Francisco, who is a professional swimmer and came close to qualifying for the U.S. Olympic team. He now owns and operates a pool and offers swim lessons.

Copeland's replacement will arrive on post before he leaves, allowing the two to work together for a few weeks, and then Copeland will retire in May. "I am confident the new physician will be a great fit for the Institute and will enjoy working with the staff and cadets as much as I have," he said. ❀



Dr. David Copeland

VMI Hosts 6th Annual Commonwealth Cyber Fusion

By Marianne Hause

VMI hosted the 6th annual Commonwealth Cyber Fusion and Virginia Cyber Cup Competition, a state-wide collegiate cyber security competition on Feb. 24–25. The invitation-only event is for colleges that are National Security Agency (NSA) / Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense.

It was organized by the Center for Leadership and Ethics as part of its strategic engagement initiatives, co-hosted with the Virginia Cyber Range and the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative.

VMI founded this cybersecurity event in 2017 at the suggestion of Bryce Bucklin '17, a computer science major, when the Commonwealth of Virginia sought to create a statewide cybersecurity competition. Sen. Mark Warner serves as honorary chairman.

Participating were about 150 students with 30 of their faculty advisors representing 20 colleges in Virginia: Danville Community



Cadets participate in the cyber competition in Marshall Hall Feb. 25.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

College, ECPI, George Mason University, George Washington University, Germanna Community College, James Madison University, Liberty University, Laurel Ridge Community College, Marymount University, Northern Virginia Community College, Old Dominion University, Radford University, Regent University, Virginia Peninsula Community College, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, VMI, Virginia Tech, and Virginia Western Community College. Each college was allowed to bring

six competing students along with two observer students.

VMI cadet competitors were Nick Schaefer '23, William Shelley '23, John Boles '24, Alexa Avery '25, Joseph Flynn '25, and Alex Dieffenbach '26.

Friday's activities included a keynote speech by Maria Sumnicht, who was the Urban Technology Architect for New York City Cyber Command, responsible for the cyber security and technologies for

Continued on next page



Maria Sumnicht addresses the Cyber Fusion audience in Gillis Theater Feb. 24.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

VMI is hosting the 2023 USIBA Boxing Nationals

March 23–25, Cocke Hall

March 23, 6 p.m.—Quarterfinals \$10
 March 24, 6 p.m.—Semifinals \$10
 March 25, 1 p.m.—Finals \$15

Ticket for all three nights \$25
 Kids 5 and under \$5

Purchase tickets at the door or call 540-464-7325.





Members of the employer panel discuss real-world solutions with the audience in Gillis Theater on Feb. 24.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



University of Virginia students receive their awards on the Gillis stage in Marshall Hall Feb. 25.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

the more than 65 city agencies; a job fair; and an employer panel discussion regarding real-world advice for students.

The winners of the capture-the-flag-style competition for the four-year college division are: University of Virginia in first, Liberty University finishing second, and George Mason University

in third. For the community college division: Tidewater Community College was the winner, followed by Laurel Ridge Community College in second, and Virginia Western Community College in third. The University of Virginia was the overall winner and received the Commonwealth Cyber Fusion Cup. 🌟



Legislative Reception

Alumni, faculty, staff, and cadets gathered at the Library of Virginia in Richmond on the evening of Feb. 16 to thank members of the legislature, including Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears and Sen. Thomas K. Norment Jr. '68, who were in attendance, for their service and support of VMI. This is the first legislative reception since February 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Several cadets had the chance to spend the day in Richmond with elected officials for the commonwealth.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





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Midwinter Formal

Cadets and their dates dance in Cocke Hall during the Midwinter Formal Feb. 17 and 18. Friday night, 1st and 2nd Class cadets attended, with 3rd and 4th Class cadets attending Saturday. Put on by the S7 staff, the James Bond-themed event featured live music and 007 decorations.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.

