

Soon you will be receiving a letter from our reunion committee soliciting donations to the VMI Alumni Agencies for a class gift of \$19.74 million to VMI to commemorate our 50th reunion. However, we have learned that a lot of you have “walked away” from making contributions to VMI as a form of effective protest against the many changes made at VMI over the last two years commencing with the forced resignation of Superintendent General “Binni” Peay in November 2020 to address alleged systemic racial and sexual discrimination at VMI. These include changes to the Ratline, Corps and Class systems, Honor system and the introduction of controversial practices based on the principles of “DEI” i.e., Diversity, Equity and Inclusion derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Alumni across all classes share your concerns about these changes. This letter is to inform you of an alternative to the “all or nothing” option that will confront you when you consider the Hobson’s choice of contributing to the Alumni Agencies that encourage and financially support these damaging changes or contributing nothing to voice your opposition to them. Listen Ron “Stel” Stelmasczyk’s ’74 announcement using the link at [enclosure 3, para 10c](#).

We believe our alternative is a way forward that unifies Alumni while ensuring your gift goes only to those aspects of the VMI experience deserving of Alumni support. **Bottom line, we are asking you to donate and support The Cadet Foundation, not** the VMI Alumni Agencies for our 50th Reunion Class gift goal. All contributions directed to the Cadet Foundation would be used to fund programs and projects that directly benefit cadets but not those that would impose divisive changes derived from political agendas and policies on the Corps, Ratline and Honor System.

The facts supporting the reasons you should choose our solicitation over that supporting a contribution on behalf of the Alumni Agencies are not complex but they are extensive. Therefore, we summarize them below for your consideration with sources of information which you may wish to consider for those desiring to conduct a “deep dive” into these issues. Links to make your pledge to The Cadet Foundation or contact us are also provided below.

Past solicitations on behalf of the Alumni Agencies have been for gifts to “The Keydet Club Scholarship Fund” which are only used to finance support for NCAA athletes and unrestricted gifts to the VMI “Foundation Fund.” There will likely also be a solicitation directly for the “Class of 1974 Fund”. This form of contribution is also unrestricted. Unrestricted funds can be used to fund any purpose or program the Board of Visitors or VMI Superintendent chooses, including programs intended to advance the goals of the DEI movement. Therefore, we asked the VMI alumni Agencies to include the Cadet Foundation as an option in the solicitation you will receive from the ’74 Reunion Committee.

This joint solicitation would have provided a convenient and efficient way for class members uncomfortable with the usual vehicles for donations to VMI to be assured that their personal contributions will not go to programs they do not support. However, and perhaps not surprisingly, our proposal for a joint solicitation was not accepted but ignored by the VMI Agencies who wish to control all funds contributed by alumni. Therefore, we feel compelled to independently provide another route for our Brother Rats (BRs).

We desire to take a stand and save what is left of the VMI experience; restore **OUR** rights as proud VMI Alumni; and, most importantly, preserve the VMI ethos by ensuring donations directly support projects that benefit cadets and DO NOT fund programs and policies that force changes on the Corps, Ratline, and Honor system, resulting from political agendas and ideologies such as CRT, a divisive DEI Program, and others.

The Cadet Foundation supports freedom of speech at VMI, the Honor Code and system, the power and authority of the Corps to run barracks, the Class system, the Ratline and other programs for Cadet academic and other development. Please read the details about The Cadet Foundation and our approach to form your own opinion at [enclosure 1](#). We are confident you will embrace The Cadet Foundations core tenets listed there, just as we do.

The Cadet Foundation, a 501(c)(3) recently founded by Alumni and cadets, is **totally separate** from the VMI Alumni Agencies and the VMI Administration. It is dedicated to providing funding and other support to cadets and cadet activities directly, without political or other influence from the administration, the VMI Alumni Agencies or in response to “agendas” from any Richmond administration, such as those that brought VMI to this dangerous point in its history. The Cadet Foundation is controlled by a board made up of current cadets and VMI Alumni. It will provide money and other activities to directly benefit cadets, and will be advised by cadets and Alumni including representatives **WE** choose from ’74. The Cadet Foundation’s leadership and its proposed Advisory Board are, and will continue to be, exclusively VMI Alumni and current cadets. We will not provide “the Big Check” at our 50th to the VMI Superintendent, but instead to a **Cadet** and alumnus representing the Corps and The Cadet Foundation. **We think your choice between supporting The Cadet Foundation over the current Agencies and VMI administration could not be clearer.**

The official mission of the VMI Alumni Agencies in its government filings is not to represent Alumni, be our voice, or support what the Corps needs to run barracks, the Ratline, the Corps system, the Honor system, but rather “**to provide support for the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), a State-supported school**”. The Cadet Foundation’s

Mission, however, is **“to unite Alumni and cadets in programs that preserve, protect and advance the core Virginia Military Institute (VMI) ethos of duty, honor, country and development of citizen-soldiers through a shared VMI experience for all.”** We intend to require that funds directed to the Cadet Foundation by our class be distributed to further these aims.

On the spirit of unity for the betterment of Cadets and the VMI experience, The Cadet Foundation approached the VMI Alumni Agencies ([see enclosure 3, para 4h for link to the letter](#)) with “open hands” to work together to support the VMI experience which has shaped our lives, and benefitted our nation and the world through VMI’s traditional mission “to produce educated, honorable men and women, prepared for the varied work of civil life, imbued with love of learning, confident in the functions and attitudes of leadership, possessing a high sense of public service, advocates of the American Democracy and free enterprise system, and ready as citizen-soldiers to defend their country in time of national peril.” **The Alumni Agencies never responded to our earnest, good faith request to work together and exhibit a continuing arrogance where Alumni are merely funding sources with no right to real votes, transparency, or accountability, or for a place where our voices can be heard.**

As the materials we include here and in the attached links show, the reasons for not supporting “the status quo” of the current VMI Administration and Agencies’ operations are clear. The instances of mismanagement and erosion of the VMI experience are almost too numerous to list. Many are detailed in [enclosure 2](#), but just a few examples include:

- Fall 2022 Rat matriculation was down almost 25% at VMI from 2021, while at the same time most Senior Military Colleges, such as the Citadel and Texas A&M met quotas or experienced gains. (see link in [enclosure 3 at para 3c](#)).
- VMI’s stated plan, briefed to the BOV at their September 2022 meeting is to “Achieve **Out-of-State enrollment to 55%/45% In-State.**” The BOV did not express any opposition to this proposal.
- **Honor System Changes** (See [enclosure 2](#)). The current administration, supported by the Agencies and the BOV continue to make substantial changes to the VMI experience, including the Honor System. VMI justifies those changes to the Honor System based upon the findings in the Barnes and Thornburg report called for by the Northam Administration. Even though evidence outlined in the report demonstrated the system performed as designed **and without bias**, changes were made in the name of “equity” and “DEI.” To prove that point, we call your attention to the following statements that appeared in the VMI Quarterly Equity Audit Report ([See link to VMI Quarterly Equity Audit Report in enclosure 3, para 3a](#)) conveying the reasons for changing the Honor System:
 - "On 21 October 2021, after considering the committee's and the cadets' input, the Superintendent implemented the following changes ***in pursuit of equity and the elimination of bias in the honor system.***" (emphasis added; Page 17)
 - “In an additional effort to increase ***diversity*** on the honor court, include ***DEI related language*** on the honor court election ballots, conduct class briefings on honor court roles and responsibilities and the value of ***diversity*** on the court, . . .” (emphasis added; Page 18)
 - The Honor Court, along with the Superintendent’s Representatives to the Honor Court and in coordination with the ***CDO*** (Chief Diversity Officer), will develop and maintain a set of working papers that includes demographic and ***DEI-related data.*** (emphasis added; Page 18)

Shouldn’t the Honor System be about blind justice, not an extension of social justice? It should also be noted that these changes expand the authority previously given to the Superintendent/Superintendent’s Representative, such as to convene a Special Board of Inquiry; permit a drummed out cadet to testify in another Honor Court case; allow the standard 21-day timeframe to prepare a defense to be waived; permit observers(s) during the trial that were not selected from the jury pool. Isn’t the Honor System of, for, and by the Corps of Cadets? ([pages 17 & 18 VMI Quarterly Equity Audit report at enclosure 3, para 3a](#))

- The VMI Superintendent directly stated DEI funding is being expended from the General Assembly’s appropriation, which is forbidden ([see link in enclosure 3 at para 6 – VMI PAC release](#)).
- BOV Member Lara Chambers challenged the Wins administration request for \$800,000, for DEI questioning if the DEI classes were “doing more harm than good” ([see transcript excerpt and link to full audio at enclosure 4](#)). Now VMI is “rebranding” DEI as “Inclusive Excellence” – ***new name, same approach.***
- The only "addition reading" under "required readings" in one VMI History course is by renown, self-proclaimed, Marxist historian self-proclaimed, "Marxist historian" ([See links at enclosure 3, para 11j. –1.](#)) ***Where are the other “diverse” viewpoints?***
- Currently faculty members are speaking out in *The Cadet* newspaper stating that the current climate is destroying VMI ([see enclosure 3, para 8a – link to The Cadet December 15, 2022](#)).
- The VMI BOV approved a **\$100,000 performance bonus** to Maj. Gen. Wins **in addition to his \$620,000, annual salary** of which **47% (over \$300K) is paid with Alumni Agency funds.** According to a Cadet directly involved in the fundraising effort, **Cadets solicited some of the funds used and the bonus was paid from the Alumni Agencies into the Superintendent’s unrestricted fund at VMI.**

- In a recent email to Alumni, in response to legitimate criticisms of his policies, the Superintendent called us, in part, “a group of unhappy Alumni who want to stoke the worst fears and sow seeds of discord about the training and education of students here.” (see links in enclosure 3 at para [7a](#) & [7b](#)).
- The Superintendent took to Facebook to attack former Honor Court President Carmen Villani '76. In another social media post, publicly called senior alumnus and the leader of the Spirit of VMI Political Action Committee, Matt Daniels '85 “racist and desperate” ([enclosure 5](#)) for their criticisms of VMI’s current direction. The Agencies and the BOV did nothing to defend them.
- Awards benefitting cadets, as well as Cadet Clubs such as The Civil War Round Table, were cancelled by VMI because of links to the Civil War, Stonewall Jackson, and distinguished alumnus, sculpture, New Market Cadet, first Jewish VMI graduate and member of the VMI Class of 1864, Sir Moses Ezekiel. ([see link in enclosure 3 at para 3c](#)).
- Free speech at VMI is under attack resulting in a formal warning to VMI from The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) and the Student Press Law Center (SPLC) (link in [enclosure 3](#) at para 9a-c).

The situation with the VMI Alumni Agencies is equally bad and, again, the issues are too numerous to list. Many are detailed in [enclosure 2](#) but a few are included here:

- The Alumni Agencies **are dictating** our 50th Reunion Class gift can **only go to the Alumni Agencies**. Contributions to The Cadet Foundation – **and any other efforts - will not be counted** toward the amount of the “Big check” handed to MG (R) Wins during the parade ceremony.
- The Alumni Agencies are in full support of all the changes that have occurred at VMI, while refusing to share with Alumni any contrary viewpoints.
- Funding decisions by the Agencies are made solely by them, without full visibility, and are substantially driven by the VMI Administration.
- The Agencies did not effectively defend VMI or Alumni from attacks by the Northam administration, the media, or the current Superintendent and his Administration
- The VMI Alumni Association Board of Directors changed the Articles of Incorporation **to remove our rights** to vote by proxy for the Association’s leadership. You also cannot vote remotely.
- The only Alumni Association Board candidates allowed on the ballot are those Hobson’s choice ones selected **by the Association controlled nominating committee**, using a closed vetting process.

On these issues, and more, the agencies have either been silent or actively support the Administration – **often with Alumni funds**. Regardless of your position on the issues, it is unquestionable that the VMI Alumni Agencies has become an organization where the politics of the oligarchs in power rule –that must stop and control must be returned to its Alumni members.

In taking this stand, VMI '74 will serve as the catalyst for other VMI classes to switch their contributions from the VMI AA to The Cadet Foundation, and use “the power of the purse” to defeat the corrosive and divisive CRT/DEI indoctrination currently imposed upon the faculty and Cadet Corps.

Here are just three recent examples of similar actions by concerned Alumni, with VMI and the VMI Alumni Agencies responding with attempts to discredit them and stating that these gifts will never be legitimate pledges or donations:

- Doug Conte '75, recently withdrew a \$1,000,000 pledge to VMI in his will, stating he is looking to allocate the funds to The Cadet Foundation instead (see [enclosure 6](#) and links in [enclosure 3 at 10a](#)).
- The class of '86 sent an open letter to VMI BOV, VMI Alumni Association, the VMI Parent's Council and the VMI Corps of Cadets signed by some 100 Brother Rats, withholding funds until changes are made in how VMI operates ([see enclosure 7](#)).
- Another donor, with a son in barracks, changed a \$900,000 commitment from VMI to the Tunnel to the Towers Foundation ([see link in enclosure 3 at para 8d](#)).

For more information on the issues use the links provided at [enclosure 3](#).

We apologize for the length of this letter, but it is of utmost importance to make everyone aware of the option to demonstrate your objections to what is occurring at VMI by providing much needed support directly to CADETS through The Cadet Foundation.

JOIN US AND OUR OTHER BRs TO MAKE YOUR DONATIONS TO THE CADET FOUNDATION. For further information and to make donations or pledges to The Cadet Foundation for our 50th Reunion gift, please visit our website at: www.thecadefoundation.org/VMI74 or contact us directly at VMI74@thecadefoundation.org.

Your Brother Rats in the Spirit,

Ron Stelmasczyk '74, James Cottrell '74, Mike Andriani '74, Gene Rice '74, John Williams, Jr. '74

Supporting facts and documents

For those who want to do a “deep dive” into the situation at VMI and our justification the following materials are provided.

Enclosure 1 to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023



Overview of The Cadet Foundation

The Cadet Foundation was created by alumni and cadets to support and preserve the ability of all those who want it and are willing to dedicate themselves to achieving the benefit of Virginia Military Institute's mission "to produce educated, honorable men and women, prepared for the varied work of civil life, imbued with love of learning, confident in the functions and attitudes of leadership, possessing a high sense of public service, advocates of the American Democracy and free enterprise system, and ready as citizen-soldiers to defend their country in time of national peril."

The Cadet Foundation fully supports the power and authority of the Corps to run barracks, the Class system, the Ratline, and, especially the Honor Code and system. The Cadet Foundation serves the interests of Alumni and cadets using our proprietary approach, some of which we are sharing with you here to explore our desire to work with the Alumni Agencies where these goals and objectives may align.

The Cadet Foundation provides support to Cadets and their activities including, without limitation, The Cadet newspaper, VMI Hockey Club, various activities for the companies in barracks, and, most recently a program to pay for Class rings for Cadets in the class of 2023 facing financial hardships. For alumni it supported programs for the classes of '56, '61 and others the Alumni Agencies or VMI could not or would not. The Cadet Foundation is also a 501(c)(3) charity registered for fundraising with the Commonwealth of Virginia and a member of the Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA), American Council of Trustees and Alumni, and the Virginia Council for VMI free-speech and other areas.

While the overall mission of the VMI Alumni Agencies is "to provide support for the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), a State-supported school", The Cadet Foundation's Mission is "to unite alumni and cadets in programs that preserve, protect and advance the core Virginia Military Institute (VMI) ethos of duty, honor, country and development of citizen-soldiers through a shared VMI experience for all." These include, without limitation, merit-based academic scholarships, awards and other initiatives to assist and support cadets. The Cadet Foundation aims to grow the bond between cadets, alumni and those who support the moral, ethical and other core and traditional positive principles upon which VMI was founded. It supports and defends free speech, academic freedom and viewpoint diversity at VMI and for alumni.

As it expands operations and programs furthering the goals and objectives of its mission, The Cadet Foundation will operate using an Advisory Board consisting exclusively of cadets and alumni. The alumni members of The Cadet Foundation will be determined by all supporting alumni rather than limited to just those who are able to and do appear in person at an annual meeting. Cadet representatives will be selected by the Corps. All participants commit to the following tenets:

Practice good stewardship - Be especially careful and responsible in the conduct, supervision, and management of The Cadet Foundation in a manner that serves the interests and concerns of all alumni and current cadets.

Ensure transparency - Execute all operations, functions, policies, and decisions following a thorough, open, and shared dialogue with all alumni and cadets.

Ensure stability - Use sound business practices and deliver through a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) paradigm. This includes providing timely communication with alumni and cadets of all matters affecting the Institute including information which may constitute "bad news".

Maintain unity of purpose - Unite all alumni and cadets in a singular purpose to preserve, improve, and share the VMI experience.

Build trust – Establish confidence in The Cadet Foundation by alumni and cadets with respect to the reliability, truth, ability, and strength of the organization.

Maintain organizational independence – As “a conscience of VMI,” we will maintain an "arm’s length," but balanced [neutral] relationship with the VMI Administration through the application of performance-based metrics that ensure accountability and productivity of alumni and other funds invested in VMI, only supporting projects that support the Corps, as determined by the Advisory Board that includes current cadets.

Ensure accountability - Drive ethically based decision making to ensure fiscal, moral, and ethical responsibility in all endeavors. Ensure all major expenditures/obligations are reported, and listed on the Cadet Foundation webpage, accessible to all alumni and cadets.

Maintain dedication to the mission – Follow a “One Mission, One Team” approach to management, reflecting the love of the Institute and the desire for the preservation and fostering of an ever-improving VMI experience for all.

Serve as a voice for the alumni while fully supporting and defending freedom of speech for the Corps - Build consensus through credibility and transparency, leading to a confirmed and trusted voice serving alumni and cadets for all relevant matters including ensuring cadets retain editorial control of The Cadet and it remains one of the oldest independent college newspapers in Virginia.

Use civility, fairness, and respect in all endeavors - Adhere to a strict and unwavering Code of Conduct, for which nothing less is expected as representatives of VMI, cadets, and alumni.

Maintain unquestioned integrity - Adhere to the Honor Code and the VMI ethos in all things, without exception.

Transparency and accountability are paramount to The Cadet Foundation. The Cadet Foundation was formed and will remain completely independent of the Alumni Agencies and VMI, as any independent organization should. While it will maintain strict separation from the VMI Administration and the Alumni Agencies, the Cadet Foundation’s operations and the programmatic decisions will be completely independently and governed by current cadets and alumni participants. The Cadet Foundation’s leadership and its proposed Advisory Board are, and will continue to be, exclusively VMI Alumni and current cadets. The Cadet Foundation’s published annual reports will not only include funds expended at the program level but associated Measures of Performance (MOP) or Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) using detailed metrics and performance measures as a means to demonstrate our impact.

Enclosure 2 - to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023

The current state of VMI – From Brother Rats Ron “Stel” Stelmasczyk, James Cottrell '74, Mike Andriani '74, Gene Rice '74, John Williams, Jr. '74

VMI has had a lot of negative exposure in the press over the last few years, especially the *Washington Post*, about accusations of systemic racism and other various prejudices levied by the disgraced former Gov. Northam. Besides the fact that the Northam Administration's state sponsored investigation found no substantive evidence of the charges by Northam, he fired one of the most revered Superintendents in the history of VMI (GEN Peay). Although not ordered to do so, using what can only be called a “strategy of appeasement”, the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) Board of Visitors (BOV) unilaterally ordered numerous changes at VMI including the removal of historic statues, renaming of buildings and even changes to the Ratline, class system and honor court that tended to pull authority/responsibility away from the cadet corps and centralize it within the authority of the administration. Here are just a very few documented examples:

Changes in the VMI experience, Ratline, Class System, Honor Code and Honor Court:

- **Changes to the Honor System** - What could have caused the recent changes to be made to the to the Honor System SOP? That answer can be found in the VMI Quarterly Equity Audit report. It is a recommendation that came from the Barnes & Thornburg (B&T) report and states: **"VMI should perform a root cause analysis as to why minority cadets are drummed out at a disproportionate rate."** This statement suggests skin color may have been the causation, but in reviewing the evidence and data, it is very clear this is not the case. The Barnes & Thornburg (B&T) report concluded as much with the following statements:
 - *"This report does not recommend that any of VMI's core policies, practices and traditions, including the Honor Code and Rat Line, be abolished (B&T Final Report, Page 9)."*
 - *"...the data VMI produced does not suggest impropriety or unfair treatment among the 91 cases that resulted in a finding of guilty. To the contrary, overall, the cases appeared to be well-documented and justified." (B&T Final Report, Page 76)."*
 - *"The investigation found no evidence of overt bias in Honor Court proceedings; ... (B&T Final Report, Page 82)."*
 - *"The investigation did not find anything to support a conclusion that specific policies or procedures of the Honor Court cause African American or other minority cadets to be drummed out at a disproportionate rate (B&T Final Report, Page 97)."*

Additionally:

- *"No explicit racist or sexist policies; racist and sexist culture disparately impacts minorities and women. (enclosure 3 link to *The Cadet*, December 15, 2021, Page 3)"*

The VMI Quarterly Equity Audit report ([see link in enclosure 3 at para 3a](#)) stated that a root cause analysis could not be performed due to "full case files required...are not available."

- Despite the lack of evidence in the B&T report to indicate the system was flawed and no Root Cause Analysis being performed, changes to the Honor System SOP were still made. Several of those changes that should be of concern as covered in the VMI Quarterly Equity Audit Report:
 - Enabling a drummed out individual to testify in a different case with Superintendent's approval. This is a very troubling change in that once a person is found guilty, that person's name is never mentioned again at the Institute, let alone be allowed to testify.
 - Increasing the jury size from 8 to 12. In doing so, to render a guilty verdict will require a vote count to go from 5 to 9, which is an 80% increase from the previous 5 votes. In reviewing the VMI Quarterly Equity Audit report, one of the reasons provided is that by doing so, it “reduces the potential (real or perceived) of forcing a guilty verdict based on insufficient or circumstantial evidence.” (Page 26). Yet just 2 pages earlier, it was stated

that out of “107 reports of suspected honor code violations...only four (4) went to trial (AY 2020-2021). Combine that with the statements above of praise highlighted in the B&T report, the dedicated cadets serving on the Honor Court, three Superintendent’s representatives reviewing the charge packet (arguments/evidence for charging a cadet with an Honor Code violation) before sending it to the Superintendent for his approval, and VMI’s own legal counsel reviewing it as well, such a reason demonstrates a lack of respect for all the “eyes” that create and review the charge packet, as well as a lack in critical thought. (see link in enclosure 3, [para 3a](#) and [3b](#))

- Increasing the jury size from 8 to 12. In doing so, to render a guilty verdict will require a vote count to go from 5 to 9, which is an 80% increase from the previous 5 votes and possibly increase the potential of jury nullification. A supplemental document to a letter signed by over 100 former Honor Court members to the BOV and the Superintendent, pointed out the following: "While the switch to jury trials consisting of a pool of random cadets was a laudable and necessary reform, it increases the risk of jury nullification." (see link in enclosure 3, [para 3a](#) and [3b](#))
 - The random jury pool will increase in size from 24 to 36 and at the Superintendent's discretion, a member not selected from the pool may be chosen to observe a trial. One of the reasons - "desired diversity mix" not achieved. See: VMI Quarterly Equity Audit Report.
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- In a recent count of an estimated 724 faculty and staff at VMI, **only about 24 are VMI alumni**, including the Superintendent and Commandant.
 - The current administration is accelerating replacement of key positions with those who never shared the VMI experience. Under Maj. Gen. Win’s leadership alone the Dean, Admissions Director, Chief of Staff, Director of Communications, most of their staffs, many other key positions are filled by non-graduates. This also includes the much-heralded DEI Director, and staff, whose programs are permeating all facets of VMI.
 - For the Corps, decisions of when and how to grant many of the historic “Class Privileges” now rests with the Commandant’s staff and not the first class.
 - Our beloved yearbook, *The Bomb*, once the first and oldest college annual in Virginia is now under editorial control of the VMI administration through a “cadet in charge.” The Commandant’s staff has final approval of its contents.
 - The Commandant’s staff now has final approval of all VMI Class Ring designs.
 - Although recognized by the Gov. Of Virginia (see link in enclosure 3 at [para 8g](#)) and the General Assembly (see link in enclosure 3 at [para 8h](#)) as one of the oldest independent college newspapers in Virginia *The Cadet* newspaper, after being restarted by cadets and alumni in 2021 the administration has, and continues its attempts to close down or control *The Cadet* newspaper with the Alumni Agencies cooperating in an attempt to place it under the Alumni Association’s communications office.
 - The VMI Superintendent threatened last years’ Editor-in-Chief of *The Cadet* to never recognize or support *The Cadet* newspaper unless it “severed all ties” with both Alumni and The Cadet Foundation.

The divisive impact of the administration’s current Diversity, Equity and Inclusion path enabled by the Board of Visitors and the Alumni Agencies

Many of us believe these changes will negatively impact the goal of producing “citizen soldier” leaders embodying the American spirit of freedom and equality, by creating a generation of leaders for a more “progressive” class of political agitators, fully indoctrinated into the “woke” culture of Critical Race Theory (CRT) through its practical application under the title of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). The intent is clearly to transform VMI and the VMI culture with a more acceptable “progressive” academic atmosphere, mimicking the other universities within the Commonwealth.

The VMI DEI instruction directly conflicts with the VMI Culture from which we benefited. VMI taught us to treat everyone equally. When a cadet passed through Jackson Arch (or whatever it has been renamed) they left

Note: since publication of this letter VMI announced on January 23, 2023 to Cadets that the Jackson and Ezekiel awards will now be available in 2023.

their previous life behind. All of who they were before matriculation meant nothing. They were all reduced to one common identity that they all shared equally: RATS! Anything that they aspired to be had to be earned, and they suffered the hurdles of life in a shared Spartan existence together...as a class. This is how the bonding began. This is how you mold character. This is how you unify a diverse group. *E Pluribus Unum!* This time-tested method is now being replaced by cadets being taught to focus on the many varied distinctions and differences of color, religion, sex, gender identification, social status, family wealth and advantages/disadvantages, etc., and applying these new found skills to see people differently, hence treating them differently. Just look at the “Facilitator’s Guide” for the current DEI training at VMI in the link here → https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Facilitator-Guidance_-Highlight-1.pdf. Note that in addition to “candy rewards” for the politically correct answers to the DEI rhetoric, cadets who push back are reported for further action. Additional examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Cancelled** - The Civil War Round Table club, that did nothing more than study battles of that conflict, was “disbanded” by the administration because VMI connected it to “the Lost Cause”. It is the only cadet club so terminated by VMI.
- **Cancelled** - The Moses Ezekiel award funded by the Daughters of the Confederacy and presented annually to a cadet who according to VMI’s own official definition, “has contributed to the cultural life of the Institute” BOV cancelled on request of the Dean due to connected with Jackson and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. **See note above**
- **Cancelled** - The Stonewall Jackson Memorial Award, established in 1957, funded by the Daughters of the Confederacy, and presented annually to a cadet who, according to VMI’s definition, “is the first standing graduate in the physics curriculum.” BOV cancelled on request of the Dean due to connected with Jackson and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. **See note above**
- According to the Spirit of VMI Political Action Committee after conversations with the Governor’s Office, Legislators VMI and Alumni Agencies Officials, Governor Youngkin secured assurances from VMI Officials its budget increase would be used for faculty and staff salaries and salary increases, and not DEI yet the VMI Superintendent directly stated DEI funding is being expended from the General Assembly’s forbidden appropriation (see link in enclosure 3 at [para 6](#)).
- An increasing number of faculty do not support the VMI experience or even VMI as a Senior Military College. In just one example, according to documents in a current court case against VMI for contracting improprieties, a senior professor, highly praised by the current Superintendent and President of the BOV, who was on the source selection panel for the DEI training contract (now being challenged in court) and who holds key positions on the BOV and faculty DEI Committees stated **“We [VMI] really aren’t military. I have a bird on my shoulder [indicating Colonel rank] – doesn’t mean anything – just I am a field professor, So – compare us more to University of Maryland than a military academy”** (see link in enclosure 3 at [para 5b](#)).
- Rather than invite alumnae who could speak from experience on the issues and the benefits they received from the VMI experience, the VMI administration invited Ms. Kimberly Dark to be the keynote speaker for its “Celebration of 25 Years of Women at VMI”. In Ms. Dark’s own words her presentation’s focus was: “in particular addressing the ways in which women and LGBTQ+ cadets, along with those who struggle to meet the height/weight requirements of the military are still targeted for unfair treatment.”
- While Maj. Gen. Wins’ personally defended Ms. Dark as an internationally renowned sociologist, Ms. Dark’s writing and “credentials” as a self-described “performing artist” include: *The Butch Femme Chronicles: Discussions with Women Who Are Not Like Me (and Some Who Are)*, *True Confessions of a Lesbian Diva*, *Stripped and Teased: Scandalous Stories With Subversive Subplots, Dykeotomy and Things I Learned from Fat People on the Plane*. Her listed performances include the Dirty Queer Conference, Seattle Erotic Arts Festival and the Bad and Nasty Conference. None of this has anything to do with VMI’s successful transformation to a co-ed institution and the success of female cadets at VMI.

This social experiment can do nothing but spread distrust, animosity and even hatred. It is dividing, not uniting, and not what we need or should expect from VMI. Recent stories about the problems at VMI have even made national news when VMI enrollment suddenly dropped 25% allegedly from its new “woke” policies. Even though the Superintendent blamed lowering population rates, available HS seniors, **the failure of the**

replacement for the white male cohort to materialize and other excuses, this does not account for all of the other military academies as well as military aligned schools keeping matriculation rates steady. To add insult to injury, the folks at The Citadel must have had a good laugh at VMI' expense when their matriculation rate skyrocketed from ~700 to almost 800 new cadets. Many of these were likely potential VMI candidates that decided they didn't need a political indoctrination, just a good college education in Engineering, Arts & Sciences, etc. According to what a Texas A&M admissions official told one of our alumni, they had no problems filling their new Cadet Corps and were only limited on the quality applicants accepted by their barracks space that they are expanding.

Many of us do not approve of BG Wins' administration and its "progressive" policies that are threatening to destroy the uniqueness of VMI and the VMI Experience for which the majority of cadets signed up. Unfortunately, many of us feel helpless in stopping the steady march toward mediocrity that this administration has us on. We could hope that the BOV would do something about it, but sadly, many are there because Northam put them there and are on board with what is happening. Likewise, we would expect help from the VMI Alumni Association to put pressure on the administration and BOV but they have been co-opted and have proven to be unanswerable to the very alumni they claim to represent. I have personally witnessed them corrupt the election process for Alumni Association members so that only candidates they personally approve can even be placed into ballot.

The elimination of our alumni rights and voice by the Alumni Agencies

These are almost too numerous to list as well. Just a few documented examples of how our rights as Members have been cancelled by our own Alumni Agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Like the VMI administration, and increasing number of the Alumni Agencies leadership are not VMI graduates. Just a sample include The Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Communications Officer and Director of Human Resources. **These are the people with the power to spend your donated monies.**
- Somewhere around 2019, the VMI Alumni Association Board of Directors unilaterally changed the Articles of Incorporation **to remove our rights** as Members to vote by proxy for the Association leadership. You cannot vote remotely. Unless you physically show up in Lexington when and where they direct for the annual meeting, your vote on who runs YOUR alumni associational and makes decisions on how YOUR donations are spent do not count. So unless you live in the local area, you have no voice!
- Also in 2019, the Board unilaterally gave themselves the sole authority to appoint whomever they chose to the "honorary members" of the Alumni Association and also granted those honorary members the right to vote.
- In April 2022, in accordance with the Alumni Association's articles of Incorporation, a majority of alumni present at the general membership meeting in Lexington voted to remove and replace the association board in accordance with the Articles. The association President refused to accept the will of the majority members present and disapproved the vote to keep their Board members in position, but said they would hold new elections in a Special Meeting in a few months.
- In the June 2022 Special Meeting members could only vote for Alumni Association Board "candidates" pre-selected by the Association own nominating committee and NOT all those advanced by other members. If you showed up in Lexington to vote, you could only vote for ONE candidate of their choosing per position for their entire slate. If **their** slate failed to pass, the Board members chosen by the association would remain in place until their candidates were elected (see enclosure 3 at para [4g-4l](#)) for first-hand accounts from alumni.
- The Alumni Agencies would not distribute our donations option and refuse to share any views they deem as opposition to the VMI administration. We built this Class of '74 contact list on our own.

The Class of '74 is being denied our right to choose for our upcoming 50th Reunion Class Gift

This “control” by the Alumni Agencies and the current administration is being unfairly applied to our proposed 50th Reunion Class Gift.

As currently directed by the Agencies, all donations, including those provided toward our 50th Reunion fund go through the VMI Alumni Agencies. On their website for donations, you can choose to donate to the VMI Keydet Club Scholarship Fund, the VMI Foundation (unrestricted), or to the Class Fund (unrestricted). There are other options at the bottom of the page that allow for pledges and giving with specific instructions. I assume one can make their gift a “restricted” donation for a specific scholarship or for a specific academic department or club sport, etc. The danger here is that “unrestricted” funds can be used for anything, and in particular help fund the operating costs for the VMI administration. The Superintendent submits a budget request for funds annually to the Alumni Associations/VMI Foundation indicating intended obligations. Since no VA state money can be used to fund CRT or DEI in state supported schools in VA under Gov. Youngkin, the administration has to go elsewhere to fund the operating budget for DEI instruction at VMI. In fact, in a recent BOV meeting we learned that the DEI lead at VMI is requesting another \$800,000 in addition to monies previously allocated ([See enclosure 4](#) for partial transcript and link to the full audio of the meeting). **This, of course would be at the expense of other departmental or cadet needs.**

Logically our unrestricted donations may very well be directly funding DEI indoctrination of cadets or other actions we may feel erode the VMI culture we are trying to protect while restricted donations must be doing so but are hidden from us!

The path forward to bring back VMI and our Alumni Community

Of course, regardless on where you may stand on DEI, **none of this is acceptable and cannot be tolerated**; *but what can we do?*

Many I have corresponded with are upset and even angry to the point where they are choosing to show their disgruntlement by choosing not to attend the 50th Reunion and/or not donate a penny toward the Class goal \$19,740,000. I sympathize and identify with this group but **we should not allow this to keep us from enjoying the bonds between Brother Rats or support providing the VMI experience** that shaped our lives to others. Doing so is exactly what those who seek to control and fundamentally change VMI want.

We are not alone in our concerns and must “join the fight” to bring back VMI and our alumni rights.

Despite the well documented attempts by both the Agencies and the administration to discredit criticism and conceal their “progressive agenda to destroy the VMI Experience, other alumni and classes have begun to voice their outrage **and take action**. The class of ’86 recently sent an open letter to Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors, Virginia Military Institute Alumni Association, the VMI Parent’s Council and the VMI Corps of Cadets signed by some 100 Brother Rats explaining their dissatisfaction with the direction of the Wins administration **and withholding of funds** until changes are made and DEI is removed (see [enclosure 7](#) for Class of 1986 letter to the BOV). Additionally, Doug Conte ’75, recently withdrew his \$1,000,000 pledge for the same reasons. (see [enclosure 6](#) for Conte’s letter and links in [enclosure 3](#) at para 10). Another alumnus, changed his \$900,000 pledge from VMI to Tunnel to the Towers foundation (see link in enclosure 3 at [para 8d](#)).

The common factor here is money. The only way we can get the attention of the administration and have a voice in the future of our own alumni agencies and VMI itself is to withhold money from the administration. How do we do that and not hurt cadets or further damage an already severely wounded VMI experience?

Working with others of our BRs I join in their endorsement of a truly unifying solution in making our 50th Class reunion donations to The Cadet Foundation.

PLEASE JOIN THIS EFFORT TO MAKE OUR DONATIONS USING THE CADET FOUNDATION. For further information on this initiative and to make donations or pledges to The Cadet Foundation for our 50th

Reunion gift, please visit our website at: www.thecadetfoundation.org/VMI74 or contact us directly at VMI74@thecadetfoundation.com.

We, the Class of '74, must take action NOW

Sir Edmund Burke once wrote, “**All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in this world, is for a few good men to do nothing.**”

For more information, (with links) to some of the outrageous happenings at our beloved Institute since GEN (R) Peay was fired follow the links at [enclosure 3](#).

Enclosure 3 - to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023 - Links to documents mentioned in the letter, additional evidence and information

For those wishing to see the current *The Cadet* newspaper with the great articles written by cadets defending VMI, you can find it at this link: www.cadetnewspaper.com.

1. **Best Source for documents, interviews, media coverage and other information on the issues detailed in the letter.**
2. **Protect Honor – Defend VMI News stories**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/news/>
3. **Reference for changes to the VMI Honor system and 2022 – 2023 Rat Class mentioned.**
 - a. **VMI Quarterly Equity Audit Report**
http://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/VMIQuarterlyReport1_EquityAudit.pdf
 - b. **Barnes & Thornburg Report**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/vmi-special-investigation-team-final-report.pdf>
 - c. **VMI Fall 2022 Rat Class enrollment statistics**
<http://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022EnrollmentData.pdf>
4. **Alumni Association and BOV suppression of Member rights and opinions**
 - a. **Open letter to the BOV and Agencies from alumni challenging misinformation from the administration and BOV the Agencies will not allow alumni to respond to and requesting “equal time” at a BOV meeting.**
https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Watjen-Letter-Response_13Sept2022_FAS.pdf
 - b. **Alumni challenge their votes being dismissed at June 2022 General Membership meeting**
<https://www.baconsrebellion.com/wp/dissident-alumni-open-a-new-front-in-the-higher-ed-culture-wars/>
 - c. **Mike Stasos '79 addresses attempts at intimidation and suppression of Alumni Member rights at the April 2022 General Membership Meeting**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/339/letter-to-the-editor-mike-staso-79-recounts-his-experience-in-the-recent-contentious-alumni-association-meeting/>
 - d. **Video of June 2022 VMI Special Meeting and election of Board Members over alumni opposition**
<https://youtu.be/9xYyxvjk5g>
 - e. **Open letter to the Alumni Agencies By Larry Respass '61 and Sal Vitale '61 “The VMI Alumni Association as a self-perpetuating oligarchy”**
<https://www.baconsrebellion.com/wp/the-vmi-alumni-association-as-self-perpetuating-oligarchy/>
 - f. **Open letter on VMI and the Agencies trying to repress the VMI Class of '56 Memorial Service from Pete McCrary '56**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Class-of-56-BOV-Packet.pdf>
 - g. **John Reid Interview with Sal Vitale '61**
<https://omny.fm/shows/richmonds-morning-news/sal-vitale-june-2-2022>
 - h. **Cadet Foundation letter asking to partners with the VMI Alumni Agencies**
http://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/LettertoVMIAgencies_FAS.docx.pdf
5. **Lawsuit against VMI for violations of Virginia Procurement laws and ethics on DEI training contract.**
 - a. ***The Roanoke Times***
<https://theroanokestar.com/2022/08/17/lawsuit-against-vmi-for-illegal-dei-procurement-activities-to-move-forward/>
 - b. ***The Cadet***
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/401/civil-suit-filed-against-vmi-over-dei-contract-award/>

- c. **Direct access to the court lawsuit legal documents:**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/legal/>
6. **VMI's violation of General Assembly and Governor's prohibition against using State appropriations to fund DEI at VMI**
Spirit of VMI PAC Press Releases confirming the intentional violations from meetings with the Agencies and VMI Officials
<https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/PAC-Press-releases.pdf>
7. **Maj Gen Wins' email condemning and alleging racism by alumni who challenge his policies and changes**
 - a. **Maj. Gen. Wins' email condemning alumni for questioning his administration's policies**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/WinsletterAlumni2.pdf>
 - b. **Maj. Gen. Wins' condemning Matt Daniels as racist and desperate**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/WIns-post.pdf>
8. **Articles referenced in *The Cadet*:**
 - a. **B&T Report results and fact checking Gov. Northam, December 15, 2021**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/227/the-cadet-fact-checks-gov-northams-address-to-the-corps/>
 - b. **Faculty member on DEI destroying the VMI experience**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/447/a-professors-perception-of-dei-and-its-impact/>
 - c. **Jackson and Ezekiel Awards**
https://www.vmi.edu/media/content-assets/documents/bov/cmnr/CMNRC-Minutes_11.12.21_FINAL.pdf
 - d. **Donor withdraws \$900K pledge to VMI**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/184/laurel-to-the-vmi-donor-who-withdrew-a-900000-future-donation-to-vmi-for-moral-courage-and-intestinal-fortitude/>
 - e. **Donor changes \$1,000, 000 pledge from Alumni Agencies to The Cadet Foundation**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/421/vmi-loses-1000000-bequest-for-suppressing-the-corps-authority-and-free-speech/>
 - f. **Cadets call for return of power and authority to the Corps**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/416/with-vision-2039-reaching-its-final-goals-vmi-must-support-cadet-efforts/>
 - g. **Governor of Virginia recognition of The Cadet**
<http://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/cadetletter2.pdf>
 - h. **Virginia General Assembly recognition of The Cadet**
http://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022_HJ453_Durant.pdf
9. **Suppression of Free Speech at VMI:**
 - a. **Editorial in *The Cadet* challenging false statements by the administration**
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/301/a-response-to-the-chief-of-staff-and-the-vmi-administration/>
 - b. **Editorial in *The Cadet* rejecting administration attempts to control *The Cadet***
<https://cadetnewspaper.com/news/395/final-word-the-return-of-the-cadet-is-reality/>
 - c. **FIRE and SPLC First Amendment Warning to VMI**
https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FIRE_FAS.pdf
 - d. **John Reid Show Interview with interview with Robert Morris '79**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/freespeech/>
 - e. **Single source compilation of documents regarding suppressing of free speech at VMI:**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/freespeech/>
10. **Alumni rescinding pledges, changing to The Cadet Foundation, and the VMI '74 Class Reunion gift**
 - a. **Doug Conte '75 interview on the John Reid Morning Radio Show:**
[Doug Conte: November 11, 2022 \(audacy.com\)](https://www.audacy.com)

- b. **\$1 Million Donation Rescinded in Open Letter to VMI Constituencies | The Roanoke Star News:** <https://theroanokestar.com/2022/11/11/1-million-donation-rescinded-in-open-letter-to-vmi-constituencies/>
- c. **BR Ron “Stel” Stelmasczyk announces VMI ’74 initiative to support The Cadet Foundation on the John Reid Radio show January 17, 2022**
<https://www.audacy.com/podcasts/richmonds-morning-news-20797/ron-stelmasczyk-january-17-2023-1549539566>

11. VMI DEI “training” manuals, documents and curriculum related

- a. **Comprehensive presentation on VMI’s DEI program and its links to CRT by Carmen Villani ‘76**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CRTatVMI.pdf>
- b. **DRAFT DEI Manual used in academic year 2021 – 2022 and as the foundation for VMI’s DEI training program:**
https://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Cadet-Diversity-Training-Draft-8.23.21_FOIA.pdf
- c. **CURRENT DEI Facilitator’s Guide used in academic year 2022 – 2023:**
- d. https://www.protecthonor.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Facilitator-Guidance_Highlight-1.pdf
- e. **Jose Suarez ’82 letter to the Board of Visitors challenging the divisive DEI program being implemented by the administration and supported by the Agencies.**
<https://www.baconsrebellion.com/wp/racism-at-vmi-not-that-this-hispanic-alum-ever-saw/#more-98761>
- f. **John Reid interview with alumnus Jose Suarez ’82 on the divisive impact on minorities of VMI’s current DEI approach.**
https://www.audible.com/pd/ITEM_NAME-Podcast/B0BJZZC84V?ref=a_pd_Richmo_c0_1Asin_0_0&pf_rd_p=1da7ab30-c785-4a0e-a160-4a7e7077b353&pf_rd_r=VA1VS34YEFBNMZMGMKXE
- g. **John Reid interview with parent on cadet experiences with DEI at VMI**
<https://www.audacy.com/podcasts/richmonds-morning-news-20797/jackie-hart-april-6-2022-1346938078>
- h. **VMI enrollment drops 25% at VMI after implementing severe DEI program**
<https://freedompress.com/enrollment-drops-25-at-woke-virginia-military-institute/>
- i. **Compilation of VMI DEI documents**
<https://www.protecthonor.com/crt/>
- j. **VMI History course Marxist historian reading**
http://thecadetfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Hi206-08SyllabusSpring2022_1.pdf
- k. **VMI History course Marxist historian background 1**
https://s3.amazonaws.com/usma-media/inline-images/about/board_of_visitors/meeting_minutes/Lou_Coatney_Statement_1.pdf
- l. **VMI History course Marxist historian background 2**
<https://redemmas.org/titles/31025-marxist-perspectives/>

Enclosure 4 to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023 - BOV Member Laura Chambers 24 Oct 2024 BOV Special Meeting partial transcript

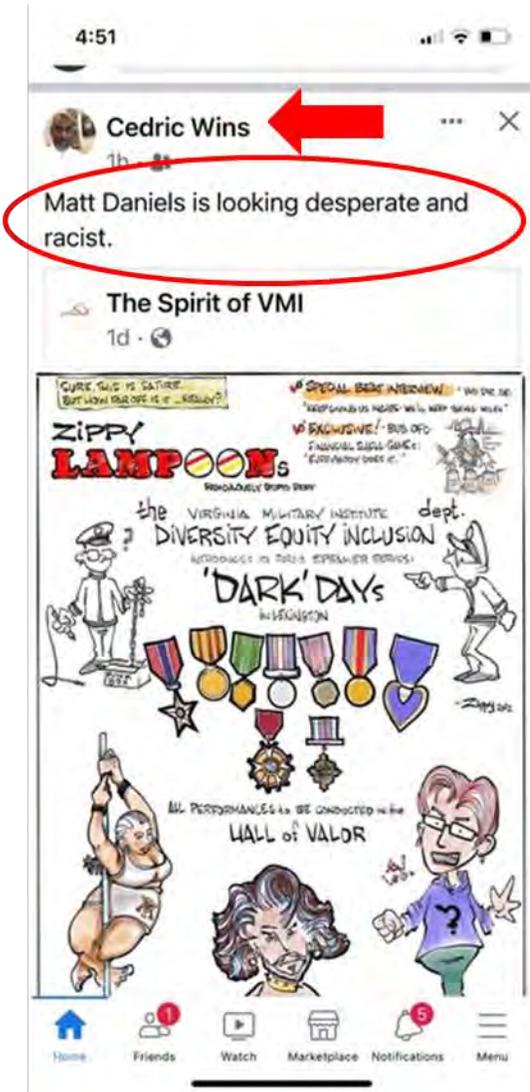
A few examples from the October 24, 2022 BOV Executive Meeting include, without limitation:

- MS. LARA CHAMBERS (BOV MEMBER) REF PRESENTATION BY MS KIMBERLY DARK:

“I don't know how much we paid her, but I'm sure it was a pretty penny because I know our training session last year was twenty grand! And that's a lot of money, and I think I told you, as nice as our training session was, you know, to me it wasn't worth a thousand dollars, and it was almost kind of insulting. You know, we're a bunch of executives and generals, and of course, we know how to conduct ourselves. But again, nice to bring to the forefront of our mind, but that's a lot of money and we're paying, I'm sure we gave her a great penny, and I know in athletics alone, we're already \$300,000 in the hole.
- MS. LARA CHAMBERS (BOV MEMBER) REF BOV DEI TRAINING: “... I know our training session last year was 20 grand. That's lot of money. And I think I told you like as nice as our trainings was, you know, to me it wasn't worth a thousand dollars. And it was almost kind of insulting. You know, we're a bunch of executives and generals and of course we know how to conduct ourselves. But again, nice to bring to the forefront of our mind. But that's a lot of money. And we're paying, I'm sure we gave her a, a pretty penny. And I know in athletics alone we're already \$300,000 in the hole. Like, I would've rather the 20,000 of our training last year go towards our football team being able to sleep in their own beds. And, we're already \$300,000 in the hole for Athletics. And we know by the end of the year it'll probably be double that, if not triple that. I mean, I hope not. And from what I understand, it's not a one-time thing. It's going to be a yearly thing. And now we're requesting even more money for DEI. Like how much are we requesting right now? Someone had told me \$800,000 for DEI... I just think a heads up on things like this would take a number to get out that I know we are going to -- and someone's going to come back and be like, \$800,000 for DEI. I'm like, really? Are you serious?”
- MS. LARA CHAMBERS (BOV MEMBER) REF A DEI CLASS FOR RATS SHE JUST ATTENDED: “We're not even sure. I mean, I just came up for a class. I'm not even a hundred percent -- while we've gotten better. I'm not a hundred percent sure if we're still doing it right. I mean, there was clearly some cadets leaving that class disgruntled. They were mad they were there. And while I think that it's not terrible to have those classes, is it doing more harm than good? Again, I said a thousand times, I would've been horrified if any of my BRs had to go to a class to learn to be nice to me. I'd rather earn their respect. You know, it's 8:00 AM and you're there and you're being bribed with candy to participate. And then there was a cadet for, and these were Rats, who spoke up and he said, 'Am I going to have -- how many times am I going to come to this?' And they said 'once or twice a year'. And he said, 'oh, great'. And the facilitator said, 'well, why do you ask that?' And he said, 'oh, I'm just happy to be here and to participate in these discussions.' And I couldn't tell if he was being serious or sarcastic. And this was after a couple other comments that happened during the class. And then he just, I thought we were just going to dismiss, but he couldn't help himself. And he said, you know, and he was injured. He had a broken arm. And he said, you know, 'I just love giving up my optional to get some clearly needed rest to come down here and do this. And I just want to make sure that I don't have to come back again.' And why was he asking that? Was he asking that because he's afraid he must have come back? Is he made to come back if he doesn't participate? You know, these are all...

- MS. LARA CHAMBERS (BOV MEMBER): ... I'm talking more about the class and doing more harm than good. I mean, we were talking about specifically a women's dress and it was a very, you know, it was dressing appropriately for this very, very, very conservative school. And that was ridiculous. And if, you know, if one cadet tried to speak up and say, 'Hey, I had a hard time playing a devil's advocate, you know, and talking about cause I'm not a woman.' And immediately he was, you know, met with, 'well, you're going to have to deal with women, you're going to have to deal with this in the real world.' I could see him kind of retract. And, and then another cadet spoke up and he said, 'well, in my group we're very one-sided.' So again, he had a hard time talking about it. And immediately it was, well, 'you're going to have to deal with this. You're going to have to deal with this in the real world.' And so he was retracted and it just, this animosity and this aggravation kind of built up....”
- MS. LARA CHAMBERS (BOV MEMBER): This rat, hold on, Mr. Watjen. This Rat, you know, finally built up and was a little upset. And I think we need to be very careful with who we invite here and these classes and just make sure that we're doing it right. And this is a lot of money going out the door. A lot of money and athletics need it. And you're such so passionate about athletics. I just don't understand why we can't put that money towards getting our football players rest or something like that so they can win some games and recover and that's being a huge morale builder.”
- MS. LARA CHAMBERS (BOV MEMBER): “Well, as a female, I worry that those males went back and just, you know, just festered. It's too much. You know, there's an animosity that's built and that wasn't there before. And now all of a sudden it is because they have to go to this class and they're dreading going to this class, and if they don't participate, they have to come back. And so, they do participate, you know, that was clear. And I just want to make sure that we're doing it right so that we don't build those animosities.”

Enclosure 5 to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023 - Maj Gen. Wins social media allegations of racism against Matt Daniel '85 Nov 4, 2022



See link at [enclosure 3, #5a](#) for Maj. Gen. Wins email to alumni condemning them for disagreeing with his policies

Enclosure 6 to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023 - Conte Letter rescinding \$1,000,000 bequest to VMI and VMI Agencies

See link at [enclosure 3, #8a](#) for radio interview with Mr. Conte on why he changed his pledge to The Cadet Foundation and away from VMI.

*Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors
Virginia Military Institute Alumni Association
VMI Parent's Council
VMI Corps of Cadets
Fellow VMI Alumni/ae*

November 11, 2022

I am a member of the VMI class 1975. In the nearly 50 years since my graduation, I have taken great pride in being one of the over 20,000 who can claim that honor. Therefore, I take no pleasure in writing this letter to make known my growing concerns about the future of VMI. and my conviction that the path VMI is embarked upon will destroy the Institute. And I don't mean the buildings and other physical features of VMI, but the traditions and other intangibles woven into the VMI experience from which I have benefitted and which is the source of my pride. I am confident that many other alumni share this view. My convictions have become so strong since Maj. Gen. Wins and his administration took charge that recently I reluctantly took the step of amending my last will and testament to excise a bequest of \$1,000,000 for the benefit of VMI through the Alumni Agencies.

In the brief span of just two years since the abrupt dismissal of General Peay as Superintendent, the Institute has traveled far down the path of political correctness. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) ideology, have sunk their toxic roots into the fabric of VMI life. The recent recognition of Gen. Peay with the New Market medal is not a step forward but simply long overdue. Even that effort was besmirched by a crass appeal for donations by the Alumni Association immediately following the Board of Visitor's (BOV) announcement of the award, an act that only demonstrated how VMI and the Alumni Association are trying to simply capitalize and profit from what they cravenly avoided doing done long ago. Adding to this insult is the BOV's recent approval of a \$100,000 bonus for the Superintendent despite a 25% drop in enrollment and the administration's direct defiance of the Governor and General Assembly's directives not to use budgeted funds to resource VMI's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program. Recently I was appalled to see a social media posting apparently from the Superintendent's personal account describing an alumnus and his own Brother Rat as "looking desperate and racist".

For these things I blame the Superintendent, Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins and some members of his Administration, as well as public statements by the Board of Visitors and the VMI Alumni Association for supporting them, vilifying alumni who have contrary views, dismissing them as being misinformed or simply disgruntled whose criticisms are ignorantly made without any foundation. Other improvident actions include taking authority from the Corps in running barracks; and splitting the VMI Family. The complex challenges VMI faces require serious, skilled leaders who love VMI and we do not have them. Fortunately, none of these ill-conceived changes are carved in stone. They can and must be reversed. For that I look to Gov. Youngkin, hopefully sparked by coordinated action of my fellow alumni.

Fortunately, we are beginning to see real pushback over issues of free speech, possible misuse of curriculum funding, and perhaps, defiance of the governor's directive not to teach divisive concepts and

ideology all by a growing number of concerned alumni and cadets rather than isolated acts by some "small group" as the current administration endeavors to have everyone believe.

Protect Honor, The Spirit of VMI, and many concerned alumni are encouraging resistance to these divisive policies and ideologies. I have noticed that The Cadet newspaper is giving the Corps back its independent voice and we must all come together to truly return control of the Corps system, class system, Ratline and, especially the Honor Code and Honor system to the Corps under the traditional leadership of the First Class. The Corps, as it has in the past, must govern itself and be among the agents of whatever change may be necessary to restore and even improve the VMI experience.

We are not a "a group of unhappy alumni who want to stoke the worst fears and sow seeds of discord about the training and education of students" as Maj. Gen Wins stated in his October 18, 2022 letter to Alumni. We grow in numbers daily. We are dedicated to preserving that which is good in VMI while evolving what is needed to make VMI better for every cadet regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, belief or background. But this must be done through transparency and openness to all ideas, all essential elements the administration, BOV leadership and Alumni Association leadership represses.

It is time for action.** For my part, and for a start, I revealed above that I have rescinded the \$1,000,000 bequest to the Institute from my Will and am working to re-commit it to **The Cadet Foundation** or another charity separate from not under the thumb of the VMI administration and the Alumni Association, so that I know it will be used by alumni and cadets working together in the true spirit of VMI and not to support policies that divide alumni and cadets and that do not discredit VMI in the public arena. **I urge more alumni to review their donations and act similarly.

Many thanks to The Cadet and all its' staff and supporters for standing up for freedom of speech, fundamental values at the Institute, and working to address the serious questions and issues facing VMI. The administration must accept, unconditionally, that the First Amendment is non-negotiable. The Administration must immediately stop all actions to control and restrict The Cadet newspaper, The Cadet Foundation, and the newspaper's staff. It must stop distorting the facts surrounding the re-start of The Cadet by cadets with alumni support as the independent voice of the Corps and immediately restore the historic privileges of The Cadet as they've requested.

Next, return control of barracks, the Ratline, Honor Code and Honor system to the Corps without caveat or conditions. These are great young men and women who deserve our help and advice, but ultimate they must run the Corps.

Finally, the administration, BOV and Alumni Association must stop vilifying alumni while deliberately censoring and dismissing or otherwise repressing contrary views and the personal attacks against those who do not share "management's views".

Your actions against free speech, reducing the authority of the Corps to run itself and your divisive approaches cost VMI my \$1,000,000 and if others follow my example, hopefully it will be much more.

*Sincerely,
Douglas R. Conte M.D. '75*

Enclosure 7 to Brother Rats of the great VMI Class of '74 letter, January 16, 2023 – VMI Class of 1986 Open Letter on suspending donations

November 2022 Mr. Thomas Watjen '76 President, VMI Board of Visitors Virginia Military Institute Lexington, Virginia 24450

Dear Mr. Watjen:

We, the undersigned members of the Class of 1986, are deeply concerned about the current state of affairs at our beloved Institute. We hope this letter will communicate the basis of our concerns.

The ultimate strength of the VMI Experience is the Brother Rat phenomenon that is the essence of the fabled Spirit of VMI. The Brother Rat Spirit is built through the Ratline, the adversative system, and an uncompromising code of personal honor. This methodology has endured 183 years at VMI, never failing in its mission. The mission is predicated on the notion of eliminating all prior station and status in the new cadets and reducing them all to the lowly status of a Rat. From there, they are built back up into a cohesive unit that puts a premium on selflessness and being part of something larger than oneself.

Our belief is that the DEI program is in direct conflict to the time-proven Rat system. Contrary to the unity built and nurtured through the Rat system, DEI seeks to label and divide cadets by race, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. DEI may sound good and may even be well-intentioned, but it is divisive at its core. It literally and figuratively tears apart the very fabric of the VMI Experience. VMI has always been about one corps – that is why we all sign a pledge on matriculation day not to join any fraternity or secret society. The Ratline is administered without bias and we believe that VMI is the most egalitarian society we have ever experienced; where any cadet may rise to excellence and ascend “to be whatever they resolve to be”. Why would the VMI Leadership allow an ideology to infiltrate and undermine the very system that makes VMI great?

Despite countless salacious print media assertions and a million-dollar inquisition masqueraded as an investigation, the allegations of systemic racism at VMI have been unfounded. We have been disappointed that the Board of Visitors has not defended the Institute against these attacks. The Superintendent did refute them once, albeit mildly, when he acknowledged in an interview with Virginia Business magazine that the evidence he had learned in his tenure did not bear out that systemic racism existed at VMI. However, during a later interview with the Military Officers Association of America, he subsequently agreed with the results of the Barnes & Thornburg Report. That vacillation gives us pause.

The result of the woke policies hastily implemented at VMI coupled with these unfounded attacks and failure to defend the honor of the Institute against them has resulted in a lower applicant pool and the smallest matriculating Rat mass in the last 25 years or more. Meanwhile, applications and admissions are up at most every other Virginia college to include our comparable rivals, the VPI Corps of Cadets, as well as The Citadel. Clearly, VMI is on the wrong trajectory.

Our desire is to support a VMI that believes in, is confident in, and loyal to, the time-proven mission to produce the citizen soldiers so desperately needed in this country. To accomplish this, VMI must also have the courage not to succumb to the political and social whims that endanger its mission. Therefore, we, the undersigned members of the Class of 1986, reserve the right to withhold our monetary support from VMI until the detrimental narrative of the DEI program is expunged from the VMI System and the Board of Visitors DEI committee is disbanded.

Sincerely,
Members of the Class of 1986

Some 92% of the Class of 1986 members contacted responded to the request to sign this letter. The letter listed 100 signatures at the time it was sent to the VMI Board of Visitors.