VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Equity Audit Implementation Update
Quarterly Progress Report
June 1, 2026

The following is a summary of actions / activities taken between March 1 and May 31, 2026, to foster, promote, and provide a diverse, inclusive environment for VMI cadets, faculty, staff, and visitors. (Actions / activities correspond to the areas defined in the Barnes & Thornburg report.)

1. Maintain Accountability

- The Office of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion continued Inclusive Excellence programming with a focus on leadership development, professional workplace culture, and cadet success.
- In March 2026, the office hosted the fifth annual Employee Inclusive Excellence Training featuring Catherine Mattice of Civility Partners. The program addressed workplace civility, communication, and accountability.
- Cadet Inclusive Excellence training for the Second and First Class cadets concluded during the period covered by this report. VMI alumnus Grant Harris ’06, president of GTH Consulting, a Virginia SWaM-certified firm, delivered presentations in Gillis Theater on neurodiversity in leadership and the workplace. His sessions covered the leadership strengths often associated with neurodiverse individuals and strategies for leading neurodiverse teams.
- In April 2026, VMI’s chief diversity officer led Inclusive Excellence training for the VMI Board of Visitors. The presentation addressed diversity, equitable opportunity, inclusion, and leadership development within the context of VMI’s mission. The session emphasized practical leadership applications, establishing a shared language around this work, and how these concepts relate to leadership within military and higher education environments.
- The Office of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion also continued its partnership with on-post and community organizations to support cultural and educational programming throughout the Lexington-Rockbridge community. The office partnered with VMI’s Building BRIDGES Club to pack and distribute hygiene kits for the Rockbridge Area Relief Association (RARA), providing meaningful support to community members in need. The partnership reflects a broader understanding of diversity that includes socioeconomic background and community context while reinforcing VMI’s role as a community partner.

2. Improve Diversity in Leadership and the Corps

- VMI continued to increase our attendance at various resource fairs such as the National College Resource Foundation, VACRAO, etc., and serves as a sponsor of the Infinite Scholars Program, an organization dedicated to helping high school students overcome financial barriers that may inhibit their access to higher education. The Institute participated in 142 events this semester.
- The Pell Initiative Grant continues to be instrumental in the Institute's recruitment and retention of a diverse Corps of Cadets. Progress has been made this semester in the development of a new website scheduled to launch this summer and in the implementation of retention software that will identify cadets at risk of attrition before they leave. The grant also provides scholarships to Pell-eligible cadets for VMI's Summer Transition Program, a program designed to ease an incoming cadet's transition into the Rat Line.

3. Monitor and Adjust Institutions and Traditions

- At the request of the Superintendent, an alumni committee has been meeting to develop recommendations for memorials to honor the first female and Black VMI cadets, among others.
- VMI is currently evaluating proposals for a vendor to provide an assessment on organizational culture, institutional effectiveness, and leadership development across the Institute. This work intends to help VMI better understand institutional strengths, areas of friction, communication patterns, and organizational dynamics that impact the cadet and employee experiences. Of the 77 proposals received, all qualifying offerors have been scored, and the Institute is in the final stages of vendor selection.

4. Temper Associations Between VMI and the Civil War and Confederacy

- VMI submitted a grant proposal to the Jessie Ball duPont Foundation in support of our Inclusive History Project which seeks to broaden research and interpretation related to historically underrepresented individuals connected to the Institute. After submitting the application and participating in an interview with foundation representatives, the project advanced to the second round of consideration for a potential $50,000 award.

  The Inclusive History Project is intended to support student scholarship and historical research focused on stories and perspectives that have been underrepresented in existing accounts of VMI's history. Initial areas of focus include the lives of enslaved and free Black individuals connected to the Institute and the broader relationship between VMI and Black communities following the Civil War. Future phases may examine the experiences of Irish laborers involved in early VMI construction, the evolving role of women at the Institute, and other dimensions of its broader institutional history.

7. Recognize and Celebrate Other Cultures

- The Office of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion coordinated a range of cultural and educational programming throughout the spring 2026 semester including initiatives tied to Black History Month, Irish American Heritage Month, Arab American Heritage Month, and Women's History Month. The Institute also sponsored cultural dining initiatives in the Institute's mess hall designed to encourage both education and genuine celebration of the traditions and experiences represented across the VMI community. The office continued its partnership with Parkhurst Dining to incorporate heritage-themed menus related to cultural observances and celebrations.
- VMI partnered with the Blue Ridge Irish Music School (BRIMS) to host an evening of traditional Irish music and dance which was open to cadets, faculty, staff, and members of the broader Lexington-Rockbridge community.

8. Address Tensions Between Athletes and Non-Athletes

- In collaboration with athletics leadership, the Center for Leadership and Ethics, and other Institute partners, the superintedent's office is coordinating an "On Winning" symposium in June 2026. The symposium will address the relationship between athletics and the broader cadet experience. "Warm start" presentations held in advance of the symposium during this reporting period centered on belonging, buy-in as a response to the environment, and the shared responsibility across the institution for supporting cadet-athlete success.