

February 27, 2025

Members of the BOV,

There has been a lot of attention in the media surrounding the Superintendent's contract. It is reminiscent of the negative publicity originating in 2020. Normally, people learn from the past, not repeat its mistakes. Unfortunately, I find the current BOV acting in similar fashion as the one in place during that time of "turmoil" as described by the Superintendent in his address to the graduating Classes of 2023 & 2024. I have seen silence, instead of vigorously speaking out against the racial comments made by a VMI alumnus, Virginia State Senator Jennifer Carroll Foy. Her recent comments surrounding the Superintendent's contract serve as a clear example as to why DEI has no place in our society and VMI. She uses race and societal identity to justify the Superintendent's contract extension. I reject such an argument and I offer performance metrics and character deficiencies to justify my position that the Superintendent should not only have his contract not renewed, but to call for his resignation.

So let's look at some performance metrics as outlined in the Strategic Plan. For starters, commitment to honor. On the STARRS website, there is an article that was submitted by Mr. Sal Vitale '61 titled, "VMI's integrity at Stake." The Superintendent had made the comment at a BOV meeting that "nobody at the Institute has questioned the honor of cadets" in reference to the cadets at The Cadet newspaper, to which Mr. Gottwald commented, "General, I disagree with that." Then just today, an article appears on Bacon's Rebellion blog titled, "VMI at a Crossroads: Integrity vs. Politics."

Despite the Superintendent's GO #96 stating VMI being "committed to free speech," free speech organizations such as the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), Student Press Law Center (SPLC), Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA), and Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) have all criticized, not complimented, VMI regarding free speech. Then there is the article appearing in STARRS (Three Groups Call for an Investigation into Political Intimidation and Free Speech at VMI). Serious allegations are made with respect to "intimidation and retaliation" by the Superintendent and his administration regarding The Cadet newspaper.

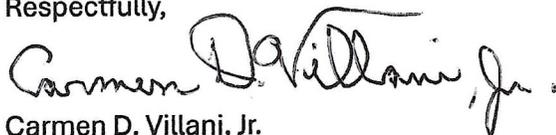
As for "the VMI brand," is it defined by diversity, equity, and inclusion under the guise of Inclusive Excellence, or is it of honor, meritocracy, and excellence? In regard to "one VMI," do any of you believe it exists??? The Corp and the VMI community are divided, not united. As for "competing to win," other than the improvement of the basketball team this season (13-17) and the early success of the baseball team, football, basketball, baseball, and men's and women's soccer have had an overall losing records since 2020, not to mention NCAA athletics operating in the red and millions in additional funding being requested.

Some other metrics to consider are enrollment, academic performance, and after-graduation compensation. In looking at acceptance rates, they have been significantly higher than in years past. It is interesting to note that the Data Dashboard has not been updated to reflect Fall24 numbers. In the Affordability/Tuition & Fees presentation at the recent BOV meeting, a corps size of only 1527 is depicted. While it may not be a true apples to apples comparison, contrast with the 1560 corps size depicted on the Data Dashboard for FL23. In the presentation given by Dean Moreschi at the same meeting, the percentage of Rats finishing the fall semester on academic probation has increased over the last 4 years to an average of 13%. Contrast that with the previous 4 years of an average of 8.25%. That is an increase of almost 60% (57.6%). In the Office of Career Services brief, a mere “30.8%” of the 122 “full-time employment” graduates were earning above the national average. That should not be a statistic to be proud of.

These are real metrics and they don't even take into account the lawsuits, one of which a judge sanctioned VMI and another one involving a sexual assault being settled out of court; controversial people like Kimberly Dark and Phillip Crane; a Lexington resident complaining to the City Council about cadet behavior in her neighborhood; lack of transparency with regard to the IG investigation surrounding The Cadet newspaper; implementing nearly every recommendation from the B&T Report which should have been discarded; changes to the Honor System based upon no evidence to indicate the system wasn't operating as it should, and not having performed a root cause analysis; in an ill-advised social media post attempting to discredit me, the Superintendent insulted over 100 former Honor Court members by referring to us as merely as “that group,” and the good-will gesture of sharing our thoughts on the Honor System as “nothing in it was enlightening”; just recently a 40 page document submitted by a member of the VMI community to the accreditation institution Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) which starts out by stating; “Please accept this submission of reports. . .regarding the operational mismanagement, student harm, and political capture that has taken place at the Virginia Military Institute the last four years.”

In closing, everything presented here has NOTHING to do with skin color and everything to do with performance and content of character. It is time for the BOV to show courage and, at the least, not renew the contract of the Superintendent. I am reminded of retired 4-star general and former Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Charles Krulak. In concluding one of his many speeches, he cites “The Eagle and the Wolf.” The eagle stands for what is “good and true and beautiful.” The “howling wolf” on the other hand, “represents the worst that is in me. . .and justifies himself by his presence in the pack.” It then challenges the reader by asking “who wins the great battle?” The answer – “the one that I feed.” Feed the eagle ladies and gentlemen!

Respectfully,



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VMI, Class of 1976