

Joseph M. Spivey, IV

April 3, 2025

Mr. Jamie Inman, Mr. Ernie Edgar, Co-Chairs
Superintendent Search Committee
V.M.I. Board of Visitors
Virginia Military Institute
P.O. Box 932
Lexington, VA 24450

Re: Superintendent Search Committee meeting March 20, 2025

Messrs. Inman, Edgar and Members of the Committee,

I recently listened to the committee's meeting (YouTube video) and reviewed its slides. Slide 6 contains a prospective timeline for the committee to execute its work even though Mr. Inman hypothesized the timeframe may be flexible. I'd like to offer a perspective I trust the committee will consider even if it decides not to use it. I recommend the committee retain the timeline but for a different purpose.

I think it is in the best interest of VMI and VMI's supporters if the committee uses the Search Timeline to hire an interim superintendent. The individual would only serve for the academic year 2025-2026. An interim superintendent hired for a single academic year allows the committee and the Board of Visitors to exercise across time and space, all necessary due diligence to select the very best candidate for the Institute's most important position. The new superintendent would commence his/her duties beginning mid-summer 2026 for a contractual period set by the Board of Visitors.

There are advantages and disadvantages to this proposal. However, I think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. I'll highlight three advantages.

- Extending the overall schedule (search window) across all phases increases the opportunities for candidates to apply.
- Potentially, senior flag, general officers, and corporate leaders unable to apply now, may be able to apply later this year or next year.
- Extending the search window enables committee members to carefully, thoughtfully, and deliberately review and consider all candidates' qualifications avoiding the pressure of a compressed schedule.

While considering this suggestion, I also ask the committee to consider the following key issues the next superintendent must undertake.

The Corps:

- Return and sustain annually matriculating class sizes of approx. 500 individuals.
- Provide guidance and intent to subordinate staff leaders (Commandant and Dean) to effectively and impartially oversee the Corps.
- Eliminate favoritism for particular groups or subsets of cadets.
- Amend managing directives (General Orders, Standard Operating Procedure manuals). Among this review should be provisions ensuring Corps dining periods are not superseded by other requirements forcing cadets to choose between a meal (funded via room and board fees) or other activity.
- Return The Cadet newspaper to club status - on par with other cadet clubs, with necessary exemptions to meet federal statutes and 1st Amendment protection requirements for college student newspapers.
- Deliver for review to the Board of Visitors, policies for transgender cadets (in compliance with state and federal law).

Joseph M. Spivey, IV

- Excise divisive concepts, policies, training, exercises, SOPs, etc. from Corps activities. This action extends to faculty and staff programs.

Academics:

- Return VMI to its high academic standards for both admissions and achievement in class. Offering appropriate assistance to cadets needing it.
- Evaluate returning the SAT as an admissions requirement. Examine and review with the Dean and Board of Visitors Academics committee. Provide a recommendation to the full Board of Visitors.
- Ensure all cadets have academic advisors.
- Provide training to academic advisors regarding credit hours, academic major minimum course requirements, understanding courses entwined with federal funding, credit hours vs. class final grades, “class sequencing vs. class offering” and understanding VMI’s drop/add process to ensure advisors provide good counsel and instruction to cadets.
- Modify the daily calendar to enable cadets to complete academic major and minor, or concentration of studies requirements without compulsory attendance at summer school, community college or enroll in online classes.
- Return oversight of the Honor Court and honor systems to the Corps, enabling Corps driven adjustments vice administration delivered edicts.
- Provide clarity and transparency regarding Peay Scholars (vetting, hiring, contracts, courses, etc.).
- Discontinue “mandatory” activities during cadet study time (post-SRC to Taps).

Athletics:

- Develop and distribute policies for cadet participation in NIL enterprises, (in compliance with state law and the NCAA).
- Commit to conducting an examination, including a return on investment (ROI) review of continuing VMI’s participation as an NCAA division 1 program. The examination should fully explore VMI operating in another single NCAA division or in a hybrid condition. (ref.: Georgetown Univ and Johns Hopkins Univ.) Make a recommendation to the Board of Visitors. Make available all data and information.

Administration:

- Actively serve as the Institute’s chief fundraising officer. [This appellation should be the superintendent’s primary, unwritten sub-title].
- Improve (repair) relations with state legislators.
- Obtain professional communications expertise by hiring a long-term crisis management communication company. Relying on “in-house” communications department support and/or the VMI Alumni Agencies is unacceptable based on comments made by the Board of Visitors president.
- Provide greater financial transparency (in re: Cadet Activities/Facilities fees).
- Review the role, responsibilities, and performance of the Registrar, the Comptroller, the Deputy Commandant for Operations, Plans, and Training, the director of cadet activities, as well as the processes and administration of VMI’s Freedom of Information office. These reviews make require termination/hiring decisions.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the VMI budget and staff with the objective to lead VMI being recognized as the Commonwealth’s most efficiently managed institution of higher education.
- Deliver cost-effective grounds and facilities (state property) management; assess the ROI of the Physical Plant operations and staff.

Joseph M. Spivey, IV

- Review policies for third-party organizations using Post's facilities. This action should be conducted in conjunction with the Board of Visitors and Commonwealth appointed legal counsel.
- Improve transparency within the Inspector General's office.
- Provide an improved records management process.
- Establish a resolution process to address issues before they occur and in order to prevent unnecessary litigation.

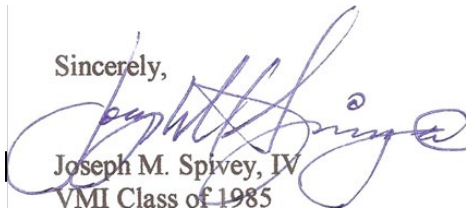
Alumni (This is so crucial it gets its own listing.)

- Improve relations with Alumni.

I implore the committee to not rush into selecting a superintendent simply because the incumbent will depart in a few months. Yes, his departure produces a vacancy, but I think VMI, all of VMI, the Board of Visitors, faculty, staff, cadets, parents, Alumni, friends, and many other Institute benefactors will benefit from this course of action. It will create time to "let the dust settle" following the tumultuous past 6 years.

This committee has an extremely challenging job and heavy responsibility. I am fearful that if the committee rushes into its selection in order to meet, in my view an arbitrary due date, it may miss some detail, or overlook a potential flaw, or shortcut the candidates' evaluation. Extending the entirety of the selection process by amending the overall schedule, dividing it into two parts, will enable the committee to complete its work without regrets or second guesses.

Sincerely,



Joseph M. Spivey, IV
VMI Class of 1985

cc: Mr. John Adams
Mr. Teddy Gottwald