



Strategic Plan Approval Brief

Board of Visitors
30 November 2023

Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins '85
U.S. Army (retired)
Superintendent



Strategic Plan Overview



Forging 21st Century Leaders **Five Strategic Initiatives**



Substantive Edits to the Strategic Plan



Suggestion: *Emphasize controlling costs and operational excellence/efficiency.*

Location: Superintendent's Letter (Pg. 2)

Before

In the ever-changing landscape of higher education, we are determined for VMI to be the premier small liberal arts college and operate fully as a leadership laboratory for young men and women. In this pursuit, we must not miss the opportunity to leverage academic advancements to continue to prepare our graduates for the day after graduation. While we have accomplished much in recent decades, we must move forward along a path that continues to be forged.

Location: Superintendent's Letter (Pg. 2)

After

Although we have accomplished much over the decades, we must continue forging a path forward. In the ever-changing landscape of higher education, we are determined for VMI to be the premier small liberal arts college and to operate fully as a leadership laboratory for young men and women. Forging 21st Century Leaders is intended to help us realize this vision by leveraging academic advancements through which we can achieve operational excellence while being ever vigilant about year over year affordability for VMI families. Done successfully, the VMI diploma will be strengthened and enhanced, ensuring the honorable graduates we produce enter the workforce prepared to succeed and ready to overcome the formidable challenges of the coming decades.



Suggestion: *Emphasize controlling costs and operational excellence/efficiency.*

Location: Recruit Top Cadets & Boost Success, Objective 2 (Pg. 15)

2. Be among the top five Virginia public institutions in retention and graduation rates.

VMI is physically and mentally demanding in ways that most institutions are not. Nonetheless, VMI has very respectable retention and graduation rates. Our most recent six- year graduation rate VMI is 77%, which is 15- points above the national average (NSC, 2016 cohort). Among Virginia four-year public institutions, VMI's graduation rate is five points higher than the average. However, our most recent retention rate was 82%, which is 9th place among Virginia public colleges and universities, 15-points below the front-runner.

To become a top 5 Virginia school, we must improve our retention rate without decreasing academic and physical rigor. There are ~~three~~ four strategies that will help us meet this challenge. First, we must adopt a data- and technology-intensive approach to academic advising and support. Second, we must augment advising and support by rethinking our approach to classroom engagement, especially in core curriculum courses.

Third, we must address growing high school deficiencies in core knowledge areas—such as mathematics, writing, and history—before cadets matriculate because failing a core curriculum class increases the likelihood of attrition.

Fourth, we must be exceptional in our fund raising and operational excellence efforts, with particular emphasis on controlling the costs of education.

Together, these four efforts will benefit the entire VMI community: cadets, parents/guardians, faculty, and alumni.



Suggestion: *Illuminate what VMI will look like in 2039; emphasize the fundamental elements of the VMI experience.*

Location: The Vision Guiding the Process (Pg. 4)

Before

The guiding tenets of the Forging 21st Century Leaders planning process included:

- » *To be the first-choice destination for talented students, faculty, and staff.*
- » *Develop and implement a leadership and education model that other institutions of higher learning seek to emulate.*
- » *Teach America's next generation of leaders to think critically and ethically, and work effectively in teams.*
- » *Develop and graduate honorable men and women who serve with courage and compassion.*

Location: The Vision Guiding the Process (Pg. 4)

After

As we work toward our 2039 bicentennial, we envision a VMI that will:

- » *Grow and retain a Corps strength at operational capacity.*
- » *Be a first-choice destination for talented students, faculty, and staff,*
- » *Retain and graduate cadets at rates that rival the best institutions in the nation,*
- » *Have a leadership and education model that other institutions of higher learning seek to emulate,*
- » *Teach America's next generation of leaders to think critically and ethically, and work effectively in teams, and*
- » *Develop and graduate honorable men and women who serve with courage and compassion, with at least 75% serving their country in some capacity—especially within the US Armed Forces or other state and federal agencies—a goal of more than half commissioning in the US Armed Forces, and additional quarter serving in other public service roles.*

In the implementation of this plan, we are committed to achieving the Institute's mission by protecting our time-honored culture and traditions and maintaining the elements fundamental to the VMI experience, namely:

- A single-sanction honor system that reinforces integrity and is fair,*
- A Class System that promotes accountability and camaraderie,*
- A Regimental System that promotes leader development,*
- A rigorous academic curriculum that challenges cadets to think critically and encourages ethical reasoning, and*
- A commitment to preparing graduates for a life of service the nation and the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

Suggestion: Discuss how we accomplish the values of Honor and Resilience; improve the language used to describe Excellence.



Location: Values (Pg. 5)

Honor

Honor is the heart and bedrock of the VMI experience. The VMI Honor Code has been fundamental since the school's beginning in 1839. "A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do." VMI's unique, single-sanction Honor System is foundational to the culture of the Institute. Living the Honor Code establishes the framework for an honor- able life.

Beyond our code, VMI seeks to develop men and women who live lives of integrity. Choosing to do the right thing even when there's an easier path, and treating others with dignity and respect, should be hallmarks of a VMI graduate. These are foundational to the VMI mission of producing "honorable men and women prepared for the varied work of civil life..."

[Kept the above and added the following at the end of the section]

The VMI Honor System's strength is the expectation of adherence to the highest standards of ethical behavior offering no tolerance for aberrations. More than a set of rules and regulations, the objective of the honor code is the inculcation of honor as a lifestyle. The development of honor is accomplished through conscientious daily decisions undertaken by each individual cadet in all facets of their lives.

Location: Values (Pg. 5)

Excellence

VMI has a long history of excellence. The VMI experience is predicated on pushing cadets to be the best version of themselves, reaching targets and goals that stretch themselves to new limits.

Seven Medal of Honor recipients. 11 Rhodes Scholars. 1 Nobel Peace Prize winner. 1 Pulitzer Prize winner. 293 general and flag officers.

Pursuing excellence is the standard at VMI, not just in the classroom, but in every aspect of a cadet's life: academics, military, extra-curricular, and athletics. It is a hallmark of a VMI graduate.

[Kept the above, edited the middle paragraph]

VMI graduates' noteworthy accomplishments are exemplified through Seven Medal of Honor recipients, 11 Rhodes Scholars, 1 Nobel Peace Prize winner, 1 Pulitzer Prize winner, 293 general and flag officers, 2 Virginia Governors, numerous state and federal legislators, and many business executives in the fields of science, defense, security, engineering, and manufacturing. Leaders from VMI emerge irrespective of their chosen path.

Location: Values (Pg. 6)

Resilience

Mental toughness inspires cadet life. They get tired, get knocked down, and take some tough hits, but it's how they react and recover that makes them special. It takes a level of grit just to apply to VMI. Then starting as early as Matriculation Day, a cadet's resilience is tested regularly. There is no shame in asking for or receiving help, and help is readily available.

Cadets face challenges each day on the field of competition, in the classroom, and as they prepare for the battlefield and the boardroom. There's no fear in failure, but rather a motivation for doing better the next time.

[Kept the above and added the following at the end of the section]

Resilient leaders at VMI are developed through the constant pressure to prioritize requirements and strive for excellence in response to the rigorous demands of a cadetship.



Suggestion: Add an action quote.

Location: The Plan (Pg. 7, side bar)

“VMI graduates are making a difference in the lives of their soldiers, co-workers, and families. To continue to deliver on our mission, the VMI experience must refine, enhance, and adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of our communities, commonwealth, and nation.”—Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, Superintendent



Suggestion: Blend NCAA Athletics with other leader development opportunities; streamline description of products.

Location: Prepare Exceptional Leaders, Objective 1 (Pg. 8)

1. Teach, coach, mentor, guide, and direct cadets through the VMI training model to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to become effective leaders.

Our country needs leaders of character now more than ever. VMI serves this need by developing men and women who think and act ethically, lead by example, inspire confidence, and are willing to work hard to achieve their goals. They endure rigorous training that promotes resilience and perseverance. Opportunities for cadets to hone their leadership skills are many and varied. Examples include participation in club sports, extracurricular activities, academic clubs and honor societies, Center for Leadership and Ethics programs, and the Regimental and Class Systems. Similarly, through NCAA athletics, leadership opportunities abound on the field of competition where individual and team skills are demonstrated.

Our unique method of education, symbolized by a three-legged stool (academics, military, athletics), has produced Rhodes Scholars, numerous military leaders, and captains of industry, ~~and a civil rights martyr~~. We intend to continue this great tradition and find ways to improve upon it. We strive to elevate VMI's approach to leader development to world-renowned status.



Suggestion: Revise graduate school reference.

Location: Prepare Exceptional Leaders, Objective 5 (Pg. 9)

5. Explore the value-added opportunity of ~~offering graduate programs and professional or advanced certificates~~ expanding the Institute's exceptional leadership training model and reputation in new and innovative ways.

We have an exceptional leadership development model that prepares leaders for all walks of life. Questions about whether this model should be expanded to a broader group of aspiring leaders, and if so, how would its design and implementation best align with and strengthen our mission. Thus, we need to determine if expansion into ~~new areas of educational programming~~ areas like undergraduate research and micro credentials makes sense, and if so, how, exactly, it should be undertaken. ~~they would be delivered, and what students and location would be best suited for these new programs.~~

Additionally, leveraging existing initiatives, such as the Peay Endowment, provides unexplored opportunities to attract VMI graduates as faculty. Offering a continuing education or graduate program may be a catalyst to achieve this end more expeditiously. Maintaining and preserving the Institute's mission, culture, and traditions will be top priorities in this value-added exploration.



Suggestion: *Emphasize diverse people coming together as a strength.*

Location: Foster Esprit de Corps, Objective 1 (Pg. 12)

1. Advance efforts that foster a safe, diverse, and inclusive environment.

We strive to make VMI safer, more diverse, and inclusive. We will work to advance these efforts in ways that are appropriate for our mission and that resonate with the VMI community. To do so, we will focus efforts on system-level policies and procedures and the use of science-based practices and programming recommended by reputable, apolitical scholars and organizations.

We will continue to teach and enforce a standard of conduct that aligns with the Code of a Cadet; ~~personal~~ honorable behavior will always be paramount. Further, the primary means of promoting inclusion and belonging will continue to be achieved through learning experiences that promote effective teamwork, team cohesion, and leadership of teams.

With an appreciation for diversity and individual effort, the strength of the VMI environment is a function of the character infused within individuals who are focused on achieving a common set of outcomes and results.



Suggestion: Discuss enhancement of communications and marketing.

Location: Foster Esprit de Corps, Objective 3 (Pg. 13)

3. Deepen VMI's connection with alumni, donors, and parents.

During their tenure at VMI, cadets develop special bonds with others that can last a lifetime. Most of these bonds are with fellow cadets, while others are with faculty, staff, or local community members. These strong relationships continue to impact the Institute long after graduation, such as through donations, support for athletes, or other service. Without the generosity of alumni, VMI's ability to offer an outstanding educational experience is not possible. Given our need for, and appreciation of, alumni support, we will strengthen these bonds even further by creating new opportunities for connection, leadership development, and mentoring.

We will also work to increase donor engagement in new ways that support cadet success and their leadership development. A vibrant and competitive NCAA Athletics program plays an important role in accomplishing this goal.

[Kept the above and added the following at the end of the section]

Lastly, we will broaden VMI's value to the broader external community by enhancing strategic communications and marketing efforts in ways that help us communicate our uniqueness, continually make the VMI brand recognizably valuable to important leaders in state and federal agencies, and attract talented cadets, faculty, staff, and prominent organizations interested in hiring our graduates.



Suggestion: Focus on teams and team building rather than individuals.

Location: Foster Esprit de Corps, Objective 4 (Pg. 13)

4. Provide experiential learning opportunities that will help cadets fully integrate within the VMI system, ~~and~~ achieve their highest potential, ~~and be productive members of a high performing Corps of Cadets.~~

We respect and embrace the spectrum of religious, racial, ethnic, gender, political, and viewpoint diversity that cadets bring with them, and acknowledge that a key strength of the Corps of Cadets is its diversity.

Although we cannot guarantee cadets' success, we can ensure that our support structures help them learn and refine the skills that they will need to achieve their personal best – while at VMI and as graduates. Without exception, cadets must be willing to commit to the VMI system, work diligently toward their goals, and meet required standards. That is, cadets must earn ~~success their place within the Corps. Reciprocally~~. ~~In return~~, we have a responsibility to ensure that the VMI system is conducive to healthy development and growth, and that every cadet, regardless of ~~race, ethnicity, gender, or nationality, can thrive within its confines.~~ ~~background, can be a contributing member throughout the echelons of the Corps.~~

To that end, we will offer world-class, research-based training and learning experiences that promote growth, enhance belonging, and equip cadets with the skills needed to successfully ~~interact with diverse groups.~~ ~~build and lead strong teams.~~ Exposure to diverse perspectives will challenge cadets to think critically and work collaboratively across differences. They will also learn to work together effectively, build strong relationships, and hone their leadership and communication skills. By fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance, while also embracing differences and unique perspectives, VMI will continue to produce culturally competent leaders who can manage diverse teams and make a positive impact on society.



Next Steps





Recommendation: Approval

Questions?