

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

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*