

# INSTITUTE REPORT

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

Volume 50, Number 6, March 2022

## Tuskegee Airman Brings 'Simple' Message to VMI

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

"This may sound simple, but just do the right thing."

These are the words of Lt. Col. Enoch "Woody" Woodhouse II in response to a cadet who asked the most important lesson he should bring back to barracks. Woodhouse came to VMI for the second time in a year and not only spoke to a full Gillis Theater, but also spent time with cadets, visiting barracks, having lunch in Crozet Hall, and spending a few hours in the VMI Museum. During his previous visit in May 2021, he attended the Memorial and change of command parades. Woodhouse now spends much of his time speaking to the youth of today, sharing words of hope, unity, and optimism. His evening talk at VMI, sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, was open to the public, and people of all ages took advantage of the opportunity to hear him.

Woodhouse is one of the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African-American fighter pilots and support staff who



Lt. Col. Enoch "Woody" Woodhouse II salutes the crowd in Gillis Theater Feb. 17.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

## Topping off the Aquatic Center

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

The Aquatic Center, also known as the Corps Physical Training Facility Phase III, is starting to look closer to the finished product, at least from the outside. Passers-by on North Main Street have seen massive walls go up with the framing for large windows. The work has continued steadily, with brief halts for holidays and snowstorms.

The road in front of the facility was closed to traffic for several days in February as a 375-ton crane was brought in, and a lane was created to place and lift the roof beams. The glulam beams are laminated wood, with each being 90-inches deep and

See Aquatic Center, page 7

fought in World War II and paved the way for the integration of the armed forces in 1948. Now 95, Woodhouse was 17 when he graduated from Boston English High School, the oldest public high school in America, and enlisted in the U.S. Army.

At the beginning of his talk, he acknowledged that each person in the audience has a day or a period that stands out in their lives. For many cadets right now, that day is graduation. For him, Dec. 7, 1941 was the “greatest moment and challenge” of his life. His family was on the way to church when they learned of the surprise attacks at Pearl Harbor. At that moment, his mother told Woodhouse and his brother they needed to serve their country.



Lt. Col. Enoch "Woody" Woodhouse II shakes hands with Kasey Meredith '22, regimental commander, during his tour of barracks Feb. 18.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

“Can you imagine a Black woman telling all that she had in the world, two boys that she raised ... ‘Boys, America is at war. I want

you to serve your country.’ That’s what we did.”

While his visits to various schools

allow him to share his experiences in the Army and beyond, Woodhouse also brings a theme to each of his talks. His theme for VMI was “the tyranny of words.” There are moments in life when the word “black” or the word “white” can cause a reaction. “We have to discuss it. We have to be honest. We have to be Americans. We’re all immigrants.” He goes on to say, “as Americans, we have to see just who we are. We have to find out what direction we’re going in. Without that,



Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers and Lt. Col. John Young give Lt. Col. Enoch "Woody" Woodhouse II a tour of barracks during his visit Feb. 18.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

*Continued on next page*

# INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 50, Number 6, March 2022

The Institute Report, VMI's monthly newsletter, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; (540) 464-7207; or [VMIReport@vmi.edu](mailto:VMIReport@vmi.edu). © 2022 Virginia Military Institute.

**Director** Col. Bill Wyatt  
**Editor** Maj. Michelle Ellwood  
**Assistant Editor** Kelly Nye  
**Designer** Robbin Youngblood  
**Institute Report Staff**  
H. Lockwood McLaughlin  
Eric Moore  
**Header photo on page 1 by**  
Kelly Nye

The Virginia Military Institute is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and that is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. In pursuit of this goal, any question of impermissible discrimination on these bases will be addressed with efficiency and energy and in accordance with VMI General Order 16. General Order 90 addresses complaints or reports of retaliation against those who have opposed practices prohibited by General Order 16, those who have filed complaints or reports of prohibited practices, and those who have testified or otherwise participated in enforcement of General Order 16. Questions regarding discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, or other federal law, may be referred to the VMI Inspector General and Title IX Coordinator, 212 Carroll Hall, VMI, Lexington, VA 24450, (540) 464-7072. Any cadet or prospective cadet having questions about disability services for students should contact the Director of the Center for Cadet Counseling and Disability Services, 448 Institute Hill, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Post Infirmary, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7667. For employment-related disability services, contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, VA 24450, (540) 464-7322.

COVID-19 information and current VMI protocols can be found at [www.vmi.edu/COVID](http://www.vmi.edu/COVID).

America will not be what it should be and what it wants to be.”

Woodhouse emphasized the value of education multiple times. Growing up in Boston, his father took him to each Harvard commencement speech as a child to build his interest in higher education, and he told cadets that the library should be their second home. As he scanned VMI yearbooks during his visit to the museum, he said one common trait stood out through the pages of each class year: cadets were honest, devoted, patriotic, and hard workers.

Yale University. He then studied law at Yale Law School and at Boston University, receiving his J.D. from the latter. He worked as a trial lawyer in his native city of Boston for more than 40 years, and in the State Department and for the City of Boston as well. He met his wife Stella in 1971 and they have a son, Enoch O'Dell Woodhouse III, an esteemed Harvard graduate.

Many cadets realized the importance and value of having Woodhouse visit post again. For some, it was a moment that will stand out as someone they read about in a



Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers shows Lt. Col. Enoch “Woody” Woodhouse II a cadet room in barracks Feb. 18.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

While he talked about expanding knowledge through books and higher education, he reminded listeners that so much can be distilled into the simple concept of doing the right thing and not cutting corners. “You have an honor code. That’s very simple. Can you imagine if you followed the honor code how easy your life would be?”

Woodhouse closed out his talk in the way he often does as he lectures across the country: “You can talk about me all you please, but I’ll talk about you on my knees.”

Over the years, Woodhouse would go on to serve in the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group as a paymaster, also known as a finance officer. After retiring from the U.S. Army Air Force, Woodhouse attended and graduated from

history textbook suddenly standing in front of them.

“It’s truly an honor. I was in shock and awe,” said Dennison Kelly ’23. “To be able to meet a man who is literally the epitome of what a great American is, is such a great opportunity.”

Mariah Woods ’22, a bi-racial woman who came to VMI from Southern California, understands the barriers that Woodhouse and the other Tuskegee Airmen knocked down. As an applied mathematics major, a field dominated by men, she said, “I’m a double minority in my field, and he set the stage so people understand that I am good enough, I am important enough, I am as qualified as the next person.” ✪

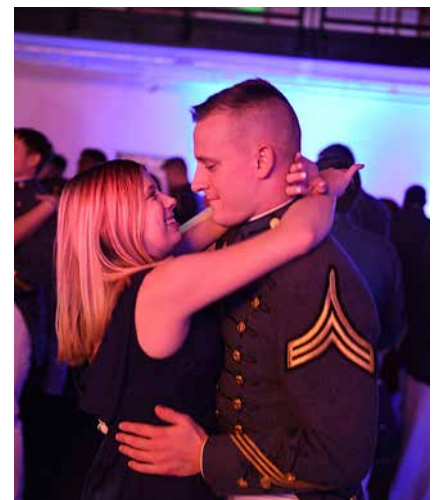
## First Parade of 2022

Cadets march in a unique retreat parade Feb. 11, the first of 2022. Due to recent winter weather, the Parade Ground was in poor condition for a typical parade, so the Corps did a lap using Letcher Avenue around the Parade Ground with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, taking review in front of Preston Library. Also in attendance were prospective cadets and their families visiting for an Admissions Open House. During a retreat parade, cadets lower the garrison flags for the evening, and the Cadet Battery fires the evening gun.—VMI Photos by Eric Moore and Sibi Bagavathy '23.



## Midwinter Formals

Cadets and their dates dance in Cocke Hall during the Midwinter Formals Feb. 18 and 19. Friday night, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class cadets attended, with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Class cadets attending Saturday. Put on by the S7 staff, the speak-easy-themed events featured live music and 1920s-style refreshments and decorations.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



# VMI Welcomes the Year of the Tiger

By Eric Moore

Cadets, staff, and faculty, as well as members of the local community celebrated the Lunar New Year during an event at VMI that's been held annually since 2016. It was organized this year by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Participants learned about Asian culture from speakers and tried delicious snacks including pot stickers and spring rolls. Cadets tried their hand at a number of games and activities including traditional Chinese board games, hacky sack, and games with chopsticks like pitch-pot—which requires the player to throw a chopstick into a glass bottle.

Taiwanese cadets helped facilitate the events and taught their peers how to write Chinese characters. Dr. Laura Xie, assistant professor of modern languages, and Maj. Briana Williams, deputy chief diversity officer, were excited for the event and the turnout.

"I'm glad to see all the cadets having fun together," Xie said. "Cultural events like this are important to help foster understanding of Asian cultures. It is a great way to welcome in the Year of the Tiger."



Chin-En Hsiao '23 uses chopsticks to pick up beans during the Lunar New Year celebration Feb. 15 in Marshall Hall.—VMI Photo by Eric Moore.

"Partnering with the modern languages department to bring a 2022 Lunar New Year event to post is just one of many pieces of our larger Inclusive Excellence plan," Williams said. "We look forward to having more opportunities to collaborate across departments to provide occasions to bring the community together in celebration." ❄️



Dr. Laura Xie welcomes attendees to the Lunar New Year celebration Feb. 15 in Marshall Hall.—VMI Photo by Eric Moore.



Anna Yemelianova '25 and Emma Cameron '25 draw Chinese characters during the Lunar New Year celebration in the Hall of Valor Feb. 15.—VMI Photo by Eric Moore.

# “Don’t Change a Thing”

## Jake Stephens ’22 Leads by Example

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Standing tall as a VMI cadet isn’t a problem for Jake Stephens ’22. The computer science major from Bunker Hill, West Virginia, measures in at 6-feet, 11-inches, currently the tallest cadet in the Corps, after growing approximately four inches during his college years. That’s after growing four inches during his years at Musselman High School. This captain of the Keydet basketball team was named the Southern Conference Men’s Basketball Player of the Week for the fourth time during the 2021–22 season in mid-February and scored his 1,000<sup>th</sup> point at the home game on Dec. 11, 2021. He is a member of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee.

After graduating from VMI, Stephens hopes to continue playing basketball in some capacity. Each NCAA fall and winter athlete in all three Division levels was given an additional year of eligibility due to the season-altering COVID-19 pandemic, whether the team competed or not. “I plan on playing basketball as long as I can,” said Stephens. “When I’m not playing, watching, or thinking [about] basketball, I usually like to listen to sports podcasts.”

Dan Earl, head coach of the VMI basketball team since 2015, has always been impressed by Stephens’ character and work ethic, even down to the snacks Stephens chooses on road trips. “In the summer, I’ll be on my porch, and I see Jake running sprints on the track at night. He’s a self-made player,” Earl said. He also hopes Stephens will continue playing the sport. “The stats speak for themselves. He’ll be able to play for a while if that’s what he wants to do. The door is open for him.”

Positive relationships have guided Stephens during his cadetship. The Piegari and Coleman families gave him homes away from home as host families. “I’m just so thankful that they came into my life, because I am not sure I could’ve



Jake Stephens ’22 and Connor Arnold ’22 are joined by their families in Cameron Hall while they are recognized during senior night Feb. 23. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

made it without them. I really can’t thank them enough,” he said.

He hopes anyone arriving to VMI could have a similar support system. “The more you put yourself out there and get involved, the more fun you will have here. If I could go back in time, I think a younger me would greatly benefit from that. Make friends, join clubs, put yourself out there, and in the end it will all be worth it because of those friendships you’ve made.”

Besides being well known on the court, and maybe giving the VMI tailor shop a bit of a challenge, Stephens carries himself well in all aspects of VMI life and is frequently described as humble, kind, and sincere. In class, he’s often quiet but gains respect of both faculty members and his classmates. “He leads by example,” said Col. Holly Richardson, professor of physical education. “Nobody wants to jump in the swimming pool at 0800 every Monday morning for 15 weeks. Jake was the one to lead the pack into the pool. He gives his best.”

A professor within Stephens’ computer and information sciences major, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey G. Smith Jr. has seen Stephens develop through his cadetship, starting in spring semester in 2019. Stephens sat in the corner of Smith’s classroom in a fashion described by Smith as “leisurely extending the longest legs of any computer science major on record.” But it didn’t take long for his dynamic leadership capabilities to shine. Stephens wasn’t loud or overpowering, simply “speaking sparingly, but with uncommon and unassuming clarity,” Smith said.

Smith recalls a time when he asked cadets to provide feedback on his course, and Stephens provided a list



Jake Stephens ’22 takes a shot against Gardner-Webb during the Dec. 11, 2021 game in Cameron Hall. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

*Continued on next page*

of recommendations on a yellow piece of paper after several other classmates shared their feedback verbally. While Stephens had provided guidance on how the course could be better, he reminded Smith not to take out the parts that make it all worthwhile. The written list wrapped up with “don’t change a thing.”

“His teachers, coaches, and classmates would tell Jake to heed his own advice,” said Smith. “When it comes to things like character, courage, humor, effort, and empathy, ‘don’t change a thing.’”

Earl wants to make sure he says “thank you” to Jake. “He’s got a great way about him. He represents VMI the right way. He’s a

phenomenal young man and I’m honored to have coached him.”

“This is only the beginning for Jake,” Richardson continued. “He is sure to have a successful future. No doubt Jake will touch people’s lives for the good. He impacted mine.” ❀

## Aquatic Center *continued from page 1*

18-inches wide. Col. Keith Jarvis ’82, director of construction, explains that “in this kind of [aquatic] environment, all the chemicals used can be detrimental to a typical steel beam. The glulam works fantastic for this.”

Once the roof is placed, which should wrap up in March, the focus will be the inside. The construction of the actual pool will begin and the initial water fill will be done in August. During the summer and fall, focus will be on windows, interior finishes, as well as completion of the heating, ventilation, and cooling system.

The 50-meter pool will hold 800,000 gallons of water. It can be divided into three sections, meaning diving, water polo, and competitive swimming could be happening all at the same time.

“This will be for the entire Corps of Cadets,” says Jarvis. NCAA teams will use it for practice and competition, but ROTC and the Department of Physical Education will both also use it for training. Cadet clubs, like the scuba club, will also find it valuable.

Just next door, the historic American Legion building, also known as the Knights of Pythias building, is under continued renovation and will be connected to the Aquatic Center. The main level will have coaches’ offices and a conference room. The upper level will be classrooms.

The \$44 million project, which has been in the planning stages for about a decade, is a little more than halfway done, and the team guiding the project is working towards a November 2022



An aerial view of the Aquatic Center construction site shows the interior.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

completion. “It’s a joy to see a project come together and get used. Then we move on to the next project. There’s always something to look forward to,” said Jarvis. ❀



A crane towers over the Aquatic Center construction site on Main Street.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



The entrance area of the Aquatic Center on Main Street takes shape during construction.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

# POST BRIEFS

---

## Slone Presents at Challenge Course Conference

Maj. Isaac Slone, facility director of the Corps Physical Training Facility, presented at the Association of Challenge Course Technology conference, which was held Feb. 10–13 in Cleveland, Ohio. The event brings together industry professionals from around the world to learn new ways of teaching teamwork and leadership through rock climbing, ropes courses, and obstacle courses. An opportunity to highlight VMI's many climbing, challenge, and obstacle courses, Slone presented on VMI's best practices and high standards for cadets in this realm.

"It was an honor to be selected to present to leaders in this field from around the world, but it was even more of an honor to do it representing the Institute," Slone said. "This presentation was on VMI's version of 'Challenge by Choice.' Our programs push individuals past their own expectations and show them they are capable of more than they thought possible."

## Arndt Book Published This Spring

Maj. Jochen Arndt, assistant professor of history, has written the book "Divided by the Word: Colonial Encounters and the Remaking of Zulu and Xhosa Identities" that will be published by the University of Virginia Press

this spring. In the book, Arndt explores the deadly ethnic divide between the two South African tribes and how outside influences created a long-lasting and sometimes inaccurate classification of the populations.

## Deputy Chief Diversity Officer Arrives

Maj. Briana A. Williams joined VMI as the deputy chief diversity officer in February. She comes from Akron, Ohio where she worked at Aultman College. Williams has professional experience with Title IX, new student orientation, and financial aid, and she served as a racial justice facilitator

for the YWCA. She holds a master's degree in leadership and higher education administration from Baldwin Wallace University, and a bachelor's degree in English from Marygrove College. She will focus on the overall Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan. ✨

# Munro '21 Named Gates Cambridge Scholar

By Eric Moore

Eric Munro '21 is one of only 23 U.S. candidates selected as a Gates Cambridge Scholar 2022. Established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000, the scholarship covers all costs for graduate study at the University of Cambridge. Munro will pursue a Ph.D. in engineering and research the development of next generation miniaturized spectrometers using novel nano materials.

An electrical and computer engineering major at VMI, Institute Honors cadet, and distinguished Air Force graduate, Munro was shocked and elated to receive the news.

"The first thing I did was call my parents to let them know that I received the scholarship," Munro said. "After that, I texted Don Kilcullen '74 to let him know. It was Don that made me aware of the scholarship in the first place, and it was Don that coached me through the process."

A cyberspace officer in the Air Force Reserves, Munro has been working at Kyrus Technology, a computer security company headed by Dan Hall '97, while

pursuing the scholarship. He is currently conducting preparatory research for his thesis "so that when I arrive at Cambridge, I can hit the ground running."



Eric Munro '21

Munro decided to attend VMI because "it promised an immensely challenging and demanding undergraduate experience that would instill discipline, leadership ability, academic aptitude, and above all else, honor and integrity." He continued, "I am happy to say that I got what I came for!"

While at VMI, Munro found success in the classroom, with extracurricular activities, and in AFROTC. As a 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet, he was recognized with several awards, including the First Jackson-Hope Medal for highest attainment in scholarship and the Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award. Munro also led a team of cadets to compete in an international robotics competition, earning praise from Col. James "Jim" Squire, professor of computer and electrical engineering.

"Eric's talents lie in being unusually gifted in both designing electrical engineering devices and being able to manage people," Squire said. "Eric guided the team of cadets working through a gauntlet of increasingly difficult competition, ... [and] his

*Continued on next page*



engineering skills and team management abilities impressed the judges.”

Munro is grateful for the mentorship and community he found at VMI that encouraged his academic success, especially from his brother rats.

“My academic achievements as a cadet were made possible because of the upper-classmen and brother rats that took the time to mentor, tutor, and collaborate with me,”

Munro said. “VMI taught me that academic success is rarely attained by being a solo act—it is more easily found by working with your peers, learning from your seniors, and helping your juniors.”

Munro’s future goals include completing a successful thesis that contributes toward the miniaturization of spectrometers and finding ways to contribute, teach, and mentor in his local communities.

Munro is the second VMI alumnus to receive the Gates Cambridge Scholarship. Jacob Cox ’10 was the first. At VMI, Cox majored in Chemistry and graduated with Institute Honors. After completing his master of philosophy degree at Cambridge, he returned to the United States and earned his doctor of medicine degree at the Johns Hopkins University. Currently, he is an ocular surgery resident at Harvard University. ✪

## Alumnus Serves as Side Judge in Super Bowl LVI

By Victoria Ferris, VMI Alumni Agencies, and Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Keith Washington ’87 experienced a full range of emotions when he found out he would be a part of Super Bowl LVI—from excitement to gratitude, and even a bit of denial. “This is my first field assignment. The assignment was really unexpected ... I knew disappointment from previous seasons,” said Washington, who served as the side judge in referee Ron Torbert’s official crew for this year’s Super Bowl.

As a former cadet-athlete, Washington’s football career has allowed him to experience the sport as both a player and a sideline official. His time playing for the Keydets helped prepare him to take on his role in the year’s biggest football game. “One of the real lessons learned was being able to focus when there is chaos around you; you still have to remain calm and execute,” he said.

Washington was a four-year letterman with the Keydet football program. He finished second on the team in receptions and receiving yards in 1986. Most notably that year, he caught two touchdown passes in the win over the Citadel on Oct. 11. He was also a jumper and sprinter on the VMI track team.

With only three weeks between the final game of the regular NFL season and Super Bowl Sunday, the crew wasted no time preparing



Keith Washington ’87 takes a photo of himself in SoFi Stadium, Inglewood, California, prior to the start of Super Bowl LVI.—Photo courtesy of Keith Washington ’87.

for the big game by staying up to date on the rule book, reviewing game film of the two teams, and sticking to their regular-season routine.

When the day finally arrived, the reality of Super Bowl Sunday defied Washington’s expectations. “Knowing that I was going to be on the field, I knew it was more emotional. I just didn’t know how much.”

The crew arrived at the stadium early in order to familiarize themselves with the venue and get acclimated. They reveled in the pre-game rituals and the singing of the national anthem. Then, it was go time. “There was a lot of hype in the last two weeks to lead up to this game. A long wait for this moment. But once the ball was kicked, then everything was normal again. We could focus on the game,” he said.

That normalcy disappeared again when the game ended. Instead of rushing off to the locker room, Washington and the rest of the crew stayed on the field, watching the confetti fall and taking in the celebration of the moment. “We celebrated each other. We all know how difficult [it is] to get to a Super Bowl ... so, [I] wanted to enjoy that moment with this crew. No one can take this moment away from us.”

Although the referees were in the locker room for much of halftime, he got to enjoy a portion of the halftime show, featuring big names like Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Mary J. Blige and Eminem, from field level.

Washington proudly wears his VMI ring, including when refereeing NFL games, and gets a lot of questions about it. He borrows his

response from former Keydet football teammate Mark Stock ’88, who played in the NFL: “This ring is tougher to get than the Super Bowl ring.”

But now his own Super Bowl ring is on order. The officiating crew will each get a ring from the big game. ✪

# Courageous Leaders Speak on Post-9/11 Mission

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

The Center for Leadership and Ethics kicked off the Courageous Leadership Speaker series for the spring 2022 semester with Toby Harnden, author of “First Casualty: The Untold Story of the CIA Mission to Avenge 9/11” and guests on Friday, Feb. 18 in Gillis Theater in Marshall Hall.

Immediately following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the CIA formed a handpicked team to go into Afghanistan, which included two VMI alumni who were in special forces. Details of the first mission post-9/11 into Afghanistan are told in Harnden’s book. He is an Orwell Prize for Books winner and former foreign correspondent for the Sunday Times of London and the Daily Telegraph. The panel presentation was moderated by Col. Dave Gray, director for the VMI Center for Leadership and Ethics. Harnden shared the stage with Dave Tyson, CIA case officer, Scott Spellmeyer ’90, third in command of Team Alpha and a former U.S. Army Ranger, and Col. Justin Sapp ’94, who was a captain at the time. Each shared their insights on the lessons learned in terms of intelligence operations, improvised military response, and the principles involved in how the war in Afghanistan was fought. They also talked about the long-lasting impact of



Justin Sapp '94 greets attendees of the panel discussion during a book signing held afterwards.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

losing Alpha team member, Mike Spann, the first U.S. citizen killed in action in the 20-year war.

Harnden said he was inspired to write the book after seeing the look on Tyson’s face in a news segment. “I could just see the look in his eyes, and I thought, ‘He’s got a story to tell,’” said Harnden. When Harnden contacted him, Tyson proposed they widen the scope of the story to include the other Team Alpha members. Harnden

contacted them to learn about their experiences. “Each story kept popping out,” he said. “I did my best to build up trust and confidence that I was a serious person. I wasn’t going to cheapen their story. I was going to do it right.”

Cadets, faculty, staff, and community members got an inside look at the risky scenarios the team was put in those days after 9/11 when the world was changing so quickly. Alumni were also in the audience, including some of Spellmeyer’s and Sapp’s brother rats, and a cadet whose father had been a classmate of Spellmeyer’s.

The panel shared some of their keys to success, which included knowing multiple languages, caring about people, and identifying the “least worst thing that can happen,” as Tyson explains.

Spellmeyer directed one statement specifically to the cadets in the room, especially to those commissioning in the U.S. military or going into national security on the civilian side. He advised them,



Author Toby Harnden discusses his book, “First Casualty: The Untold Story of the CIA Mission to Avenge 9/11” during a panel talk in Gillis Theater Feb. 18.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

*Continued on next page*

“be vigilant. There will be a time when it’s time for you to put up or shut up.” The risks Team Alpha faced were unprecedented. Spellmeyer characterized Harnden as a man of his word and “the goal [of the book] is to honor Mike Spann for his kids to be proud of him.”

After the panel discussion, attendees could meet the panelists and have them sign Hardnen’s book.

The Courageous Leadership Speaker series continues through the semester. An event on March 3 featured Andy Milburn, author of “When the Tempest Gathers: From Mogadishu to the Fight Against ISIS, a Marine Special Operations Commander at War.” Learn more about upcoming events hosted by the Center for Leadership and Ethics at [www.vmi.edu/cadet-life/cadet-leadership-and-development/cle](http://www.vmi.edu/cadet-life/cadet-leadership-and-development/cle). 🌟



Scott Spellmeyer '90 discusses his experience with Team Alpha during the panel talk held Feb. 18 in Gillis Theater. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



## VMI Hosts Fifth Cyber Fusion

Nearly 225 people participated in the Commonwealth Cyber Fusion conference held Feb. 25 and 26 organized by VMI’s Center for Leadership and Ethics. The 19 colleges participating sent approximately 130 students, with faculty and job fair guests also in attendance for the fifth annual event. Sen. Mark Warner was the honorary chair and provided a video welcoming everyone. The students met employers in the cyber field, got professional headshots, and heard from Stoney Trent, a retired Army colonel and research professor at Virginia Tech. Trent is also the founder and president of The Bulls Run Group, LLC, a company that specializes in human-centered artificial intelligence technologies for high-risk operations. On Saturday, the schools participated in a capture-the-flag-style competition led by the Virginia Cyber Range. George Mason University placed first taking home the Virginia Cyber Cup, and VMI placed fourth. —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.





Virginia Military Institute  
Communications & Marketing Office  
Lexington, VA 24450-0304

Nonprofit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Waynesboro, VA  
Permit 129

## Southern Conference Recognizes Dedicated Service

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Dr. David Copeland, Institute physician, and Col. James “Jimmy” Coale, professor of physical education, were recognized by Jim Schaus, league commissioner, at the Feb. 23 home basketball game as members of the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team for the 2021–22 academic year. With two representatives from each of the Southern Conference’s 10 member schools, the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team recognizes individuals who have demonstrated service to their schools and made contributions to campus life and the local community.

Coale has been at VMI for more than four decades. He has worked with all of VMI’s athletic teams in some capacity over the years and oversaw facility expansions and renovations that have benefited the athletic

training of numerous cadets. Copeland has held his position since 1992, focusing on the health and safety of cadets. He helped with the transition of health care when women joined the Corps of Cadets and has most recently spent much of his time focused on the coronavirus pandemic care and prevention.

Also recognized at the game were Michael Marshall, chief of

VMI police, and Col. Tim Hodges ’80, recently retired professor of physics, who were named members of the 2020–21 All-SoCon Faculty and Staff Team. Due to COVID-19 limitations, last year’s selections were not able to be recognized in person. Hodges was not able to attend the Feb. 23 game, but Marshall was on the court with this year’s recipients. 🌟



Jim Schaus, Southern Conference commissioner, recognizes Col. James “Jimmy” Coale, Michael Marshall, Dr. David Copeland as the VMI members of the All-Southern Conference Faculty and Staff Team for the 2020–21 and 2021–22 academic years during halftime of the Feb. 23 game in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

### Connect with VMI

 [facebook.com/vmi1839](https://facebook.com/vmi1839)

 [@vmi1839](https://twitter.com/vmi1839)

 [@virginia\\_military\\_institute](https://instagram.com/virginia_military_institute)

 [vminews.tumblr.com](https://vminews.tumblr.com)

Additional photos and videos can be found on Flickr and YouTube.