

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE
Lexington, Virginia
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
Tuesday, 24 August 2021

MINUTES

Committee Members Present:

Mrs. Lara T. Chambers '03
LTG Charles E. Dominy (Ret)
Mr. Michael L. Hamlar (Committee Chair)
Mr. Lester Johnson, Jr. '95
Mr. E. Sean Lanier '94
Mr. Scot W. Marsh '81
Mr. Damon Williams '90
LTC Jamica Love, Chief Diversity Officer
COL Kathleen Bulgar-Barnett, Professor, Modern Languages (*ex-officio*)
LTC Karen Bliss, Associate Professor, Applied Mathematics (*ex-officio*)
Cadet Whitney Edwards-Roberson '22

Board Members Present:

Mr. Hugh M. Fain III '80
Mr. Conrad M. Hall '65 (Vice President)
Mr. Lester Johnson Jr. '95
Mr. Gene Scott '80 (Vice President)
Mr. Thomas R. Watjen '76 (President)

Others Present:

MG Cedric T. Wins '85, Superintendent
BG Dallas Clark '99, Deputy Superintendent for Finance, Administration and Support
COL Keith Gibson '77, Executive Director of the Museum Systems
COL Dave Hall '83, Special Assistant to the Superintendent
COL Gary Bissell '89, Interim Chief of Staff
Col Dale Brown, Institute Planning Officer
COL Kimberly Parker, Governmental Relations Director
COL Bill Wyatt, Director of Communications and Marketing
COL Tinni Sen, Professor, Economics & Business
LTC Kevin Ryan '01, Interim Executive Assistant to the Superintendent & Secretary to the Board of Visitors
LTC Michelle Ellwood, Associate Director, Communications and Marketing
LTC Kim Connolly, Assistant Director for Programs & Conferences, Center for Leadership & Ethics
Mr. Patrick O'Leary '90, Institute Council
Mr. Stephen E. Hupp '84, Alumni Agencies Board of Directors

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. Hamlar, DEI Committee Chair, presided and called the meeting to order. He shared that Mr. Eddie Williams '83 will be the new Head Coach for Women's Track & Field. He is the first African American Head Coach hired by VMI Athletics.

2. Minutes of 30 April 2021 BOV-DEI Committee Meeting.

The Committee unanimously approved the minutes.

3. Introduction of Chief Diversity Officer

Mr. Hamlar introduced LTC (Doctor) Jamica Love as VMI's first Chief Diversity Officer. He shared that LTC Love will report directly to MG Wins and highlighted several items contained in the resume information provided.

4. Chief Diversity Officer Report

a. Review and finalization of the VMI Inclusive Excellence, One Virginia Strategic Plan

LTC Love reviewed the *VMI Inclusive Excellence Plan*. She highlighted that we are institutionalizing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) not just because it is mandated by the Commonwealth but because it is what we owe to the Cadets to prepare them for the diverse society they will encounter outside VMI. LTC Love reviewed the goals and objectives outlined in the Inclusive Excellence Plan contained in the information provided. She briefed that the plan is scheduled to be submitted to the State by 1 September 2021.

The Committee asked what aspects of the plan should be addressed first? LTC Love responded that education is the first priority. Across the Post there needs to be a common understanding and language around DEI.

The Committee asked if the Board members will have access to the on-line training? LTC Love indicated that once the software is purchased, she will be able to provide the Board members access to the on-line training.

The Committee unanimously voted to recommend the VMI Board of Visitors approve the *VMI Inclusive Excellence, One Virginia Strategic Plan*.

b. In-briefs across Post

LTC Love shared that since her arrival she has been and continues to meet with individuals and organizations (Cadets, Faculty, Staff and Alumni) across Post to build relationships, get an understanding of the organization and their needs, and give everyone a chance to get to know her and ask questions about DEI.

c. Coordination and Network Meetings (including media)

LTC Love briefly reviewed the individuals and organizations she has also been engaging outside VMI including Dr. Underwood.

d. Assessing Existing Training and Environmental Scan of Training Offerings

LTC Love has been reviewing the various trainings currently being offered to Cadets, Faculty and Staff to get a better understanding of supplemental training needs that are required or what new training may be beneficial.

e. Strategic Engagement on Post

LTC Love reviewed briefly the offices she is meeting with to explore what diversity data is available, how it is collected and ways in which the collection of data can be improved. For example, she is working with the Human Resources Office on inclusion of a search committee equity coordinator in the hiring process. This would be someone who looks at the hiring process through the lens of DEI and can bring DEI expertise into the candidate selection process.

f. Organizational Review of the DEI Office

Advertisements have been posted for a Deputy Chief Diversity Officer and an Administrative Assistant/Office Manager. LTC Love is also looking into the getting a graduate assistant. Even though VMI does not have a graduate program there may be graduates from other schools who may be interested in coming to VMI to complete their graduate level requirements.

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is temporarily located in the Smith Hall Small Conference Room. The permanent office will be located in the facility located at 303 Letcher Avenue which is currently under renovation. The office will be located on the third floor, above the Protocol Offices.

g. Equity Dashboard

LTC Love shared that she is reviewing the current Equity Dashboard. Her concern is that there is no way to determine the level of accuracy of the current metrics because the information can only be collected on a voluntary basis. This is true for both employees and Cadets. Metrics developed from only those who are willing to share their information may not result in an accurate metric for the Institute as a whole. She shared that we must continue to look for ways to collect better information in order to improve the accuracy of the information displayed on the Equity Dashboard. She is working with Institutional Research to improve the data collection process and plans to update the information on the Equity Dashboard in January 2022.

The Committee asked if the Dashboard will be used to compare VMI with other higher education peers both in State and out of State? LTC Love confirmed that that is the intent, including other military institutions of higher education. The information will also be used to track performance on VMI's journey for self-improvement.

h. Future Calendar

Continued efforts to staff the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Begin in-person DEI engagement and training in the spring academic semester (January 2022).

MG Wins shared with the Committee the infectious energy LTC Love is bringing to VMI about her area of expertise. Her actions are encouraging others to embrace the tenants of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, or at least understand the perspective and the foundation on which it is build, which is in-line with his intent for the program. Mr. Watjen echoed the Superintendent's comments, and thanked LTC Love, and all who have been working this program, for the efforts.

Mr. Hamlar shared that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is an uncomfortable topic not only to work but to discuss. He continues to be impressed by the progress that is being made in such a short period of time. VMI just needs to continue to put our best foot forward.

Mr. Watjen reminded the Committee of the three objectives the Board has adopted:

1. The Post needs to resemble the outside world.
2. The experience on Post needs to be conducted in a fair and equitable environment.
3. That People have comfort raising issues that they think

may be unfair. We all need to continue to evaluate our efforts against this three basic objectives.

The Committee expressed the desire to expand the vocabulary of what VMI is trying to accomplish beyond the terms of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. VMI always intends to be the leader in whatever programs it participates in. We need to grow the VMI program as required to meet the Board objectives and not let ourselves be limited by the terminology and actions directly associated with the tenants of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The Committee shared that the military services are experiencing a shortage of trained DEI officers. It was suggested that VMI might consider aligning a portion of our program to meet their needs and investigate the possibility of funding that might be available to meet some of those needs.

The Committee shared the current version of the Rat Bible is available from the Commandant's Office. It was noted the language changes that have been made to incorporate the cultural shifts that are on-going. Faculty representatives asked if the Rat Bible could receive wider dissemination to include copies to all the faculty so they may reference current language. COL Gibson shared that he has been a part of the preparation of the Rat Bible and shared a desire for the faculty to have a larger role in the annual review of the document as a means to better understand and share in the Cadet experience. The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion should have a similar role in the next revision of the Rat Bible.

Cadet Edwards-Roberson on behalf of the Corps of Cadets expressed appreciation to LTC Love for her briefing to the Cadets. Her briefs have been engaging and well received by the Cadets without any of the normal complaints for mandatory training and briefs. Mr. Hamlar shared that this is a great way to end the meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned.