

History, Item by Item VMI's Roots Painstakingly Recorded in Museum Inventory

By Maj. Sherri Tombarge

A kepi worn by an alumnus with the French Foreign Legion.

A pistol made by a captured German arms manufacturer presented to Gen. George Patton and imprinted with his name.

A bullet pulled from the body of VMI cadet and New Market casualty Thomas Garland Jefferson.

These lesser-known and little-seen artifacts and many others have recently passed through the often gloved hands of Capt. Montie Blakey, VMI Museum assistant, during a comprehensive inventory of collections currently under way at the museum.

"It's ... a great job for me," said Blakey, surveying artifacts from paintings to guns to uniforms to medals in the climate-controlled area where the museum's research collection is housed. "I love history, so for me to be able to touch a pistol that Patton had or a bullet that came from Thomas Garland Jefferson, how many people get to do that?"

Blakey has been working on the project with Col. Keith Gibson, executive director of the VMI Museum System, since October. The project was initiated partly because of an upcoming assessment



Col. Keith Gibson (left) and Capt. Montie Blakey, refer to a record in the database that tracks museum artifacts. – VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

for reaccreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, but also because the museum underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation from 2004 to 2006.

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MOU Solidifies Relationship Between VMI and Project Horizon

By Kelly Nye

The Commonwealth of Virginia wants its students to be safe on their college campuses. Prevention and awareness of sexual assault are top priorities across the state, and VMI is no exception.

This past summer VMI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Project Horizon. Every school in Virginia

is now required to sign an MOU with the local sexual assault crisis center, as recommended by the governor's Task Force on Combating Campus Sexual Violence. Among those serving on that task force were Judy Castele, executive director of Project Horizon, and then-VMI Title IX coordinator Col. Bill Grace.

"We [Project Horizon] had a good, solid working relationship with VMI," explained Castele. "This just really made it official."

The MOU outlines the history of the two agencies and describes each agency's role. Under the MOU, Project Horizon provides

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INSTITUTE REPORT

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Office of Communications and Marketing

Director	Col. Stewart MacInnis
Editor	Maj. Sherri Tombarge
Assistant Editor	John Robertson IV
Graphic Artist	Robbin Youngblood
Contributors	Scott Belliveau '83 Chris Floyd Stephen Hanes H. Lockwood McLaughlin Kelly Nye

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"Every artifact was boxed up and moved over to Preston [Library]; some of it was moved over to the Marshall museum, some of it was at other locations," said Blakey. "We had to bring it all back."

"And the time you're likely to lose things," noted Gibson, "is when you're moving them." The inventory will allow Gibson to be sure everything was returned to its proper place.

"Inventory in a museum is different from inventory in a store ... because accountability is of paramount importance for a museum collection," said Gibson. It's fundamental to good stewardship, and when we accept an artifact into the collection, we are entering into a trust with that donor that we're going to care for that item."

The comprehensive inventory is an opportunity, Gibson said, to confirm the condition of the artifact as well as its location and documentation. In the early years of the museum, he noted, documentation consisted of a letter of donation, filed appropriately. Later, more detailed information was neatly organized in ledgers – retained now for the "soft" information they contain and as a tribute to the stewards who created them.

Now, however, each item has a unique accession number, with the addition of letters to denote sub-items if the artifact has parts, such as the 22 items in the historic drafting set Blakey had checked – "That's A through V," he noted.

The numbers, which identify the year the artifact was donated, the collection it was donated with, and the number of that item within that collection, are stored in a database complete with photographs and detailed information about the artifact, information that Blakey and Gibson often find themselves augmenting as they handle the artifacts.

Such an immense project – the collection consists of 30,000 artifacts plus all their sub-items – required careful planning, undertaken by Gibson and Blakey with Barbara Blakey, the museum's registrar.

"The process is to, row by row, shelf by shelf, take down a box of artifacts and open it and confirm that what is in that box is what our computer database is telling us should be in that box," said Gibson. "Sometimes we discover that something that should be in that box is not in its home location or that something has migrated to that box, in which case we add it in the database or move it to somewhere it would be more at home."

Added Blakey, "I have to open the box; I have to check the numbers with the computer to make sure that they match. And items like this [drafting set], I have to go through all the numbers in the box, so it's time consuming, very, very time consuming."

This meticulous work assures the viability of the collection for scholars and for cadets, who are able to access even those artifacts not on display – as long as they're accompanied by a staff member. Artifacts serve as illustrations for classes and tell the story of the past.

"Museums are about standing in the presence of participants," said Gibson. The jacket worn by Stonewall Jackson when he was wounded at Chancellorsville, on display in the museum, is an example. "They [the artifacts] were there. They witnessed what happened. The bullet first went through the shoulder of the jacket and then through Jackson."



Women in the Military

Retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Fran Wilson gives a presentation March 2 in the Turman Room offering her professional perspectives on the Combat Exclusion Policy. Also speaking at the event, which was sponsored by the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, was Holly Hemphill, senior counsel at the National Women's Law Center. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.



Accession numbers can be seen on two of these artifacts touched during the VMI Museum inventory. – VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.

Museum Collection Features Common Items Heavy With Meaning

Among the artifacts handled during the inventory is the kepi worn by Kiffin Yates Rockwell, Class of 1912, when he was part of the French Foreign Legion. Rockwell, said Gibson, went on to be a fighter pilot with the Lafayette Escadrille and became the first American fighter pilot to shoot down an enemy aircraft in aerial combat during World War I.

The artifact elicits a sense of the “romance and mystery” of the French Foreign Legion, said Col. Keith Gibson, executive director of the VMI Museum System. “Why would an alumnus join? He gets all jazzed up about the war breaking out in Europe and he’s killed in action in 1916.”

The kepi, which reflects the style of the French Foreign Legion’s distinctive uniform, is a rarely seen artifact, safely stored with the VMI Museum’s research collection.

“That particular artifact may ... imply the diversity of our collection because alumni are involved in all sorts of activities, strange and unusual activities,” said Gibson, adding that, as such, “It is a historical asset.”

The pistol belonging to Gen. George Patton, who matriculated with the Class of 1907, is a Walther PPK. Capt. Montie Blakey, museum assistant, described how, once the manufacturing facility was captured by the Allied forces during World War II, it continued manufacturing the pistols, but with very different inscriptions.

Patton’s men had the pistol made and inscribed for him, and it came to the museum collection via another alumnus, Gen. Thomas T. Handy,

Class of 1914, who had served as second in command for Gen. George C. Marshall, Class of 1901, during the war, Gibson added.

An item even older and more sacred, perhaps, to the heritage of VMI is a bullet removed from the body of Thomas Garland Jefferson. Lying in Blakey’s gloved hand, it seemed a small and insignificant thing, easily misplaced if not for the care of the museum staff. Jefferson was among 10 cadets mortally wounded in 1864 in the Battle of New Market.

The museum goes even further back in time, to 1845, but not its collection.

“We have been assembling the collection and the records related to it for well over a century,” noted Gibson. “Those early artifacts that constituted the museum collection can no longer be accounted for, and we’re reminded of that every time we do an inventory because the early museum collection was destroyed with the Institute in 1864. ... So today, the earliest accession number is 1870.”

Items currently housed in the research collection, such as the kepi, may someday find a home in a display case, said Gibson.

“We are in the process of developing a gallery called VMI Citizens and Soldiers, and in that gallery we will feature alumni service ... both civilian and military. ... That would be the appropriate place that the kepi would be exhibited.”

– Maj. Sherri Tombarge

Great Stories: Cadets Write to their Scholarship Donors

By Scott Belliveau '83, VMI Foundation

Every April, the VMI Foundation hosts its annual Benefactors Luncheon, an event at which hundreds of the donors of scholarships or their representatives come to post and meet the cadets who receive financial support from endowed scholarships. These donors leave VMI with a renewed appreciation for the importance of their support in the lives of cadets, and the cadets hear stories behind these scholarships and see firsthand the often passionate commitment that the donors have to VMI and its cadets.

Before that event takes place, however, the cadets who benefit from endowed scholarships write thank-you letters to their benefactors. This effort, coordinated by the VMI Foundation in late February, is

carried out because many of the alumni and friends who support scholarship endowments cannot make it to the luncheon, and the VMI Foundation wants these men and women to know how significant their support is.

“We can never thank these people enough of their generosity, foresight, and vision,” said Christina Hatcher, donor relations coordinator for the VMI Foundation. “However, it is important that these donors hear directly from the young people who are benefiting from scholarships.”

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The Benefits and Dangers of Technology

Cadets and Conference Participants Explore the Ethical Challenges of this Digital Age

By Maj. Sherri Tombarge

VMI's sixth annual Leadership Conference brought nearly 20 speakers to post to address its theme, "Ethical Dilemmas in a Digital Age," from a wide range of perspectives. Retired Army Gen. Keith Alexander, former director of the U.S. National Security Agency, spoke to the government's need for access to information and the tension that creates related to privacy issues, during his keynote address March 7, the first day of the conference.

Luncheon speaker Dr. Christopher Sogohian, principal technologist with the American Civil Liberties Union's speech, privacy, and technology project, called, on the other hand, for more encryption for individual communications, not less. Panels and speakers throughout the day touched on these and other ethical concerns including data mining, robotic warfare, and job automation.

Classes were canceled March 2 so the entire Corps of Cadets could join the proceedings on Day 2, first attending a talk by futurist and author Dr. Peter Singer, in which he surveyed the warfare and battlegrounds of the 21st century, and then dividing into small groups for in-depth discussions of the ethical challenges presented by technology.



Dr. Peter Singer addresses the Corps and conference participants in Cameron Hall. - VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

"You hear these speakers, experts in the field, [and] here are things they want us to consider," noted Lt. Col. Pennie Ticen, professor of English, "and then you have the time to sit down with a group of people to ponder these issues." The small group discussion, she said, "actually scheduled time when you're able to think through the issues."

Ticen and numerous other members of the VMI faculty and staff devoted half a day or more to the activity, leading discussions among groups of up to 10 cadets on scenarios that captured some of the conference themes.

"At Lt. Col. Ticen's table we discussed the topic of public shaming," said Carlee Anderson '18, who had attended Alexander's and Singer's talks and a panel discussion on Day 1. "My group really dissected the idea of how social media can easily serve as a source of false confidence for people to come together to put down something that might not conform to societal norms."

Noting that the discussion on social media and public shaming was both "exceptionally thought provoking" and "somewhat unsettling," Anderson added, "To think that reality can be twisted into fictitious



Biology professor and department head Col. Jim Turner '65 leads cadets in discussion during the Ethical Leadership Challenge. - VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

drama at the stroke of a key is extremely concerning to me as we enter an age so dedicated to reputation and image."

"That group had some cogent critiques of the way social media is used by their generation," said Ticen. "It went back to being cowardly; Carlee called it the 'Oz effect.' Behind the curtain, you are small and scared and not willing to talk one to one, face to face. ... They all seemed to agree that's what you need to do."

The scenarios challenged the cadets to choose solutions, sometimes between two "wrongs," noted Ticen, adding, "I was impressed with the complexity of the student thinking by and large."

Cadets also attended panel discussions on cyber attacks and on social media.

"The impression I took away," said Anderson, "was the idea that the people in my generation, here at VMI at least, ... want to see a change that turns technology into a resource that is solely beneficial to our society."

Remembering Jonathan Daniels

Cadets fill the Daniels Courtyard March 9 for the Jonathan Daniels Ceremony, wherein cadets laid a wreath honoring the civil rights hero and "Amazing Grace" was played on the bagpipe. - VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.



Brothers Collaborate on Biology Research Projects

By Kelly Nye

All cadets in the same class are Brother Rats, it's true; few of them, however, are actually brothers. Few room together, and perhaps even fewer share the same major.

Justin and Jarred Doran '18 are the exception. They are not twins, but two of three brothers in a family from Royersford, Pa. Not only do the two biology majors room together, but they take the same classes and also work together on projects.

Justin transferred to VMI from the University of Pittsburgh; now he and Jarred, though a year apart in age, are in the same class at VMI.

"They call us Tweedledee and Tweedledum, or Thing One and Thing Two," Jarred said, laughing. And it's easy to see why. Both have bright red hair and brown eyes. They are easy to mix up, until they speak, when the difference in their personalities starts to show.

Lt. Col. Pieter deHart, associate professor of biology, works closely with the Doran brothers on their research projects. "They work really well together," he said. "And they do have different strengths – very different personalities – and I think they are very complementary, which is rare."

Justin has been researching spiders, mostly wolf spiders and harvestmen – daddy long legs – and how they adapt in different environments. He makes his assessments by measuring their isotopic signatures. The spider project is a collaboration with Washington and Lee University biologist Dr. Larry Hurd and a student of his, who is researching orb weavers.

Justin plans to write Jarred in as a co-author on the paper because Jarred has been helping him every step of the way – exactly the way Justin has been helping Jarred with his research on crayfish. Jarred is collecting crayfish and comparing their isotopic ratios to see if increasing water temperatures have an effect on the native species here. The crayfish project is a collaboration with a professor at Longwood University looking for reasons why invasive crayfish species are outcompeting native ones.

The brothers work side by side on each project.

"Last summer, when we first started our research, we had to do our initial collections, so we would go out everyday for at least two

weeks. And we would just try to catch a good amount of crayfish or a good amount of spiders," explained Jarred.

Even when analyzing the data, the Dorans work at the same time using two stations in deHart's lab. "It's a pretty drawn-out process. It takes a while to analyze each sample," explained Jarred. "We'll both sit down, and we might have crayfish and spiders in both but we'll just knock them out together."

"It's really helpful to bounce ideas off each other," added Justin.

DeHart has been pleased with the work the two of them produce. "These are probably the two strongest students I've ever worked with. And I really love that they're a team," he added.

Justin presented the project on spiders, and Jarred presented the project on crayfish, at the Virginia Academy of Natural Science undergraduate research forum this past fall. They were both finalists. Justin won a \$500 grant to continue his research, but he claims it was only because they called his name first.

He shrugged. "They could only accept one person from VMI as the winner," he said.

The two also split up over Thanksgiving furlough when deHart took Jarred to the Amazon to collect fish samples. He had only one slot available on the project, where the scientists stayed on a floating research center and caught fish in nets for up to seven hours a day.



Justin Doran '18 and Jarred Doran '18 analyze crayfish samples in Lt. Col. Pieter deHart's biology lab. – VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Justin Doran '18 removes a sample of crayfish tissue so his brother Jarred can measure its isotopic signature. – VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Jarred explained how primitive it was: "We were on the river and we caught a bunch of piranhas that day, so that's what we had for Thanksgiving dinner."

"I don't really enjoy eating fish. It's not my scene," noted Justin.

Both of the Doran brothers are contracted and on scholarship to commission into the U.S. Army, but both are requesting academic delay so they can go to medical school. Jarred is interested in patient care or surgery while Justin wants to do pharmaceutical research. They know it's a possibility they will not get into the same schools.

But, as deHart observed, "I know they're going to go on to do some really good things."

Two Wins Close Final MAC Season for Rifle Team

By Chris Floyd

It wasn't a bad way to say goodbye.

VMI's women's rifle team won two titles at the Mid Atlantic Rifle Conference championships held in Kilbourne Hall March 5, as the Keydets bid farewell to one league and prepared to rejoin another.

Saturday's competition marked VMI's last in the MAC. Next year, the Keydets will rejoin the Southern Conference, which announced recently that it will add rifle as its 21st sponsored sport beginning in the fall.

"We got a lot of thank you notes," said VMI head coach Lt. Col. William "Bill" Bither, who led his team into its final match in the MAC, a league to which VMI has belonged since 1990-91. "We hate to leave the MAC, but everybody is looking forward to the Southern Conference."

But before VMI could think about the SoCon, the Keydets had some unfinished MAC business to complete. And the women responded. Alice Chiu '18 tallied 553 points to lead the Keydets to the smallbore sharpshooter title, while Samantha Alexander '18 scored 576 to pace VMI to its win in the air rifle expert division.

"The women's team had a really good day," said Bither, whose team claimed the MAC championship a year ago. "We've been rebuilding this year. We lost some key positions, but we did a lot better than I thought we would. We had some people step up and shoot some really good scores."

Once Saturday's MAC championships ended, the Keydets could begin focusing on their return to the Southern Conference.

The SoCon sponsored rifle for nearly 30 years before dropping the sport in 1985, and VMI was a member during that time, winning league titles in 1964 and 1971. The league decided to adopt the sport again earlier this year, becoming one of only two Division I conferences in the country to sponsor rifle.

Added to the SoCon team roster immediately were established programs and full members VMI, which made a brief appearance in the top-20 this season; the Citadel, which won 10 Southern Conference titles back in the day; and Wofford College. They will be joined by associate members University of Alabama-Birmingham,



Samantha Alexander '18 aims downrange during the Mid-Atlantic Conference rifle championships held in Kilbourne Hall March 5. - VMI Photo by Stephen Hanes.

Georgia Southern University, and perennial top-20 University of North Georgia.

"It is going to be, literally, a shoot-out," Bither said. "Most of the teams are pretty close, and I expect that to continue in the first year of competition."

The SoCon might never even have considered adding rifle to its ledger if not for VMI. Bither said he and Citadel coach William Smith "floated the idea around," and eventually Bither took his musings to VMI athletic director Dr. David Diles, who in turn went to the Southern Conference president.

"It finally gained some traction," said Bither. "It's going to be a big change for us, but it's a good fit. This is going to be quite an opportunity for VMI rifle."

While it is probably too early to start making predictions, especially considering the level of competition VMI will face in its new league, Bither believes that the teams are evenly matched. And with his women's team fresh off two MAC titles, and the mixed team finishing third, he is definitely excited about seeing what his teams can accomplish in the SoCon.

"We're going to shoot some great scores, and I expect to have some great team scores next year," he said. "We've got some outstanding talent coming back."

Bither is currently working on next year's schedule. Nothing is set, but he knows he will have to face each of the league squads at least once during the regular season. He said he expects sectional qualifying to be held in February, with the conference championships slated for March.

And who knows? VMI, the host site for its last MAC tournament, just might be home to the first Southern Conference rifle championships. Bither and his staff have submitted a bid for that honor and are awaiting word from the league offices.

"I'm not sure how that's going to play out," he said, "but we're definitely in the mix."



Competitors take aim during the Mid Atlantic Conference rifle championships. - VMI Photo by Stephen Hanes.

Wrestler Competes in NCAA Tournament

Neal Richards '19 did something no VMI wrestler has done since 2011.

He earned a spot in the NCAA tournament.

Richards finished third overall at 157 pounds in the Southern Conference tournament held March 3 in Asheville, N.C., but with a second NCAA bid up for grabs at that weight class, he defeated Aaron Walker of the Citadel in a true second-place match, scoring a 13-11 overtime victory and earning a spot in the NCAA championships, which were held March 17-19 at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

The Keydets finished seventh in the team standings at the SoCon tourney.

Keydets Win Weekend Baseball Series

Matt Pita '19 hit for the cycle (single, double, triple, and home run) in the first game of a doubleheader with Binghamton University March 5 in Lexington, setting a new VMI record in the process. The left fielder drove in eight runs to lead the Keydets to a 15-9 victory in the first game of the twin bill, setting a new school mark for RBI in a single game.

The Keydets won the weekend series Sunday when Will Malbon '17 doubled to drive in two runs in the bottom of the 10th inning to give VMI a 2-1 win. Josh Winder '19 tossed a gem on the mound, going all 10 innings and allowing just seven hits while striking out 10 and walking none. The Keydets stood 7-6 overall at press time.

Indoor Track Takes Third and Fifth in Championships

VMI indoor track returned from the Southern Conference Championships in Birmingham, Ala., with a pair of league champions.

Jordan White '16 took the top spot in the weight throw with a toss of 19.21 meters, just two-tenths of a meter short of the meet record. Meanwhile, Greg Henderson '17 broke the tape in the 200-meter dash with a time of 21.91 seconds to earn his conference title. The Keydets finished third in the team standings.

The VMI women earned five top-five finishes, placing fifth overall.

New Jersey Lacrosse Victory First for New VMI Coach

Wesley Sanders '18 scored four goals, and VMI defeated New Jersey Institute of Technology 10-7 Feb. 27 in Madison, N.J. The victory was the first of the season for the Keydets and the first for new head coach Jon Birsner.

Basketball Falls in Tournament Opener

VMI basketball fell to Samford University in the opening round of the Southern Conference tournament March 4 in Asheville, N.C., dropping a heartbreaking 92-85 overtime decision.

The Keydets, who finished the season 9-21, were led by QJ Peterson '17, who tallied a game-high 27 points. Peterson, who was named to the All-Southern Conference team, also chipped in with 14 rebounds, six assists and three steals. Tim Marshall '16 and Phillip Anglade '16 closed out their VMI careers with 20 and 19 points, respectively.

Inventory, Efficiency Key for New Equipment Manager

By Chris Floyd

He's involved in every sporting event at VMI, yet most people don't know he exists, as he works in quiet anonymity.

He's Lenny Brown, the new director of athletics equipment and services at VMI, and he just may be the most important person in the Institute's athletic program.

"When you say equipment manager to people, they either don't know about it, or what they do know is very limited," said Brown,

who arrived on post Jan. 18, replacing the retired Jimmy Mason, who held the position for three decades. "There's definitely not a clear recognition of what we do."

What does an equipment manager do? Well, just say it involves much more than stocking shelves.

"The position in support of athletics equipment and services has evolved tremendously," said Dr. David Diles, VMI's athletic director. "First, it now requires a certification to be certain that our athletes are fitted properly and protected. Second, there is a high expectation that this position work closely with coaches on their purchasing [and] inventory and in relationships with vendors to maximize financial efficiency."

"Any equipment manager is kind of like a go-to guy for just about anything," Brown said. "I have to be someone [teams] can depend on."

The bulk of Brown's time these days is consumed by laundry, a daily chore that takes six or seven hours as he collects, washes, and redistributes practice gear for VMI's many teams. But he is also responsible for inventory, repairing damaged equipment, and purchasing new items. Brown serves as a liaison between the school and Under Armour, the official outfitter of VMI athletics, as well.

When football season rolls around, Brown's load will only increase. Then he will be responsible for outfitting nearly 100 players, loading and unloading trucks for road games, and sideline communications as well.



Lenny Brown launders uniforms for VMI's baseball team - VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.

Cadet Project Uses Polarization to Understand the Stars

By Kelly Nye

Much of what scientists understand about stars has come from observing them in the night sky. Their luminosity, or brightness, the distance they are from earth, even their temperature, are all calculated by observing the light that reaches the earth. To make sure those calculations are correct, polarization of that light must be taken into account.

Polarization is the focus of 1st Class Cadet Robert Elmore's honors project with mentor Col. Greg Topasna, professor of physics and astronomy. Specifically, Elmore, a physics major with a minor in astronomy, is studying the polarization of starlight from open star clusters – young groups of a few hundred stars.

Polarization happens when light moves in different directions. The more objects, like dust and other interstellar media, that interrupt the light's journey, the more polarized the light is when it reaches earth.

Elmore explained that polarization, "affects the amount of light that's incoming from stars in our galaxy," adding, "So if we know the amount that it's polarized, then we can say how much light is actually getting to us, which is important when comparing stars of different magnitudes and different intensities"

In other words, in order to understand the makeup of the stars they're studying, Elmore and Topasna have to measure the things that affect the quality of the light between Earth and the star.

Elmore is building on knowledge gleaned from cadet studies over several years. His project digs into the actual size of the dust particles interrupting the light and causing the polarization.

Once he gathers data, he enters it into a software program, Mira Pro 7, which helps him analyze the images of the stars he takes

through the telescope. He then has numbers to plot into a Serkowski curve. The width of the curve helps determine the grain size of the dust.

"The polarization will peak at a particular wavelength, so we'll have some maximum value at a certain wavelength value, and that's telling you about the grain size that's in the interstellar medium," said Topasna.

Elmore and Topasna are also using a broadband and a narrowband filter on the telescope to compare the findings between the two.

"So if you were to go out and make a measurement using polarization using broadband and reported a result and used narrow band and reported the result, then you would say we both agree on the degree of polarization, and we both agree on where the polarization occurred, but we'll disagree on the size of the grain because the two curves



The VMI observatory glows red with the safe light that allows Col. Greg Topasna and Robert Elmore '16 to see without interfering with their photography of the star clusters. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.

– the width of the curves – differ,” explained Topasna. “What we decided to do is confirm that result and extend it to not just one cluster, but several clusters, and see what’s happening.” This helps them determine if previous measurements have been accurate, though for some clusters theirs are the first polarization measurements taken.

Topasna would like to attract more cadets to the astronomy minor. He’d like to see cadets pursuing projects such as determining what stars belong in certain star clusters and the removal of foreground contributions to the scatter of light.

But work will need to be done on the observatory and its 50-year-old dome first.

“It’s like having a Lamborghini under a shed; you want to have a nice garage,” Topasna. The telescope, he noted, is an expensive piece of equipment, and it should be protected.

Elmore will present his findings during Honors Week in April.



Inside the observatory, Robert Elmore '16 reviews photos as they are taken through a telescope pointed at the window behind him. – VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

He is glad to have had this chance to work in astronomy and study the skies; this time next year, he expects to be serving with the U.S. Navy deep under water, as a submariner.

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its 24-hour hotline, an “adviser of choice” to accompany victims during investigations, and confidential crisis intervention, all services that existed before the MOU was signed.

“It really validated for us that what we were doing was the right thing to be doing,” said Castele. Other services are also listed.

The MOU outlines VMI’s role to “inform Project Horizon about the reporting obligations of Institute employees and identify those employees with whom students can speak confidentially.”

Any VMI employee who hears a sexual assault complaint, with the exception of the chaplain, counselors, or medical personnel, is required to report it. Yet not all victims of sexual assault want their case presented to the authorities. A benefit of going to Project Horizon first is that the organization provides professional help along with confidentiality.

“I want survivors to have options. The reality is it’s not always going to be addressed in the criminal justice system. So let’s give them some option to be validated and heard, and some safety,” said Castele. “That doesn’t mean that we discourage people from [filing a report]; it just means we give people some breathing time.”

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VMI’s relationship with Project Horizon is deeper than the MOU requires or suggests. Every August, for instance, Project Horizon trains the cadet cadre before the new cadets arrive. Cadet leaders are taught when to report sexual assault and how to listen to a victim’s story.

And many cadets have volunteered to assist Project Horizon, staffing the November Deck the Halls fundraiser and helping timber framers add an addition to the Project Horizon house during Spring FTX.

VMI Title IX coordinator Col. Jeff Boobar is pleased with the relationship between the cadets and Project Horizon.

“It shows that our cadets are not isolated; they are giving back to their communities and they are helping give back to the people of Rockbridge County while they are here,” he said.

Volunteering may also raise cadets’ awareness of sexual assault prevention, said Castele, who described how one cadet approached her during an event and asked if he could volunteer in other ways.

“He understood what we did; it really connected with him,”

said Castele. “I just thought, ‘OK, here’s somebody who gets it.’ I knew that if he had friends who had been hurt he would be telling them about us.”

Castele has been pleased with “how open VMI has been to discussing difficult things and ... making changes where they are needed – really recognizing they want the best for their students.

“They have a history of developing strong leaders, and I believe this is the next area for strong leaders. ...The next step is not just awareness, but it’s doing something about it. And I think VMI could be a great leader in that for every college.”



Cadets talk to Kate Corr, Project Horizon’s campus coordinator, during her Feb. 17 visit to Crozet Hall to raise awareness about sexual assault prevention. –VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

In Pedagogy 400, Professors Take the Role of Students

By Kelly Nye

When Maj. Abbey Carrico, assistant professor of French, was named to the faculty development committee a year ago, she began looking for ways to share new tools for learning.

She began the Pedagogy 400 series to give faculty just that opportunity.



Maj. Abbey Carrico addresses faculty gathered for Pedagogy 400, which she founded. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

“I wanted to see what I could contribute to the Institute, how I could serve, and kind of link what we’re doing with faculty and cadets and bring a wider dialogue – not replace any of the other forums, but just make one that’s really focusing on what we all have in common,” Carrico explained. She wanted a way for faculty to present ideas internally, ideas that fit into the VMI system. “[For] all of the faculty, despite discipline, despite field, despite rank, despite year here, ... [it isn’t just] teaching ... we have in common, but it’s teaching cadets.”

So far there have been nine forums or workshops with an average attendance of 10 faculty members from every rank and discipline. Only once did an outside speaker present; each of the other forums was led by two faculty members, often from different departments.

The topics range from new teaching methods, such as the “flipped” classroom, to a guided inductive approach to practical applications of teaching tools like Canvas, virtual exchanges, and blogging.

The most recent forum, on the flipped classroom, was presented by Maj. Matt Jarman of the psychology department and Maj. Jeff Kendrick of modern languages.

Jarman, who is in his first year at VMI, is using this method to teach his course on leadership and organization. He prepares a 10- to 20-minute lecture video for cadets to watch prior to class, complete with breaks for them to summarize what they heard and, at the end, directions to prepare discussion questions.

“So what you do in class can be a lot deeper and more applied,” said Jarman. Class time is freed from introductory lecture and used for discussion and comprehension. “We do a lot more group activities. One of the ideas of the flipped class model is getting the insights and expertise from the professor, especially when it’s really needed. And it’s hard to do that if you’re taking a lot of time lecturing.”

During the forum, the professors became the students in a flipped classroom. Jarman and Kendrick prepared a five-minute video lecture for participants to watch prior to the session, and the session was spent answering questions in a workshop format.

Role reversals are the norm in the Pedagogy 400 series.

Carrico feels that aspect, “has been key.” She said, “Especially [for] those of us who haven’t been a student in a subject that’s new to us for a while, it helps us learn what it’s like to be a student.”

Other professors have found the pedagogy lectures to validate their teaching methods. Dr. Vera Heuer, assistant professor of international studies, has attended almost all of the sessions in the series.

“The presentation on flipping the classroom by Majs. Kendrick and Jarman made me realize that some portions of my teaching in my upper-level class actually follow very much the idea of flipping some traditional classroom activities,” said Heuer. She also referred to an earlier presentation by Spanish professor Col. Mary Ann Dellinger, on Kagan’s principle of cooperative learning, as a tool for reflecting on her teaching style.

Heuer will continue to organize and facilitate the series for Carrico while Carrico is on maternity leave this fall. Carrico hopes that the series will continue to develop, and she’d like to add a website where professors who could not attend a workshop can watch what they missed online.

Ultimately, anything that is beneficial to the faculty is beneficial to the cadets.



Maj. Matt Jarman leads his peers in a workshop designed after the flipped classroom model. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

“I think too often people take for granted that teaching is just this thing that everyone should know how to do, but really it isn’t,” concluded Jarman. “There is real value to having a space and opportunity for faculty to share ideas and approaches. We all have our individual experience and expertise, and it makes sense to share that.”

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POST BRIEFS

Army ROTC Selected for MacArthur Award



Army ROTC cadets board a Blackhawk helicopter for a training exercise. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.

For the second time in three years, VMI's Army ROTC unit has been named among the eight winners of the MacArthur Award presented by the U.S. Army Cadet Command and the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Foundation. The award recognizes the ideals of duty, honor, and country, as advocated by MacArthur, one of only five men in modern times to rise to the rank of General of the Army. The recipients of the awards are evaluated on achievement of commissioning goals, cadet performance and standing on the Command's National Order of Merit List, and cadet retention rate.

VMI Achieves V3 Certification

VMI completed the Virginia Values Veterans certification Jan. 21, pledging to hire five veterans through the program. The V3 program is an initiative of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, which provides training and certification for Virginia employers wishing to better recruit, hire, and retain veterans.

Equipment Manager *continued from page 7*

"He [Brown] is bringing contemporary skills to his role, and his previous work in Division I athletics, specifically at Iowa State, certainly prepared him well for our opportunity," said Diles. "Lenny has already introduced new concepts in inventory control [and has] distinguished himself as someone who understands, and has exceptional experience, in all of the major function areas of the position."

When he began the inventory process earlier this year, he assigned serial numbers to all of the helmets and shoulder pads in the football program. Those numbers – and the equipment they refer to – will be tracked via a database.

While Brown has brought some new ideas to VMI, he found that he didn't have to change much, thanks to the work of his predecessor.

"Jimmy Mason, who was here for 30 years, had things in a good spot," he said.

March 2016

Deputy Superintendent Announces Plans to Retire

Brig. Gen. R.L. Green '67, deputy superintendent for finance administration, and support, will retire Jan. 1, 2017. Green graduated from VMI with a degree in civil engineering and holds a master of engineering degree from the University of Virginia. He saw service in Vietnam as a lieutenant with the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division and later was president of Wiley & Wilson, an architectural and engineering firm in Lynchburg. Green returned to VMI in 1997 to serve as director of cadet affairs and in 2000 was selected for his current position. The Institute will honor him and his family with a formal retirement parade this fall.



Brig. Gen. R.L. Green

DeHart Appointed Director of Undergraduate Research

Lt. Col. Pieter deHart, associate professor of biology, has been appointed director of undergraduate research. He has supervised 14 undergraduate research projects since joining the VMI faculty in 2009 and received the Thomas Jefferson Teaching Award in 2013. DeHart is the treasurer and chair of the Science Advisory Committee for the Virginia Academy of Science. As director of undergraduate research, deHart will facilitate scholarly research projects of cadets and their faculty mentors through the VMI Center for Undergraduate Research.

Dellinger Essay Featured in New Book

Col. Mary Ann Dellinger, professor of Spanish language and cultures, has authored an essay featured in *(Re)collecting the Past: Historical Memory in Spanish Literature and Culture*, a collection of 14 essays examining all forms of media in Spain from the Spanish Civil War to the present. Dellinger's contribution, "Historical Memory as a Spanish Paradigm: The Role of Mass Media (1936-2006)," examines how Spain's electronic media have built upon the media templates established in the past century and what implications this has for public discourse regarding Spanish history.

Diles also had praise for Mason.

"Jimmy Mason, first and foremost, is a wonderful human being, and he served VMI very well for a long period of time," said the athletic director. "There are not too many finer people you will meet than Jimmy. He'll always be welcome in our department and on post."

Brown cut his teeth in the equipment manager business at his alma mater, Virginia Tech, where he served as a manager during his undergraduate years before serving a summer internship with the Baltimore Ravens. He went back to Virginia Tech as a graduate assistant to pursue his master's degree. He spent some time at American University and was at Iowa State for more than three years before coming to VMI.

"The opportunity to come to VMI was something special for me," said the Roanoke native. "It was kind of a homecoming almost."

Writing Center Creates Cadet EPortfolio Team

By Kelly Nye

Ever since 2006, when the ePortfolio was adopted as part of VMI's Quality Enhancement Plan, classroom assignments have increasingly extended beyond the term paper. Professors are now asking students to hand in slide presentations, podcasts, websites, and video narratives.

VMI's Writing Center has responded by extending the assistance with writing it has always given to include help with projects in these other media. The Center's new ePortfolio cadet team is there to assist cadets with a range of multimedia projects.

Maj. Deidre Garriott, Writing Center director, explained how this new agenda fits into the Writing Center's platform.

"The original role of the Writing Center was to be the heart of writing across the curriculum at the Institute," Garriott explained. The cadets who come to the center are active participants. Their papers are not proof-read or evaluated; the discussion with the tutor leads the cadets to come up with their own solutions.

"It's a third space, it's a space outside of the professor's office, outside of the classroom, where they can come for further education," said Garriott.

The ePortfolio team extends that third space to include multimedia projects.

"We have acknowledged that there are 21st-century literacies. ... These are different ways of composing, and they include visual rhetoric and digital rhetoric," explained Garriott. The ePortfolio captures these rhetorics by allowing cadets to compile projects in a variety of media in a single presentation.

The ePortfolio cadet team concept began in 2014 as a vision of Col. Christina McDonald, professor of English, rhetoric and humanistic studies, when Garriott first began as the Writing Center director. Col. Mary Ann Dellinger of the modern languages department and Lt. Col. Howard Sanborn of international studies also helped lay the groundwork by leading the move toward the cadet ePortfolios.

The team, which consists of cadets recommended by faculty, is led by English major Andrew Rozyskie '16. He and fellow English major Christine Knowingling '16 do their own research on techniques, then lead cadets in workshops on how to make multimedia presentations.



Maj. Deidre Garriott discusses plans with cadet ePortfolio team members Christine Knowingling '16 and Andrew Rozyskie '16 for an upcoming seminar. - VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Cadet projects tend to gravitate toward video narratives, they said. Foreign language classes, for instance, are often assigned videos, with the scripts written in the language they're studying. Maj. Michael Brickler, head of media services in Preston Library, offers cameras and equipment for cadets to check out. Then Rozyskie and Knowingling help with video editing software.

Rozyskie explained that the editing is as technical as it is content based. He said cadets must learn to work with video and audio together.

"What you hear has to match what's on the screen, and it has to be engaging enough that you want to continue watching," said Rozyskie. "I recently read a study that said

most effective videos are between one and five minutes long. ... So it's really trying to get students to hit that mark of just enough content to display everything that you need and still be engaging enough to where you want to watch it."

Working in the Writing Center has been a benefit for both Rozyskie and Knowingling. Rozyskie is working toward a certification on front-end Web development, and Knowingling is enjoying the technology side of things as an English major.

She said, "I've noticed that after helping other people with their papers that whenever I have to start writing papers I get hyper-focused and notice a lot more in my own writing. It's the same idea with videos."

The Writing Center offers workshops periodically through the academic year, with the next one, focusing on the ePortfolio, coming up in April. It will be a collaboration between the Writing Center and the Department of Computer and Information Sciences on how to customize various ePortfolio themes, including changing the HTML code to move objects around a website. Also coming up, on April 26, is the Night Against Procrastination, when the center is open until midnight and the ePortfolio team will be available to help.

"If you're a cadet and you're working on any final projects, this is a great place to come," said Garriott.

New Memorial

Construction crews pour concrete into a form constructed alongside Scott Shipp Hall in Memorial Gardens. The structure, a memorial to those who have served the Institute, is composed of three arches, includes a sitting area behind the arches to serve as an area for reflection, and will be finished with precast panels and granite pavers. The memorial is designed to complement the Spirit of Youth statue located on the opposite end of the gardens. - VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.



ROTC

Air Force Cadets Learn from Those on Active Duty

Information courtesy of Air Force ROTC

VMI's Air Force ROTC unit, Detachment 880, heard a talk Feb. 25 by Lt. Gen. John S. Fairfield, who shared experiences from his college days and his decision to join the Air Force. He flew more than seven different aircraft and accumulated more than 4,000 flight hours, including 180 combat missions in Vietnam.

Fairfield highlighted the leadership challenges he encountered as he rose through the ranks toward general.

The detachment's cadets will travel to McGuire Air Force Base in Burlington County, N.J., to learn about possible career fields and life on the base during Spring FTX April 1-5. The cadets will also participate in expeditionary training, learning from active duty airmen.

The detachment's field training preparation flight will also conduct training at VMI's leadership reaction course. This training will be crucial in developing problem-solving skills as the cadets prepare for a grueling summer program and field training.



Lt. Gen. John Fairfield



Rappelling for a Cause

Custodial supervisor Isaac Stone directs cadets in the rock-climbing club who assisted the Physical Plant in cleaning the slope behind barracks. Members of the club used their skill and knowledge to rappel down the steep slope, bringing back garbage bags filled with trash and debris. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

'Uncommon Purpose' Giving Exceeds \$251 Million

By Scott Belliveau '83, VMI Foundation

VMI's current comprehensive fundraising effort, An Uncommon Purpose: A Glorious Past, A Brilliant Future: The Campaign for VMI, had received \$251.4 million from more than 14,000 donors as of March 1.

"The message that leaders of this campaign – starting with its chairman, Donald MacLean Wilkinson '61 – and the leaders and staffs of the VMI alumni agencies have taken to alumni, parents, and friends has been clear: to ensure that, as it has since 1839, the Institute will be educating young people to be honorable, resolute, and purposeful citizen-soldiers in 2039 and beyond, this campaign must be successful," said Brian Scott Crockett, chief executive officer of the VMI Foundation. "The success of this campaign since its public phase was launched on Founders Day in 2014 shows that the VMI family took this message to heart immediately."

Though the campaign has already surpassed its initial goal, the Foundation is setting its sights even higher to support all the elements that make the VMI experience unique.

"The gifts and commitments that alumni and friends have given during the life of this

March 2016

campaign have been directed to support the full range of programs that make the VMI education so effective. Their generosity toward the academic program benefits both cadets, by giving them a better classroom and laboratory experience, and our dedicated faculty, by supporting them in their important work," said Crockett.

Donors have also directed their generosity toward enriching the Institute's military and athletic programs, ensuring that VMI will continue to prepare young men and women of exceptional character.

"Their gifts to our intercollegiate athletic program support the cadet-athletes, coaches, and staff members who honor and advance VMI's proud athletic heritage. The support they have given the Institute's co-curriculum will make its military system even more effective and improve the many programs associated with cadet life," said Crockett. "Finally, the millions of dollars directed toward scholarships will expand the Institute's ability to help young people realize their dreams of becoming VMI cadets."

The work of the campaign continues, as its success is essential to making sure the Institute can offer an education on par with

other American colleges and retain the extraordinary character of a VMI education.

"All of us – alumni, parents, and friends – want the Institute to enjoy a brilliant future," Crockett continued. "That is why An Uncommon Purpose was conceived and launched, and that is why this campaign will continue its work."

To learn more about the campaign and track its progress, visit vmi.edu/campaign.

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Capstone the Centerpiece of Free Enterprise Program

By Maj. Sherri Tombarge

For the first time this year, cadets graduating with majors in economics and business will have written a complete business plan by the time they graduate. The Class of 2016 will be the first to achieve this goal, one of several coming online as the Department of Economics and Business implements its Roberts Program for the Study of American Free Enterprise.

The program is an outgrowth of the department's 2014 reaccreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, which involved a maintenance review by the organization and the development and approval of a five-year strategic plan. It's named for John and the late Jane Roberts, whose gift to the department in the past made possible the creation of faculty and cadet development opportunities and two Institute professorships.

"It's ... honoring Mr. and Mrs. Roberts for their support," said Col. Bob Moreschi, department head.

Added Col. Atin Basuchoudhary, the program is "recognizing our inherent strengths in a meaningful way." Basuchoudhary is the John W. and Jane M. Roberts Institute Professor in Free Enterprise Economics.

The cadet business plans are the new capstone project, the centerpiece of the Roberts program because it's the one piece that touches every cadet with an ECBU major.

"It's not always apparent how marketing, management, accounting, finance, law, information systems, operations, and economics work together," said Moreschi. "All those pieces are part of running a business." The capstone, he noted, is "the one activity that forces students to use all the disciplines in business and economics in one project."

A business plan is a blueprint for implementing an idea, said Basuchoudhary, and it's critical thinking as well.

"If you're not trying to solve a problem for the consumer, they're not going to buy from you," he said. And it's a plan for implementing the free enterprise model. "It's basically the ability of somebody to come up with an idea, to solve a problem, to ... fulfill their objective, and make some money while they're doing it, ... without a whole lot of interference."

Another program initiative, the Roberts Fellowships, came on line last year. Andy Choi '16 is serving as a research assistant to Maj. Bing Jiang. The fellowship program also supports cadets doing research of their own by providing a stipend. In addition, the cadet Entrepreneurship Club got its start last year.

A new online undergraduate research journal, the *Journal of Undergraduate Insight and Criticism in Economics*, is a collaborative effort, with ECBU faculty members Lt. Col. Sam Allen, Maj. Ben Grannan, and Basuchoudhary, international studies department head Col. Jim Hentz, and professors from six other colleges on the editorial board.

On the faculty development side, the Roberts Workshop series provides opportunities for faculty to review one another's work and provide feedback.

Once the program is fully funded, Moreschi hopes to be able to provide course release time for faculty to pursue research, funding for cadet study abroad opportunities, and additional funding for faculty and cadet travel to present research and to bring in speakers.



Col. Atin Basuchoudhary teaches his Applied Game Theory course. - VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

"It's basically kind of a program designed to bring together elements ... to promote free markets," said Basuchoudhary. "What are the ethical issues? What are the practical issues? How do we understand how to make free markets work? ... It brings together business, economics, psychology - disparate elements coming in and teaching students about American free markets."

And it's all part of maintaining the very rare accreditation - for a department of VMI ECBU's size - the Roberts gift helped the department achieve.

"Of the 500 to 600 American schools accredited, there are only three that are not separate colleges," noted Moreschi. It's a global accreditation, he said, that strengthens VMI's ability to attract the best faculty and the cadets' opportunities for graduate school and employment.



Midwinter Formal

Cadets dance under elaborate decorations during the Midwinter Formal, which was held in Marshall Hall this year due to ongoing renovations in Cocke Hall. First and 2nd class cadets attended the dance Friday, Feb. 19. Decorations were reset for the 3rd and 4th class dance Saturday, Feb. 20. - VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Roberts Fellow Assists with Conducting Experiments, Analyzing Data

As this semester's Roberts Fellow, Andy Choi '16 is helping assistant professor of economics and business Dr. Bing Jiang figure out why people help each other. He's paid, as her research assistant, to help set up and run experiments, make the data accessible via spreadsheet, and help analyze the data.

The two are using game theory to explore decision making.

"We have games that help us to identify generosity, altruism, collaboration, and trust," said Jiang. Their project is titled, "Toward an Understanding of Leadership, Teamwork and Selfless Service."

In the games, real money changes hands as, for instance, in the altruism game students from Group A are given \$10 each and are asked to decide how much to give to their counterparts in Group B. In another game, the students in Group B have to decide whether they will accept the money. Those on both sides must explain their decisions.

"What they decide in the games will be their final payoff," said Jiang. And in these games of strategic interaction, people don't always do what one might expect. Sometimes students in Group B reject the money because they don't think it's a fair offer. And those in A sometimes offer money, even though they could keep it.

"I thought it was interesting because I thought everybody was just going to be selfish and keep all the money for themselves," said Choi.

"Actually people care about the other person," noted Jiang. "They do give some money."

"Economists already know what should happen, but we do these experiments to see if these theories are true," added Choi. "Economists expect people to take whatever they can, but it turns out that people have higher expectations and make irrational decisions."

Even though Choi is paid for his work and gains experience he can list on his resume, the Roberts Fellowship's greatest benefit to him might be the deepening of his understanding of how economics works.



Dr. Bing Jiang meets with research assistant and Roberts Fellow Andy Choi '16. - VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Jiang's study, a collaboration with Lt. Col. Sam Allen, an associate professor in the department, will compare the behavior of students at VMI with that of students at other schools – Liberty University, this semester – to see if cadets at a military school behave more altruistically and collaboratively than other students.

At Liberty, said Choi, "I'll be guiding both groups and walking them through the game," which is double-blind – neither the participants nor the experimenters know who is playing with whom. "What's important is that they don't interact with each other."

The fellowship pays Choi for three to four hours of work a week, allowing him time for his own studies. And it's an honor to be chosen: Choi was selected after an application process that included a review of his academic record and a letter of recommendation from Jiang.

- Maj. Sherri Tombarge

Great Stories *continued from page 3*

This year, for the first time, cadets came to Neikirk Hall, the home of the VMI Foundation and the VMI Keydet Club, to receive help with their thank-you letters from volunteers and members of the VMI Foundation's staff. Over four nights, 375 cadets presented their drafts. The experience benefited both cadets and staff members.

"It was great to interact with these cadets from all classes," said Jacki Berkshire, Foundation vice president for operations and chief of staff. "We had some great conversations with them, conversations in which we learned why they had come to VMI and what their experiences at the Institute had given them. In turn, we are able to give them insights on the people who had established



Rita Blackwell, an executive assistant at the VMI Foundation, assists Nicholas Celfo '18 with his letter. - Photo courtesy of the VMI Foundation.

these scholarships, and we also had the opportunity to talk to them about the VMI Foundation and all that it does for the Institute and, more particularly, for cadets."

For those at the Foundation, the experience proved to be quite moving.

"In our offices, we often say that there is a story behind every gift and a gift behind every story at VMI. The stories that many of these cadets relate in their letters are extremely touching. The families of many cadets cannot pay for their educations, and scholarship support is what lets these young people attend VMI," said Berkshire. "When you read these cadets' letters, their sincere appreciation for our donors' generosity and for the education they are receiving because of it is exceptionally clear."

"The cadets put in a lot of effort to make their letters special, and, because of that, these letters are a collection of great stories about the profound effects that all private giving, not just that which provides scholarships, has on the life of every cadet," said Brian Scott Crockett, Foundation CEO. "These are the types of stories that continue to inspire not only our donors, but every one of us who works at the VMI Foundation."



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VMI Foundation Distributes Mugs to Class of 2019

By Scott Belliveau '83, *VMI Foundation*

After the Class of 2019 arrived at the milestone of Breakout Feb. 13, all 440 cadets found commemorative mugs – gifts of the VMI Foundation – on their desks. On one side of the mug is the class year, and, on the other side, the logo of the VMI Foundation, the word “Breakout,” and the year of the event. Each mug contained a note from the chief executive officer of the VMI Foundation, Brian Scott Crockett, congratulating the cadets on the accomplishment of their class.

The work of distributing the mugs was completed by five staff members of the VMI Foundation and 25 members of the Class of 2018, led by class officers Joey Brown, president; Henry Wiswall, vice president; and Ben Washechek, historian.

According to John J. Wranek III '85, Foundation director of alumni and reunion giving, whose son, Evan, also helped with the distribution, the cadets' assistance was most welcome.

“It was a very cold morning in barracks, and the wind made it seem even colder. So the help we received from the 3rd Class, which cut the time needed for the distribution, was something we greatly appreciated,” said Wranek.

The mugs have been distributed to each class since 2000 and are part of the Foundation's sustained effort, the Barracks Program, begun in the late 1990s, to educate cadets about the importance of private financial support to sustaining and enhancing the quality of the VMI experience for them as well as cadets of the future.

The distribution of the mugs – which Wranek said are “cherished keepsakes for the new class because it is the first time they see their class's ‘full name’ on something tangible” – is the first step in the program.

After the selection of class officers, the VMI Foundation engages with the 4th Class and, over next three years, provides its members with examples of donor support, which touches every aspect of the VMI education.

“We also tell them the reasons why alumni give,” said Wranek, “such as a sense of gratitude to VMI and the close bond they feel to those who, like them, accept the rigors of life as a VMI cadet. We challenge them to embrace the long and proud tradition of alumni support of the Institute and resolve to give back to VMI after they graduate.”

The last phase of the Barracks Program is the Graduation Campaign, in which the 1st Class leaders, including the newly elected class agent, organize and execute a fundraising effort within the class, the proceeds of which are presented to the Institute at the annual graduation parade.

“It is wonderful to see these young men and women band together for the first time as a class in support of VMI,” Wranek said. “It gives you confidence that they will follow in the footsteps of those alumni whose giving has helped make VMI a truly great institution.”