

13 April 2021

Dear Parents and Friends of Graduates:

RE: May Graduation 2021

On behalf of the Superintendent and the Board of Visitors, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to the Virginia Military Institute Final Week events as your Cadet has been designated to graduate in May. Activities begin on 14 May and conclude 16 May. The commencement ceremony is scheduled for 16 May at 11:00 a.m. outside in Foster Stadium, our football stadium. We expect the ceremony to last no more than two hours. Please expect traffic delays in the Lexington area. We appreciate your patience, understanding, and cooperation on this very special day.

**GRADUATION CEREMONY:**

Foster Stadium will be open to family and guests starting at 9:30 a.m. Family and friends are encouraged to remain in their seats during the ceremony. Due to the pandemic the Governor of Virginia has put restrictions on graduation ceremonies across the state of Virginia. We are allowing an in-person graduation but based on the Governor's restrictions we can only allow 4 tickets and families will be subject to sitting in what we are referring to for "family pods" of four seats. We are not allowing cadets to request additional tickets or exchange tickets, there will be no more than 4 family members seated together.

Due to limited space, family members that require wheelchair seating must coordinate with the Chief of Staff office as far in advance as possible. Please email the Chief of Staff's Office at [chiefofstaff@vmi.edu](mailto:chiefofstaff@vmi.edu) if you have certain wheelchair/handicap seating needs. Family members are asked to remember that Foster Stadium is our football stadium and is an outside venue and subject to weather elements. There will be steps that need to be maneuvered in order to get to most of the seats. It is not conducive to some handicap disabilities.

If you have family and friends that will be unable to attend the events in person, they will be able to view the ceremonies of the VMI Commissioning Ceremony and the VMI Commencement ceremony via live streaming. The livestream will begin streaming 30 minutes prior to the start of the ceremonies.

If there is inclement weather on 15-16 May, our events will be moved to Cameron Hall and once again based on Governor Northam's Covid restrictions, we will not be allowed to have family and guests present inside Cameron Hall, due to limit restrictions. Graduates will have their ceremony and walk across the stage in the presence of their class.

**TICKETS:**

**Tickets will be needed for the Commissioning and Commencement Ceremony and must be presented upon entering Foster Hall.** Due to Virginia Covid restrictions we are only able to provide four (4) tickets for each commissioning and graduating cadet. Information has been forwarded to the graduating cadets as to the dates they can pick up their tickets. Graduation tickets are non-replaceable, once they have been signed for by the cadet, your cadet needs to ensure that his/her tickets are kept in a secure location. NO additional tickets will be available. Seating inside Foster Stadium is first come, first serve, no family seating will be maneuvered to

accompany more than 4 family members. Tickets are not required for children under the age of 3, who will be seated on an adult's lap. Children over the age of 3 years of age must have a guest ticket to attend.

#### **PARKING:**

Parking will not be permitted on the Parade Ground. There will be satellite parking out at the Rockbridge High School on 15 and 16 May on Greenhouse Road and shuttles will escort you from the high school parking lot to Foster Stadium. Parking around post is on a first-come, first served basis, including handicap parking. There will be handicap parking permitted in our CPTF Parking Garage. Parking will not be permitted outside Cameron Hall area, however drop off and pick-up is authorized. Please pay attention to the yellow lines on the curbs near Cameron Hall and do not park in those areas, your vehicle will be towed by area police at your expense. For the most up-to-date information regarding changes related to parking or May Final Events please visit our website, <https://www.vmi.edu/cadet-life/events-and-traditions/graduation/>.

#### **WHEELCHAIR RENTAL:**

Navigating around Post during Final events involves a considerable amount of walking and traveling through heavily congested areas. Guests requiring assistance with mobility may wish to rent a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are not available through VMI. However, there is a local company here in Lexington that may be able to further assist you: [Lexington Prescription Center \(540\) 463-9166](http://www.lexingtonprescriptioncenter.com)

**PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHS:** To cause minimal disruption to the ceremony, and as a courtesy to others, please confine personal photography to the area of your seats. A professional photographer has been contracted to take pictures of each graduate being presented their diploma. Ten days after the Commencement Ceremony please go to [www.candidcolor.net](http://www.candidcolor.net), click on "graduation day", the school's access code is **VMIG21**. Parents can pre-register to be notified when photos are available. Family members and personally hired photographers are not permitted down on the near the stage during the ceremony, personal photographs can occur after the ceremony.

#### **GRADUATION ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Graduation announcements are an ideal way to commemorate this special occasion. Announcements are personalized with the graduate's name and degree to be awarded. VMI is contacted every year by two different companies. If you or your Cadet is interested in purchasing graduation announcements, you can purchase those through the following link for Balfour following this link <https://www.cbgrad.com/order/start> or for Herff Jones <https://collegegrad.herffjones.com/site/descriptors>. The websites will prompt you accordingly. – VMI only offers Bachelor degrees. However, there are other companies out there offering graduation announcement, you'll just need to provide them the information individually.

#### **SECURITY PROCEDURES:**

Due to Covid restrictions masks and social distancing are required within Foster Stadium and all of our May Final Event locations.

To ensure the safety of every guest; all persons, including graduates, may be subject to a soft pat. We have implemented a clear bag policy, so no bags, including purses, camera cases and diaper bags are permitted, some bags are subject to inspection by security officers or VMI personnel before visitors are permitted to enter Foster Stadium. We strongly urge all attendees not to bring bags to any of the ceremonies unless they are absolutely necessary. Do not bring any packages that cannot be opened or inspected; **wrapped items will not be permitted inside VMI venues**. VMI would like to encourage everyone to travel light. In order to expedite the process, please leave any unpermitted items in your vehicle. Guests in possession of prohibited items at our event locations will be asked to leave immediately and escorted by appropriate police personnel.

Examples of prohibited items include, but are not limited to: large bags, backpacks, air horns/noise makers, inflatable balls, balloons, laser pointers or weapons of any kind. Alcohol, bottles, cans and coolers are prohibited.

Weapons (knives) and firearms are prohibited on VMI property, regardless of whether you have a concealed weapon permit. Again, VMI reserves the right to inspect and remove any packages, bags and/or containers.

Service dogs with the proper paperwork are the only animals permitted inside VMI venues/facilities.

Smoking, including e-cigarettes, is not permitted in any of VMI venues/facilities.

Staff will not store or hold items for you. VMI and personnel will not be responsible for items left unattended.

Guests are responsible for their conduct, as well as the conduct of their guests. Unruly, disruptive or illegal behavior will not be permitted at any of our VMI events.

**FOSTER STADIUM ENTRANCES:**

There will only be two entrances open into Foster Stadium. The main entrance and the bridge entrance; all other entrances to Foster Stadium will be closed and guests will not be permitted entrance.

**BARRACKS CLEARANCE:** The Commandant's office will put out instructions to cadets pertaining to barracks clearance which will take place for some selected cadets on 14-16 May. Final clearances will be after the Commencement ceremony on 16 May.

**REMINDERS:**

- Tickets will be given out the week of 26 April thru 29 April 2021. The number of tickets will be four (4).
- Foster Stadium will open at 9:30 a.m. Tickets **must** be presented at the gate. Personal items left on benches do not constitute reserved seating.
- We ask that everyone mute their cell phones during the ceremony.

We look forward to sharing this special time with the graduates and their families and friends. If you need further information about Commencement logistics, please call the Chief of Staff's office at (540) 464-7104.

Sincerely,

Gary A. Bissell,  
Colonel, USAR (Ret)  
Deputy Chief of Staff & Operations