Accomplishments Many Among 317 Graduating Cadets

When Hannah Dickinson ’15 walked across the stage at Cameron Hall May 16, she was part of the one of the largest graduating classes ever at VMI. And it was, quite possibly, the first time she had stopped running since arriving on post way back in 2011.

To say Dickinson has been busy would be an understatement. In addition to the academic responsibilities that came with her biology major with minors in chemistry and psychology, Dickinson was also a member of the VMI cross country and track teams. That certainly is enough to keep any cadet hopping, but add to that Dickinson’s volunteer work, which included membership in Keydets Without Borders, and one can understand why she might want to slow down. For a little while at least.

“To not have to wear a uniform anymore, to not have anyone telling me when I have to wake up, I’m very excited,” Dickinson said a couple of days before commencement exercises.

While Dickinson, like most graduating cadets, expressed that sense of relief, she also said there is another emotion that comes with graduating from VMI.

“I definitely think there’s a sense of pride to say I did this,” Dickinson explained. “I can say that I put myself through the ‘uncommon choice.’”

And VMI reciprocates that feeling. Superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62 may not have been talking directly to Dickinson when he delivered his opening remarks to the 317 graduating cadets, but what he said certainly applies to her. He

Not Once, Not Twice, But Thrice

VMI Boxing Takes First Individual Championships and Throws in a Team Victory

For the first two days of the United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association national tournament in Ann Arbor, Mich., the VMI contingent heard the questions “Who?” and “Where’s that?” more often than they cared to hear them. They aren’t hearing those questions anymore.

With three individual champions and one runner-up, the VMI boxers knocked off defending champion University of Michigan to grab the Institute’s first national title in the largest intercollegiate boxing tournament in history.

“That was what we were kind of wanting, the guys to do well and at least bring home one national champion. To have three national champions and then to also win the team title was amazing.”

“It was really satisfying,” echoed Liam Healy ’15, cadet in charge of club boxing and one of those three individual champions. “We’ve been working really hard for this for a while. People are finally starting to understand what we are doing down here.”

Healy returned to Lexington with the championship belt in the 201-pound open division. John Park ’16 won the 125 division title, and Armando Herrera-DosReis’16 outfought the rest of the field in the beginner bracket.
More than 150 Commission in May 15 Ceremonies

Navy Ensign Among First Female EOD Officers from VMI

By Mary Price

When Morgan Robinson ’15 was in high school, she was already thinking about the U.S. Navy, but chances are good she never imagined the assignment she’d get. This spring, Robinson became one of the first female cadets in VMI history to be selected for training as an explosive ordnance disposal technician, a post within the Navy’s Special Operations division that was only recently opened to women.

And she almost didn’t come to VMI.

Robinson had always dreamed of the U.S. Naval Academy, so when her father suggested a trip to VMI for an open house, Robinson was reluctant to go.

Getting out of the car after the drive from her hometown of Concord, Va., Robinson was still sure VMI wasn’t the school for her. But then the Corps of Cadets came pouring out of barracks for a parade while she and her father sat on a bench and watched.

In an instant, the teenage sulks had vanished, as Robinson found herself having a complete change of heart.

“Oh my gosh, I’ve got to go here,” she recalled thinking. “That’s all it took. … Ever since that moment out there on the bench, I’ve loved this place.”

On Friday, May 15, Robinson was one of just under 30 cadets to commission as ensigns in the Navy. More than 150 cadets in total commissioned in four branches of the service: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Approximately 52 percent of the Class of 2015 chose to commission.

Robinson and her fellow Navy ensigns took their commissioning oath from Rear Adm. James W. Kilby, commander of the Naval Surface Warfighting Development Center in San Diego, Calif.

Commissioning the nearly 100 Army second lieutenants was Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, 35th vice chief of staff of the Army, a four-star general with combat experience in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among many other locales.

The approximately 20 cadets commissioning as second lieutenants in the U.S. Marine Corps took the oath of office administered by Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations.


Like many of her Brother Rats commissioning that day, Robinson had been considering a military career for years before coming to VMI. Her father retired from the Navy after postings that included Spain and Italy, and her sister, Carrie Stone, is currently serving as a petty officer second class, stationed at Palm Beach, Fla.

Robinson will soon join her in the Sunshine State, as she’ll attend dive school in Panama City Beach, Fla., this summer in preparation for explosive ordnance disposal training. That training will prepare her to safely disable standard explosives as well as chemical, biological, and even nuclear weapons.

“She’s definitely somebody who’s not afraid to take a challenge and run with it,” said Cmdr. Randy Zamora, executive officer with the Naval ROTC.

Zamora said that to be selected for explosive ordnance disposal training, individuals need physical fitness, the ability to lead under pressure, and a strong propensity for teamwork.

“Leadership in that community in particular is not really about being out there on your own,” he commented. “It’s, ‘How well do you work as part of a team? They really emphasize that.’

Not surprisingly, Robinson feels VMI has prepared her well for one of the Navy’s most difficult and dangerous jobs.

She majored in civil and environmental engineering, becoming one of three women to receive a degree in that field this spring. Robinson described the major as “definitely the right pick” for her, adding, “In [explosive ordnance disposal], you use a lot of physics-based things, and we did a lot of that in civil.”

It was the cadre, though, on which Robinson chose to focus much of her time and energy. Even as a 4th Class cadet, she appreciated the military discipline of the Rat Line. “I loved it,” she said. “I ate it up.”

Once on the other side of the fence, Robinson embraced the role of cadre and mentor.

“That’s where I’ve spent all of my time and my focus, ever since I was a rat,” she said. “It’s the molding process. … When they come in as rats, they’re still high schoolers. You grow so much through the Rat Line. You grow into what your [executive officer] wants you to be.”

This year, Robinson served as executive officer of Bravo Company, eschewing a higher-ranking role in favor of spending more time with 4th Class cadets.

In the Navy, Robinson is looking forward to having mentoring relationships all around her.

“I’m getting ready to go through my own mentoring phase,” she noted. “At VMI it’s a one-way track most of the time. … For the Navy I’m going to have uppers and lowers. I’m excited about that. That’s a new dynamic that I’ve never experienced.”

Ensign Morgan Robinson takes the oath of office during her pinning ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kevin Remington.
As of May 1, the Institute’s comprehensive fundraising effort, An Uncommon Purpose: A Glorious Past, A Brilliant Future: The Campaign for VMI, had received $215.4 million in gifts and commitments. Since beginning its public phase last November, the campaign has raised more than $32 million in gifts and commitments, and it’s now closing in on its goal of $225 million.

The number of donors stands at 12,722. VMI alumni have shown their customary loyalty to the Institute with 7,728 of them participating in the campaign. It is interesting to note, however, that 4,994 or 39 percent of them are faculty, staff, parents, and friends, demonstrating how broadly based the VMI family is.

“The campaign’s successes tell me two key things,” said Donald M. Wilkinson ’61, the campaign chairman. “First, that the VMI family strongly endorses the Institute’s extraordinary effort to educate young people academically, physically, and morally. Second, they understand that to continue to do so, VMI must continually improve — to use a business term, it must continually hone its competitive edge — and that takes capital.

“On behalf of the campaign’s leadership, I extend thanks to everyone who has supported this critical effort so far. I also urge members of the VMI family who have not yet made a gift or commitment to do so and so help ensure a brilliant future for the Institute.”

Campbell Passes $215 Million Mark

By Scott Belliveau ’83, VMI Foundation

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Campaign Passes $215 Million Mark

By Scott Belliveau ’83, VMI Foundation

James E. Rogers ’67 has been selected to receive the VMI Foundation’s highest honor, its Distinguished Service Award. Rogers, chairman of the board of BackOffice Associates LLC, a data management software and service provider, has served in several positions with the VMI Foundation and is vice chairman of VMI’s $225 million fundraising campaign. He served on the VMI Board of Visitors from 2004 to 2012.

First presented in 1969, the award recognizes alumni and friends whose service to the Institute, dedication to the mission of the VMI Foundation, and career achievements and distinctions are exceptional. Rogers will receive the award Nov. 11 at VMI during the Founders Day Convocation.

“Jimmy Rogers has devoted himself to the advancement of the Institute and the VMI Foundation for many years,” said Hugh M. Fain III, president of the VMI Foundation. “He also has taken on numerous leadership roles in which he has combined a keen business sense and an unwavering commitment to the Institute and its cadets.”

Rogers, who was president of SCI Investors Inc., a private equity investment firm specializing in venture capital and early stage private companies, from 1993 to 2011, serves on the boards of two public companies — Owens & Minor Inc. and New Market Corp. — and private companies including Mohawk Paper Mills Inc., Printpack Inc., and Service Center Metals Inc.

He started his career as a nuclear engineer at Virginia Power Co. in 1969 and joined James River Corp. in 1971. He later served as senior vice president of corporate development and group executive of the corporation’s specialty business. He was the founding president and chief executive officer of Specialty Coatings International from 1991 to 1993 and founding chairman of the board of directors of Customs Papers Group from 1993 to 1996. In 2003, he became the chairman of the board of Caraustar Industries Inc., a paperboard packaging company, serving until 2007.

Long involved in civic affairs, Rogers has held volunteer leadership positions in numerous organizations. He was the founding president of the Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation, he is a trustee of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Foundation, and a former vice chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. He also is a member of the George C. Marshall Foundation’s Council of Advisors.

Rogers’ service to the Institute and the VMI Foundation has been extensive. He served on the VMI Foundation’s Board of Trustees from 1997 to 2004 and was the organization’s president from 2000 to 2002. From 2007 to 2012, he was the Board’s vice president. He also is a member of the Board of Overseers of VMI’s Jackson-Hope Fund.

Matriculating from Richmond, Rogers majored in physics and was a member of Sigma Pi Sigma, the physics honor society. A track and field athlete all four years of his cadetship, he also was a member of VMI’s Honor Court and was listed in Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities. After his graduation from VMI, Rogers earned a master of science degree in nuclear engineering from the University of Virginia. He also is a 1987 graduate of the Advanced Management Program of Harvard Business School.

Said Rogers on his selection, “I am truly honored to be following in the footsteps of some other great VMI alumni, such as Stan Navas ’41, who was responsible for my decision to attend VMI.”

VMI Foundation Announces Service Award Recipient

By Scott Belliveau ’83, VMI Foundation

James E. Rogers ’67
spoke of the individual accomplishments of the Class of 2015.

“These accomplishments add to the luster of your class and the reputation of the Institute,” he said. “This is what I think makes the Class of 2015 unique: individual actions of young men and women that describe, [that] define the character of your class. I think you set an example for other classes to follow.”

Dickinson is one of those cadets whose exploits will be difficult to match.

She was named a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors and recently won an Air Force Health Professional Scholarship, which will help her as she attends Eastern Virginia Medical School in pursuit of her dream of becoming a doctor. For the last two years, she served as captain of the VMI cross country and track teams. The highlight of her career probably was her top-eight finish in the 3,000-meter run during the indoor season of her 2nd Class year, though this season she completed the Southern Conference Cross Country Championships with a time of 18 minutes, 27.98 seconds, topping her personal-best time by 30 seconds. At the end of the track seasons, Dickinson was awarded the conference’s Mike Wood Graduate Scholarship.

While Dickinson says she will cherish those memories, along with time spent with her roommates, it is her work with Keydets Without Borders that she’ll remember as among her most meaningful experiences.

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After joining the organization as a 3rd Class cadet, she stuck with the program, serving as its president this past year. The last two summers she traveled with the group to Bolivia to help install water lines and VMI-developed eco-latrines in a tiny village. She also took the opportunity to do preliminary research on the health-care opportunities in that village and used her findings as the basis of her Institute Honors thesis.

“My experiences with KWB are the defining moments,” Dickinson said of her time at VMI. “I wanted something to help people; that’s what I feel like I’m called to do. I want to continue what I’ve been doing in Bolivia, helping people who don’t have access to good health care.”

She will get that chance. When she completes medical school, Dickinson will serve a stint in the United States Air Force, like her father before her, where she might pursue pediatrics and will surely get another opportunity to help the less fortunate overseas.

And she will never forget it started at VMI. “[The Institute] really did so much for me,” Dickinson said. “I think I have definitely grown in confidence the last four years. I will carry this with me for the rest of my life.

“I’m thankful I came here,” she continued. “I would do it again.”

Two other outstanding cadets were honored during the graduation ceremony.

Robert Hardy Hendren, a biology major with minors in Arabic and French and a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors, was awarded the First Jackson-Hope Medal, given for highest attainment in scholarship, and the accompanying Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award. He also received the Society of Cincinnati Medal, for efficiency of service and excellence of character, and the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards that go along with that prize.

Wesley Cade Jacobs of North Carolina was the recipient of the Second Jackson-Hope Medal and the Col. Sterling Murray Heflin ’16 Academic Proficiency Award. An economics and business major, Jacobs was named a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors.

A total of 19 cadets were tapped as Distinguished Graduates with Institute Honors, and 43 more earned Distinguished Graduate recognition. Two other outstanding cadets were honored during the graduation ceremony.
VMI Host to 14 Schools for Engineering Competition

By Mary PriCe

It’s a phenomenal challenge. The task is to arrange for seven competitions spread over 2 ½ days, with one of those competitions held in a remote area several miles from post. The participants, all of whom will require food and lodging, number over 300. Some will be traveling from out of state, and many will be towing trailers, each containing a most unusual, and surprisingly fragile, item: a concrete canoe.

No wonder VMI’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering hosts the American Society of Civil Engineers Virginia’s Conference only once a decade.

The conference, which was held in April both on post and at Lake Robertson, a publicly owned lake in the Collierstown area of Rockbridge County, went off without a hitch despite the immense logistical challenges, said Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering.

“We had lots of things to worry about but everything came together well,” Newhouse noted. “We had 14 schools here.”

The ASCE conference offers competitions in seven categories: concrete canoe, steel bridge, surveying, transportation, environmental sustainability, paper/presentation, and mystery quiz.

This year, the six members of VMI’s concrete canoe team had an inside track to success: they were led by Quinn Ellis ’15, a cadet with years of experience on the water. Thanks to his experience working in a boat yard, Ellis happily took on the job of lead designer of the boat the team christened _Lady Virginia_. The small gray craft wound up placing second in the races portion of the canoe competition.

“I’m from the Northern Neck [of Virginia], so I designed it after a Chesapeake Bay deadrise,” explained Ellis as he watched the _Lady Virginia_ take to the waters at Lake Robertson on Friday, April 10. He explained that a deadrise is a boat frequently used by crabbers and oystermen — and it just happens to be the state boat of Virginia.

“It doesn’t look like your typical canoe, but so far it’s the most stable one in the competition,” Ellis continued. “You can stand up in our canoe,” added Sean Knick ’16, who served as project manager.

Knick explained that the concrete canoe team got a late start this year, thanks to a shortage of lab space. Once under way, though, the team was able to work quickly, thanks in part to Knick’s networking skills. He assembled a supply list that included 500 pounds of concrete, recycled tires, and scrap wood from the mechanical engineering department.

“I’m friends with everybody,” said Knick. “I talk to everybody. I was able to find a lot of resources for us, and at a cheap price as well. … We definitely came in under budget, and it all came together.”

“It’s a very durable canoe,” said Newhouse, who oversaw the team of six cadets. Working alongside Ellis and Knick were Max Makuch ’15, Morgan Robinson ’15, Kyle Volant ’15, and Jake Freeman ’15.

Newhouse, though, doesn’t take credit for the craft’s construction. “Our teams are fairly independent,” he said. “We just advise them. We think they get more out of it that way, and sometimes they learn from their mistakes.”

Learning from mistakes was a vital part of the experience this year for VMI’s steel bridge team, which completed its bridge only to learn that the structure was disqualified for not meeting one of myriad specifications.

The Keydets were hardly the only ones disappointed: of the 10 entries in the steel bridge competition, only two qualified for judging. The rest, explained Maj. Matt Swenty, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, either broke when a load was applied to them or simply didn’t meet all of the requirements set out in the 50-page rule book.

Swenty, though, wasn’t disappointed in his team, which was made up of 1st Class cadets Michael Souza, Matt Evans, Brent Schaufert, Matt Brau, and Michael Prifti.

“You learn as much or more from the process than [from] placing,” said Swenty. “[The competition] brings together a lot of skills — some from classes and some not, such as the softer skills that just have to be acquired over time.”

Newhouse added, “Getting these projects done and learning from them — we consider that success.”

One of the hopes going forward, said Newhouse, is to get more cadets involved in the ASCE competitions before their 1st Class year, so the Institute doesn’t lose its entire team to graduation.

“We’d like to build a dynasty going forward so they get involved earlier and keep doing it for many years,” he commented. “That’s our long-term goal.”

The VMI team puts the _Lady Virginia_ in the water. — Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse.
Recent Graduates Recognized for NASA Work

Five VMI alumni, including one 2015 graduate, were part of the NASA Solar Electric Propulsion Team, which was recently honored with the Rotary National Space Achievement Stellar Award. This major award in the aerospace community recognizes accomplishments that hold great promise for furthering future activities in space. The solar electric propulsion team is working toward the development of large solar arrays that would be capable of taking payloads to Mars and beyond. VMI alumni who contributed research for the team during their cadetships were Thomas Fleming Goolsby ’15, Jonathan Reardon ’14, Paul Cicero ’14, Kelvin Ulloa ’14, Luke Butler ’14, and Victor Deleon ’15. All six worked under the guidance of Col. Joseph Blandino, professor of mechanical engineering.

Dickinson Receives SoCon Scholarship

Hannah Dickinson ’15 recently received a $2,000 Mike Wood Scholarship from the Southern Conference, becoming the first Keydet athlete since 2010 to be selected for a SoCon post-graduate scholarship. Dickinson, a biology major, racked up accomplishments both academic and athletic during her cadetship, maintaining a 3.92 grade point average while becoming a four-year letter winner in both cross country and track. In addition, she has been heavily involved with Keydets Without Borders, a humanitarian group working in Bolivia each summer, and has served for three years as a biology tutor. She has been accepted into the Air Force’s Health Professional Scholarship Program and will enter the Air Force as a doctor after graduating from medical school. She plans to attend Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Three Winners at Undergraduate Research Symposium

A total of nine cadets gave presentations, and three cadets won awards for their presentations, at the Big South Undergraduate Research Symposium at Campbell University April 10-11. John Winalski ’16 won in the oral presentation category for biology, with a talk titled, “The Effects of Dantrolene on Nitric Oxide and Aromatase Inhibition in the Embryonic Zebrafish (Danio Rerio).” Winning in the oral presentation category for engineering/physics was Hunter Liu ’15, whose talk was, “Thickness Studies of Ionic Self-Assembled Monolayers Thin Films for Acidity Detection.” Matthew Tate ’15 won for poster presentation in physics. His topic was “Broad and Narrow Band Polarization Measurements of NGC 7380.”

Not Once, Not Twice, But Thrice

Continued from page 1

at 132 pounds. Chris Livingston ’15 finished as the runner up in the 165 novice class.

In his bout, Healy earned a second-round technical knockout over two-time champion Kevin Bosma to earn his individual title and clinch the team championship for the Keydets. It was an especially satisfying victory for Healy, who finished as the runner-up during his 3rd Class year but missed last season’s tournament because of an ROTC commitment.

“I’ve been working to get back,” Healy said. “To win the title for myself was great, but to win one with the team was even better.

“I just fought my fight,” continued the 1st Class cadet, who stung his opponent with an overhand right on a couple of occasions before the referee stopped the fight in the second round. “After one or two he was definitely hurt. I just followed up with that, and it was all she wrote.”

With that victory, VMI was crowned national boxing champion. And it brought more questions. How could such a small school, with only 1,700 students and 20 boxers on a good day, not only compete with but defeat these bigger institutions with pools of literally hundreds of potential competitors?

“It’s always amazing to us how hard these guys work,” said Hinojosa. “We ask so much of them. As coaches, it’s humbling that they are willing to put themselves out there for the coaches and the team.”

“We’re blessed with a good team of guys that are focused,” added assistant coach Joe Shafer. “We’ve got a limited number of hours each week that the cadets can come down and train. It’s a lot of work we have to get done in a short amount of time. You’ve got to be disciplined, and you’ve got to have the tough mindset to just come in here and do it.”

A special dinner was held for the VMI boxers May 13, at which they heard another question: How do you top that?

“After winning it, we sat down and had an honest talk about what we need to do the next year,” he said. “We also talked about what we could bring to the boxers that helped us win this year.”

“I think our biggest plan is on the mental part,” added student assistant coach Edsel Clark. “We’ve got to get the boxers ready for the mental part of boxing. The mental part of boxing is not as physical as the physical part. The mental part is where we’re going to have to focus on.”

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Peer Educators’ Dog Therapy Helps ‘Bust’ Stress

By Mary Price

It’s safe to say that on May 2 VMI simply went to the dogs – if only for a couple of hours.

Enjoying the unusually warm and sunny spring Saturday were seven therapy dogs from TheraPets of the Roanoke Valley, along with their handlers and a steady stream of cadets who seemed delighted to see a collection of canines in the courtyard of Old Barracks.

The dogs, who were making at least their third appearance at VMI, came as part of the Stress Busters event organized by the Cadet Peer Educators, an outreach group of the Cadet Counseling Center. Not surprisingly, the Stress Busters event was held two days before the start of exams.

“The goal is to get cadets to come down, learn about stress relief options, and learn coping skills,” explained Capt. Cera Wadsworth, program director at the Cadet Counseling Center. The dogs, she added, have become a powerful draw, with cadets asking her about the event days in advance.

She added that therapy dogs, who must pass a rigorous temperament and behavior evaluation in order to be admitted to the TheraPets program, have been shown to increase motivation in those who interact with them.

The cadets who stopped by the Stress Busters event weren’t disappointed in the selection of canine friends, which ranged from Angus, a large and loving rottweiler, to Roger, a well-behaved west highland terrier who lounged royally on a red, white, and yellow afghan made by the wife of a VMI alumnus.

“This is much appreciated,” said Cody Damewood ’16. “This is the first time I’ve touched a dog since spring . . . [furlough].” For Damewood, the dogs were a big reminder of home, as his parents run a dog rescue operation and currently have 12 canines in residence.

“I love them all,” added Bridgette Pouliot ’16, who was chatting with Damewood at the event. “They’re all so cute.” Both Pouliot and Damewood admitted to feeling some stress about exams, with the dogs providing a welcome reprieve from nervous anticipation.

That’s just the kind of relief that Stress Busters is designed to provide, noted Killian Buckley ’15, who served as cadet in charge of the Cadet Peer Educators this year.

“A lot of cadets are separated from their families and their pets so it’s kind of a nice opportunity to help them relax, especially this time of year,” she said. “It helps them enjoy life a little bit more and probably be more successful on their finals.”

Stress Busters events have been offered for at least a decade, said Wadsworth, but attendance increased markedly once the therapy dogs were added.

She estimated that approximately 200 cadets attend each Stress Busters event, although attendance is easier to tally in Cocke Hall, where the event is held in December, than it is in the courtyard of Old Barracks in May.

Seeing animals “definitely normalizes being away from home,” Wadsworth noted. “It’s a nice, simple, basic interaction.”

Offering stress reduction events and programs as the academic year winds down is a vital part of keeping cadets mentally healthy, said Maj. Kristin Hoff, psychologist with the Cadet Counseling Center. She explained that stress tends to build as the semester rolls along.

“For college counseling centers across the country, April is a challenging month,” she said. “For whatever reason, rates of suicide are higher in April. Any programs we can develop to foster self-care and connection with others in the context of busy schedules are certainly advantageous.”

Petting a dog, while talking with its handler, may seem like an easy way to pass a few minutes, but Wadsworth sees much more going on.

“The nice thing about Stress Busters in the larger context of mental health is that it de-stigmatizes the topic of help-seeking,” she said. [The cadets are] meeting people, they’re connecting, and they’re engaging with their peer group in a friendly and social manner.”

If cadets can do that, and take some of the stress out of exam week, Buckley and her fellow Cadet Peer Educators will have done their job.

“We want to help cadets succeed here and remain healthy,” said Buckley.
Work Progresses on Cormack, Cocke, and the Indoor Facility

BY JOHN ROBERTSON IV AND MAJ. SHERRI TOMBARGE

The completion of renovations to Cormack Hall marks a major milestone in the Corps Physical Training Facilities project, a $122 million investment in the physical fitness of the Corps of Cadets.

Construction crews worked seven days a week in May to have the facility ready by the end of the month, when the Department of Physical Education and NCAA wrestling were to begin moving in. Cormack Hall will also serve as VMI's primary weight training facility for cadets and employees, as the Cocke Hall weight room will close for renovation once Cormack is ready for use.

The renovation of Cormack is one of three major construction efforts that make up the CPTF project, the others being the renovation of Cocke Hall and the construction of the new Indoor Training Facility. Cocke Hall is expected to be ready by the summer of 2016 and the Indoor Training Facility by the fall of 2016.

Scaffolding is in place on the south side of Cocke Hall in preparation for exterior repairs, and interior work on the 100 level is underway.

Work on the Indoor Training Facility continues apace, with reinforced concrete rising ever higher at the construction site, located across Diamond Street from Cameron Hall. A major operation took place at the site in April when crews installed a vehicular bridge composed of massive precast concrete pieces over Town Branch.

The indoor training facility's architects, HKS and Commonwealth Architects, were awarded the Merit Award for Excellence in Architecture for the project April 16 by the Richmond chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Work is also underway to stabilize the historic Knights of Pythias building, moved to its current location on Main Street in October to make way for construction of the Indoor Training Facility.

Repairs to the interior, which had suffered substantial water damage, have been completed, including supports to stabilize compromised roof trusses, floor joists, and floor decking.

Work continued in May to install a temporary cover over the entire galvanized metal roof to prevent additional water from entering the building. Fans are also being installed to keep the building properly ventilated, and inspections will be conducted periodically to ensure that no additional damage occurs.

The building then will be maintained as is indefinitely, with no plans to renovate the building for reuse until current construction projects are complete.

To see more photos, visit vminews.tumblr.com, post date May 4.

As construction continues, the site of the Indoor Training Facility changes daily. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.
Championing Wellness

Tomlin Recognized for Efforts to Improve Employee Health and Fitness

By Mary Price

At first glance, Lt. Col. Kathy Tomlin’s office looks like that of any other hardworking professional. There are papers waiting to be filed, a desk that’s obviously filled with work in progress, two chairs, and a small table.

Near the small table is a yoga ball. It’s not an anomaly; it’s appropriate because in addition to her duties as director of procurement services, Tomlin serves in two health-related roles. She’s VMI’s representative for the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management’s CommonHealth program and director of VMI’s employee wellness program, an offshoot of the superintendent’s wellness initiative.

Last month, in recognition of her efforts to increase the well-being of faculty and staff, Tomlin received two awards, one for herself and one on behalf of the Institute. On April 14, Gov. Terry McAuliffe recognized Tomlin as an agency wellness champion. She was one of four individuals from around the state to receive the award, and the only one from the realm of higher education.

At the same ceremony, VMI was recognized as a DHRM wellness-certified agency. The Institute was one of only two four-year colleges and universities to receive the certification, with the other being Virginia Commonwealth University. VMI was also the only wellness-certified agency to have an employee recognized as a wellness champion.

While appreciative of the recognition for VMI, Tomlin was quick to credit others for the success of the employee wellness program, which was created in 2011 as an effort of the Employee Fitness and Nutrition Task Force chaired by Brig. Gen. Robert Green, deputy superintendent for finance, administration, and support.

“Our success is due to the support of senior leadership,” said Tomlin. “If they didn’t encourage participation, we wouldn’t have a program.”

The first Zumba and yoga classes were offered during the 2011-12 academic year. Now, approximately 90 to 100 employees per week participate in a wide array of fitness classes, despite ongoing challenges over where to hold them.

At first, classes were held in the pipe band practice room in Shell Hall. They then moved into a small building on Main Street that had once served as a grocery store, but that building was demolished to make way for the Indoor Training Facility.

This year, the classes have been held in Clark King Annex, and Tomlin expressed her appreciation to Col. James “Jimmy” Coale, head of the physical education department, for making this possible.

“He picked up where we left off, with not having a place to play,” Tomlin noted.

She continued, “We’ve listened to what people want. We have a very good program with lots of participation. We’ve hit right where we need to be, given our limited space.”

But VMI’s employee wellness efforts are hardly limited to classes. In years past, the wellness program has offered outdoor adventures such as tubing on the James River, kayaking on the Maury River, and hiking on the Chessie Trail. Last fall, a couch-to-5K program attracted around 16 participants, all new to running.

There’s also the employee wellness fair, held annually each April, which this year attracted approximately 200 employees. This event features healthy food and door prizes, along with a variety of health screenings.

“We’ve had great success with that,” said Tomlin. “We’ve expanded it as big as it can be for Marshall Hall.”

Looking forward, Tomlin said she’d like to see more beginner fitness classes offered. She’d also like to be able to open fitness classes to employees’ spouses and Institute retirees. Because of space limitations, those classes are currently limited to full-time and part-time employees of VMI and its auxiliary agencies.

Tomlin expects the space problem to be resolved once the renovation of Cocke Hall is complete in the summer of 2016, as plans call for the building to have dedicated space for employee fitness classes.

“We would like to get settled in our new home and see what we can do from there,” she said.
New English Minors Encourage Interdisciplinary Learning

By Mary Price

A number of cadets who took part in graduation last month received concentrations or minors offered for the first time this year by the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies.

The new concentrations, which are earned by cadets majoring in English, are offered in literary studies, philosophy, rhetoric and writing, and art history and visual culture. Minors are the same as concentrations, except that they are earned by cadets majoring in other disciplines.

Several graduating history majors, for instance, earned one of the minors. This, noted department head Col. Emily Miller, exemplifies the kind of cross-disciplinary learning that the new minors were intended to offer.

“Most of the students in most of our classes are not English majors,” said Miller. “[The minors are] a nice way for them to demonstrate that they have some expertise in these areas.”

One of those cadets, Brian Boyle ’15, graduated with a major in history and a minor in art history and visual culture. Boyle, who commissioned in the Army upon graduation, came to VMI with an interest in learning about art, thanks to his mother’s love of the subject.

Boyle’s journey toward the minor began in the fall of 2013, when he took an introduction to art history class taught by Maj. Andrew Eschelbacher, then-assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies.

“He hooked me on learning about art, and I really enjoyed it,” noted Boyle.

Boyle then took two more art history classes in the spring of 2014, before joining Eschelbacher and Maj. Jeff Kendrick, assistant professor of modern languages and cultures, on a trip to Paris that summer. Approximately 15 cadets took the trip, titled Paris as Art and Text, and museum visits were a central part of the itinerary.

“That was cool,” said Boyle. “I got to see the art I’d been studying for the past year.”

This spring, Boyle was enrolled in a visual studio art class taught by Maj. Julie Brown, assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies. In that class, he and the other cadets were asked to create three works of art: a still life, a piece of abstract art and a self-portrait.

Miller explained that a connection between learning and doing is integral to each of the minors, not just art history and visual culture.

“With all of these minors, there’s a similarity: They study what the great artists or thinkers have done, and then they try their hand with their own creative talents and abilities,” she explained. “They study great writing and then try to write themselves.”

The new minors, which were developed in the fall of 2013, replaced three minors previously offered by what was then the Department of English: English, fine arts, and writing. Then, as now, cadets could also earn a minor in philosophy, but philosophy was housed in the Department of Psychology until it was moved to the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies two years ago.

“We’ve always had minors and concentrations in the department, because we’ve felt it’s valuable for our majors to go in depth in a particular area of study,” said Miller. “We also get a number of students from other departments who take a number of our courses.”

Boyle, for one, wants to get the word out about the new minors, so others can benefit as he has. He noted that he could have earned a minor in French if he’d been more intentional about his class choices earlier in his cadetship.

“Often times, cadets have no idea [about minors],” he said. “It’s best to start as a [3rd Class cadet].”
Keydets without Borders pitched in during Natural Bridge Park’s Earth Day celebration April 18, when more than 100 area volunteers worked on projects that made a lasting impact on the park’s sustainability efforts.

Several cadets were there for the effort, putting their engineering expertise to work.

“We’re constructing three compost bins from used pallets in preparation for the Youth Conservation Corps to come follow up and move those to the final staging site,” said Sean Knick ’16, local programs director for Keydets without Borders. “Then we’re also building raised gardening beds. These are elevated platforms for growing vegetables and flowers.”

The work will enhance the park’s conservation and educational missions.

“The composting bins will be used to compost kitchen food waste which will be used as fertilizer in our greenhouse and raised beds,” said Sarah Rourke, the park’s project coordinator. “The raised beds will have a dual purpose to help grow herbs and vegetables for the kitchen and to be used in our environmental education programs with students.”

Natural Bridge Park is currently owned by a non-profit organization, the Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund, which expects to eventually transfer it to the state of Virginia to become a park. It depends on volunteer efforts like these to accomplish conservation goals.

“Volunteer support has been vital in creating new initiatives and improving existing conservation, education, and outdoor recreation features on property,” said Rourke. “Through volunteer expertise and help over the past year, numerous features and resources have been added to the property.”

The Earth Day celebration ties in perfectly with the Keydets without Borders’ mission.

“Everything that we do is centered around conservation,” said Knick. “Whether we’re talking about providing clean water or making composting bins, it all has to do with the environment.”

The Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund is a subsidiary of Kissito Healthcare, a Roanoke-based non-profit organization that works in the U.S. and around the world to improve quality of life. It was through a partnership with Kissito that Keydets without Borders worked to improve water quality in Uganda in August 2013.

“They are a health-care organization, but they’re also strong proponents of eliminating health-care problems at the root,” said Lt. Col. Tim Moore, associate professor of civil engineering and the group’s faculty adviser. “They got involved with partnering with engineers to solve water and sanitation issues.”

Kissito helps identify and fund projects on which the cadets’ engineering expertise can be brought to bear. The work at Natural Bridge is part of what looks to be a continuing partnership with Kissito on local projects.

“We’re really trying to expand and tackle local projects as well as projects abroad,” said Moore. “It really strengthens the ties with the community, and working on different projects is a lot of fun for the cadets.”

Cadets in the organization are taking a hands-on approach to developing lasting ties with local organizations.

“My goal is to build a constant relationship between us and local community organizations, to the point where we can go out every single year and build traditions,” said Knick. “I’d love to see KWB come out each year for this Earth Day celebration in particular.”

Personal ties to the historic park make the work at Natural Bridge even more meaningful.

“I’ve been to Natural Bridge a couple of times, since my father grew up in Rockbridge County. The county is like a second home for me,” said Knick. “It’s nice that I can do service for a place that’s really close to me.”

It’s a feeling that’s shared by much of the community.

“Restoring and maintaining Natural Bridge is important for people in this area,” said Moore. “It’s really about restoring Virginia history.”
VMI Foundation Hosts Benefactors Luncheon

By Scott Belliveau ’83, VMI Foundation

More than 100 people who had established the endowments that support scholarships, professorships, chairs, and other funds dined with 93 cadets and members of the faculty and staff April 13 at the benefactors luncheon. Also attending the 13th annual event, which took place in the Hall of Valor in Marshall Hall, were the members of the VMI Foundation’s Board of Trustees who were on post for their annual spring meeting.

During the program, Hugh M. Fain III ’80, president of the VMI Foundation, thanked the donors for their generosity toward VMI and for providing an “incredibly strong example [of support for the Institute] over many decades.”

Harper Niver ’15 also spoke, describing the influence that private money had on her decision to attend VMI and how it had allowed her pursue excellence as a cadet. She also spoke of her plan to “pay it forward and provide another eager high school senior the same opportunity that was afforded to me — to take part in the VMI experience.”

She closed by thanking the donors present and told them, “With more and more deserving cadets finding the burden of a college education overwhelming, each of you have and will continue to be their hope.”

Compost Project a First for VMI Living Laboratory

By Mary Price

A small pilot project undertaken by a sustainability intern last summer morphed into a much larger undertaking involving not only 20 cadets from four academic departments, but also a model of learning new to VMI.

The compost collaborative is the first undertaking of the Living Laboratory, a concept that’s been gaining traction rapidly in academia over the past several years. Maj. Jenny deHart, physical plant staff engineer and sustainability coordinator, said living laboratory projects are now underway at schools including the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and George Mason University. At a faculty lunch event held in late April, she described the concept as “a real life environment for innovative research.”

The compost collaborative began in the summer of 2014, when an intern working for deHart did the necessary paperwork with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for VMI to begin a small-scale composting project. The project was designed to test the feasibility of composting food scraps from Crozet Hall, which are currently trucked away. The compost could then be used to fertilize trees and shrubs around post.

By the beginning of this year, deHart had a plan in hand for an experiment in which cadets and faculty from the departments of civil and environmental engineering, mechanical engineering, economics and business, and biology would compost four days’ worth of food scraps from Crozet Hall.

In mid-February’s frigid cold, the cadets loaded 2,500 pounds of reeking, decaying scraps into four composting bins outside Hinty Hall. Three of the bins contained scraps mixed with a bulking agent, to supply carbon as a food source for the bacteria aiding the decomposition, while the fourth was intentionally left with no bulking agent, so it could serve as a control.

Over four or five weeks, the scraps would be supplied with oxygen through a ventilation system made up of perforated plastic pipes at the bottom of the pile — the “aerated static pile” method. Moving the oxygen through the scraps also serves as the means of stirring the mixture, which must be done on a schedule. The process would produce temperatures high enough to kill any pathogens lurking in the food waste, after which the mixture would be spread outdoors for three to six months to finish decomposing.

In the end, the cadets and professors agreed that many kinks would still need to be worked out before large-scale composting at VMI becomes a reality. But no matter the fate of the compost collaborative, the Living Laboratory is likely to continue. Proposed projects include a hazard analysis of the Chessie Nature Trail, an infrared analysis of roof leakage on post, and energy recovery from information technology closets.
This spring’s compost collaborative project was not unlike a jigsaw puzzle, with cadets from four departments charged with bringing critical pieces to the table.

Civil and environmental engineering cadets were asked to come up with a way to measure temperatures in the compost pile. To do that, they inserted probes called thermocouples into various spots in the compost heap and then set up a computer to take measurements automatically every 10 minutes.

“We had thousands of data points that we had to plot into a graph,” explained Jake Freeman ’15.

Very quickly, Freeman and his fellow cadets found that research can yield surprises. The temperature in the compost bins got up to a desirable 120 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit within the first week, despite outdoor temperatures that hovered near zero overnight.

“I don’t think they figured it … [would] get hot so fast,” said Gregory Oldland ’15.

The civil and environmental engineering cadets, who also included Damian Arnaiz ’15 and Andrew Rotermund ’15, had two additional responsibilities: creating a feasibility plan for waste management and designing an appropriate structure for a large-scale composting project.

“That involves true civil engineering – roads, slabs, structure,” noted Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, who worked alongside Maj. Paul Ackerman Jr. ’93, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, to supervise the cadets’ work.

In the end, the cadets recommended that a large-scale composting facility be built on the VMI-owned Lackey Farm at Hunter Hill, across the Maury River from the Institute. That site was chosen, Freeman and Oldland explained, because it was the largest of the three suggested and because its location would keep the smell of decomposing food well away from neighbors.

Both cadets agreed that the learning experience they’d received from the compost collaborative had outpaced a classroom-based capstone experience.

“This was beneficial because it was hands-on,” said Oldland. “We were actually going to the site.”

Freeman added, “We got to see the big picture, how much is involved in solving a problem.”

While the civil and environmental engineering cadets worked on temperature and site selection, three cadets from the mechanical engineering department – Fleming Goolsby ’15, Ching-Wei Hu ’15, and Joshua Ford ’15 – were asked to design a ventilation system to keep the compost bins properly aerated, as well as to evaluate the viability of using solar cells to power that ventilation system.

Like many of their fellow cadets from other departments, the trio from mechanical engineering found themselves wishing for a longer semester as they sought to fine-tune their designs.

“They don’t have time to go back and apply what they’ve learned to fix those problems,” explained Col. Howard Arthur, professor of mechanical engineering. “It’s a very positive learning experience, from where I sit, but the students are frustrated.”

Arthur added that time constraints are hardly unique to VMI. “That’s not unlike what would happen out in the real world,” he noted.

Bringing a cost-benefit analysis of the project to the table was Brandon Goodwyn ’16, with some assistance from Renee Reives ’15. The cadets, both economics and business majors, took on the compost project as an independent study.

“[Goodwyn has] got a number of dimensions that say the project will pay for itself in three to 12 years, based on a number of variables,” said Lt. Col. Sam Allen, associate professor of economics and business, who supervised the cadets’ work.

The final group of cadets, biology majors enrolled in a capstone course taught by Lt. Col. Anne Alerding, associate professor of biology, worked to evaluate the effectiveness of three different bulking agents, which are typically added to compost heaps to balance the carbon/nitrogen ratio.

“We actually found that there was no difference in which one we used,” noted David Kniffen ’15. “We could achieve successful temperatures through all [of the bulking agents].”

Like his counterparts in civil and environmental engineering, Kniffen said he’d enjoyed a class that involved hands-on research.

“The lab time really stood out more than anything else,” he commented. “Some classes will take you on field trips off post, but nothing like this where you actually got your hands on it and you were actually looking for results.”

Agreeing with that assessment was Heather Magill ’15, who described the capstone class as “a complete 180 from what I’m used to.”

Alerding, meanwhile, found herself in the dual role of student and teacher, learning the science of compost as she coached her students’ work. This learning, she believes, is vital to growth as a scientist, and as a professor.

“I liked doing [the capstone project] because I learned more, and every time you learn more from a class project, it trickles into your research,” Alerding said. “Then, when I learn more in research, it trickles into my class.”
In NCMT Cadets Get to Shoot – Not Just Carry – the M14

BY CHRIS FLOYD

The echoes of rifles reverberated off the walls as 4th Class cadets squeezed off shot after shot inside the shooting range at North Post. Others lined up outside, eagerly anticipating their turn on the firing lines as the New Cadet Military Training program continued.

On a Saturday morning in April, the 4th Class cadets engaged in the marksmanship phase of their training, a program designed to introduce the former rats to genuine military training.

“It’s a great program,” said Alexandra Hastings ’15, cadet in charge of NCMT. “It actually teaches them better military skills than what they received in the first year of ROTC. And for those who aren’t going to commission, they actually get a chance to [learn these skills].”

The NCMT program is broken down into four phases: first aid, survival skills, land navigation, and marksmanship. The cadets spend time learning and practicing these skills in both the classroom and the field, with the program culminating in the 4th Class FTX in early May.

“Every Tuesday throughout the second semester, all of the 4th classmen form up on the bricks, and we give them military training,” said Hastings. “We teach them survival skills, building shelters, building fires. … We put them on a course, let them find points, learning how to use a map and compass. Then we also bring them up here [to the firing range].”

Before the cadets can ever hold a weapon, however, they have to undergo intense classroom instruction. They have to learn about the firearms, from taking them apart to the fundamentals of firing them to all of the important safety issues involved in shooting.

“This is the first time many of them have ever shot a firearm at all,” said Sgt. Maj. John Neel. “We teach them how to make the weapon safe. When they come up here, they’re not untrained.”

Neel has been part of the NCMT program since its inception in 2002, and he has seen it grow over the last few years. So has Sgt. 1st Class Carmelo Echevarria, commandant’s office battle operations and training sergeant, who was running the marksmanship training this year.

Echevarria noted that the range of weapons the 4th Class cadets are exposed to – the M4, the M14, and the M9 pistol – has increased, as has the number of rounds each cadet fires. And while marksmanship is, of course, an important part of any military training, it has an important, more subtle, meaning for the former rats.

“Today is the one time when the new cadets get a chance to fire the weapon systems found here at the Institute,” he said, referring to the M14 rifle cadets carry in parade. “This gives them the [idea] that what they have in their rooms is a real rifle and not just a parade prop. Hopefully, they’ll better appreciate this rifle.”

At least one of the cadets did. Thomas McKellar ’18 was with Company H when it took its turn on the range. While he entered the fray as an experienced shooter, having honed his skills shooting in his native Texas, he emerged from the smoke and the noise with a different take on the rifle he has been lugging around, albeit without a firing pin, since August.

“We spend a lot of time with these rifles doing a lot of things [but] not … shooting,” McKellar said. “It’s good to get to use the weapons for what they are designed for.”

Even more than that, however, McKellar found another reason to enjoy the shooting range. He and his classmates have been through a great deal together over the course of the school year, and for him, this was one more chance to revel in that special connection they have developed.

“It was really fun to be able to shoot with my Brother Rats,” he explained. “This is a good time to bond, and it gives everybody a chance to get a little bit of military training before moving our separate ways.”
When the Athletic Academic Advising Office changed its name to the Cadet-Athlete Development Office in January, the change reflected more than terminology; it was indicative of sweeping changes in the mission and mindset.

J.B. Weber, the assistant athletic director for academic services and compliance, and Sarah Keller, assistant director of athletic academic services, were new to their posts this academic year. They initiated the shift after spending fall semester assessing the services offered.

“We went from being reactive to being proactive and focusing on developing our cadet athletes’ skills they need to be successful in college,” said Weber. “We want them to be empowered self-advocates … so that they can be effective on their own.”

Previously, if a cadet athlete was struggling in a particular class, the solution was to send him or her to a tutor. Tutoring is still offered, with 15 part-time, content-specific tutors available, but it represents only a part of the office’s support of cadet athletes’ development.

“The coaches bring us really bright cadet athletes, … and if they’re struggling in something … it may be that they don’t know how to study, plan, or organize themselves,” explained Weber. Weber and Keller reach out to these cadets, offering individualized action plans for academic success. They are required to check in once a week and to fill out guided study plans.

“We have a quiet study room for them in Scott Shipp Hall,” said Weber. “None of this is tutoring or content support – its engagement, relationship building, and creating the opportunity for the cadet athletes to succeed.”

Weber and Keller are also recognizing cadet athletes who are excelling academically, creating a series of honors lists. These include the Cadet-Athlete Honor Society for cadets with a 3.0 or higher semester GPA, the Athletic Director’s Honor List for those with a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA, and the Elite 18, which is composed of the top academic performer on each of the varsity athletic teams. Additionally, the team with the highest cumulative GPA at the end of every semester will now be recognized.
Track Teams Place in SoCon Championships

Individual Honors Mark Close of Season for Other Teams

By Chris Floyd

Paced by first-place finishes from Quincy Murphy ’15 and Aron Long ’16, the VMI men’s track and field team placed fourth at the Southern Conference Outdoor Championships held April 25 and 26 in Birmingham, Ala.

Meanwhile, Bria Anderson ’18 took first place in the long jump to lead the Keydet women to their best-ever finish in a conference meet, placing fifth at the SoCon Championships.

Murphy won his second straight conference decathlon title, adding this year’s Southern Conference crown to the Big South title he won last season. He tallied a personal-best 6,675 points to outdistance his nearest competitor by nearly 200 points. In the 10 events, Murphy finished no worse than fourth, earning wins in both the shot put and 110-meter hurdles.

Long captured first place in the 200 dash, crossing the line in 21.33 seconds. He also placed second in the 100 and, with Julian Jackson ’15, Davon Guerrier ’18, and Lamaris Reed ’16, ran a leg on the fourth-place 4x100 relay team.

Anderson leaped 19 feet, 6 inches, in the long jump to take first place and break the school record by nearly a full foot. She also joined Kerisha Goode ’18, Mia McClain ’18, and Yaa Agyepong-Wiafe ’18 in running to a third-place finish in the 4x100 relay.

Goode placed in two other events for VMI, finishing third in both the 100 and the 200, breaking the school record in the latter event with a time of 24.66.

VMI’s throwers enjoyed a banner day as well. Renee Reives ’15 placed in two throwing events, finishing as the runner-up in the shot put and taking fourth in the discus. Mary Grace Lemon ’15 was fourth in the hammer throw and seventh in the shot, while Logan Edwards ’16 placed fifth in the hammer. Emily Fulton ’18 earned an eighth-place finish in the javelin throw.

Julia Logan ’18 finished sixth in the triple jump and teamed up with Christina Hill ’18, Deborah Allison ’18, and Thireyona Legg ’15 for a fifth-place finish in the 4x400 relay. Legg also placed fifth in the 400, and Allison took eighth in the 100 hurdles. Logan rounded out the scoring for the Keydets with her fourth-place finish in the high jump.

After Murphy and Long, Avery Martin ’16 was the top finisher for the VMI men, placing second in the 1,500 with a time of 3:47.22. Martin was also a member of the 4x400 relay team that finished third. He was joined on the team by Brandon Hartman ’15, Andrew Gould ’18, and Jackson.

Jackson also placed fourth in the 400, followed by Hartman, who took eighth place. Murphy added a third-place finish in the 110 hurdles to his stellar efforts, while Guerrier was right behind in fourth place.

In other top performances, Daniel DeNijs ’16 was eighth in the 5,000, and Brandon White ’17 and HP Paulitre ’15 finished sixth and eighth, respectively, in the 10,000. Sean Helmke ’16 was the sixth-place finisher in the 3,000 steeplechase. Reed placed seventh in the triple jump.

In the throwing events, Donovan Walton ’18 was the top VMI finisher, taking fifth in the javelin. Jordan White ’16 placed sixth in the hammer throw, while Grant Sanchez ’17 (discus) and William Condrey ’16 (shot put) both earned seventh-place medals.
SoCon Championships

Continued from page 16

Eight members of the VMI rifle team were honored with All-Mid Atlantic Conference honors after the Keydets won the league's smallbore title at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, Mass., last month.

Jeremy Bolden ’15 led the way, earning first-team all-conference laurels in both smallbore and air rifle. Connor Sullivan ’15 and Kristen Voss ’15 were second-team selections in both disciplines. Matt Lusardi ’17 and Loran Dreelin ’16 both landed on the air rifle second team, while Zachary Johnson ’17 was named honorable mention in smallbore.

Loyce Lightfoot ’18 and Katherine Watson ’18 were both named to the MAC all-freshmen team.

Dreelin led the Keydets, who placed fourth in air rifle at the conference meet, to the MAC smallbore title with a score of 560 points to finish third in the individual standings. Lusardi, with 553 points, placed fifth, and Bolden, with 550, was seventh. Andrew Hickey ’17 and Johnson also placed in the top 10.

After winning its last two games of the season to finish with 11 victories on the year, just one short of the school mark for wins in a season, VMI's women's water polo placed Shelby Barkley ’18 on the All-Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference honor squad.

Barkley earned second-team laurels after scoring a team-leading 56 goals on the season. Scoring 33 goals in conference games, Barkley also led the team in shots and finished the season with six assists.

With Mike DeBlasio ’15 scoring five goals, VMI's lacrosse team avoided a winless season with an 11-10 victory over the University of Massachusetts-Lowell April 26 in Scranton, Pa.

DeBlasio, who led VMI with 14 goals on the season, was named the Inside Lacrosse/Select Sector SPDR Player of the Week for his five-goal effort.

Six VMI players scored in the victory, including Wesley Sanders ’18, who found the net twice. Evan Windisch ’15 recorded seven saves to pick up the win in goal.

VMI's baseball team opened Southern Conference tournament play in Charleston, S.C., Wednesday, May 20, as one of the hottest teams in the league.

The Keydets closed the regular season with five wins in their last seven games, including four of six against league foes. VMI, with a 20-28 overall record, 12-12 against Southern Conference opponents, was seeded fourth in the tournament and faced off with University of North Carolina-Greensboro in a first-round contest.

The Spartans were one of those teams VMI dispatched at the end of the regular season as the Keydets won two of the three contests in the final home series of 2015. Matt Winn ’15 and Will Connerley ’15 paced the Keydets in the two victories. Winn had four hits, including a home run, in the first two games, while Connerley was 3-for-3 with a double, home run, and three RBIs in the first contest. He belted another home run in the second game.

After defeating James Madison, VMI closed out the regular season with a pair of victories over Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C. Six Keydets had two or more hits in an 18-4 rout of the Catamounts, including Thomas Stallings ’15, who finished with a home run and three RBIs. Jordan Tarsovich ’14 and David Geary ’16 both had two hits and an RBI in an 11-6 victory, and Collin Fleischer ’18 added a home run and four RBIs.

New Names, New Faces, New Programs

Continued from page 15

“It's worked out great—the [cadets] come in and look at the board. . . . We put it out on our [athletics] website just as if it were a press release for a game, so it's on the same front page of the website as whoever won last night's basketball game,” said Weber.

Cadets honored for athletic achievement were recognized at the athletic department's first social, held April 30.

Weber also interacts with the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, which was founded last spring, yet did not have a clear mission until this academic year.

“SAAC is a council of cadet-athlete leaders who have a direct voice to the athletic administration,” said Weber. “We’re doing a lot of programs with them—community service, partnering with the cadet counseling office to do mental health awareness training, and the athletic awards banquet. We’re engaging with the bottom and the top—if a cadet is succeeding, they’re not going to come see us, so we have to think about ways to engage with them.”

Also new to the office are expanded hours of operation. “We're open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., then 7:45 p.m. to 11 p.m., because that's when our cadets are available. . . . We've shifted to fit their schedule,” he said.

Another focus is revitalizing this fall’s transition program for new cadet athletes.

“We’re going to start the very first day [the cadet athlete] steps on campus. . . . If you can help a [new cadet] to have success in the classroom the first six months they’re here, it’s unlikely that they will struggle for the next seven semesters because they’ve had a taste of academic success. . . . If you can get them in that routine, they’ll be successful.”

Dr. David Diles, athletic director, likes what he’s seeing so far.

“J.B. and Sarah have brought contemporary structures and new support systems to this important division of our department. . . . The early results are demonstrating that we are achieving higher levels of educational success with greater resource efficiency.”
Army ROTC Commissions Nearly 100

VMI Army ROTC commissioned nearly 100 cadets in a joint commissioning ceremony at Cameron Hall May 15. The cadets were given the oath of office as second lieutenants by guest speaker Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, the 35th vice chief of staff of the Army. Allyn spoke to the cadets about their future as second lieutenants in today’s Army and the challenges and successes they would face in their careers. After he administered the oath of office, he presented VCSA coins to each new officer to commemorate the hard work and dedication they invested over their four years training to commission.

Following the joint ceremony, the cadets, their families, and the cadre moved to Moody Hall for individual commissioning and pinning-on ceremonies. Family members attached the rank insignia, and each new officer presented the traditional silver dollar to the individual rendering his or her first salute.

Seventeen more cadets will commission this summer and next fall. Ninety-three cadets have been accessed to active duty; 15 will join the U.S. Army Reserve or National Guard. Four cadets received educational delays in order to pursue advanced degrees as future Judge Advocate Corps Officers or Army Chaplains.

Twenty-six of the cadets were awarded Distinguished Military Graduate, and 10 cadets were in the top 10 percent of all second lieutenants accessed onto active duty. Ninety-seven percent of the cadets received one of their top three branch choices for duty and 65 percent received their number one choice of duty.

Thirty cadets were branched into the Army infantry; five were selected for aviation; five were selected as armor officers, six were branched engineer and 18 were selected to be Army logisticians. Other branches include artillery, Military Police, signal, chemical, medical service corps, and military intelligence.

Training continues for the rest of the cadets in the VMI unit. This summer, more than 100 will attend Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox, Ky. There, they will be tested and evaluated against other ROTC cadets from across the nation in platoon and squad field training exercises. The evaluations they receive will be the basis for accessions goals as they pursue careers in the Army.

Additionally, cadets from the VMI ROTC detachment will attend the Basic Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga., the Air Assault School at Fort Campbell, Ky., Cadet Field Training at West Point, the Combat Diver Qualification Course at Key West, Fla., and Cadet Troop Leader Training with active duty units stationed around the globe.

The department is also preparing to welcome more than 600 new Military Science Level I cadets this fall.

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Air Force ROTC Commissions 11 VMI Cadets

Eleven VMI cadets commissioned in the U.S. Air Force on May 15. Gen. Darren W. McDew ’82, the highest ranking active-duty VMI alumnus, administered the oath of office.

In the next few months, the new second lieutenants will proceed to their duty assignments as follows: William Barnett, network operations, Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.; Matthew Brau, Tiffany Haines, and John Wood, pilot, Columbus Air Force Base, Miss.; Brent Clark, space operations, Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.; Robert Davison, acquisition manager, Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass.; Justin Freeman and Timothy Hostler, intelligence officer, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas; Kyle Morse, developmental engineer, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif.; Parker Searing, civil engineer, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam; and Ryan Wilson, air battle manager, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

These new Air Force officers head to their duty assignments leaving VMI which McDew referred to as “forever their home.”

Second Lt. Tiffany Haines takes her oath during the Air Force pin-on ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.
VMI’s Naval ROTC unit commissioned 28 new naval officers and 10 new Marine Corps officers in the May 15 commissioning ceremonies.

Nineteen of these officers will be heading to their first ships, where they will immediately take up leadership roles on board. These ships have homeports from San Diego to Japan and deployments from the Mediterranean to the South Pacific.

Three officers, having passed a rigorous screening process including a series of technical interviews, were accepted as Naval submarine officers. The foundation in mathematics, physics, and engineering that they gained at VMI will be vital to their success in Navy Nuclear Power School.

Four officers were selected to attend Aviation Preflight Indoctrination and Introductory Flight Screening in Pensacola, Fla. There they will learn the basics of aeronautics, aircraft systems, navigation, and water survival before beginning Primary Flight Training flying the T-6.

One officer was selected to attend the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training, and another was selected to join the Special Operations community and will be attending Explosive Ordinance Disposal training.

All of the Marine officers who commissioned through the Naval ROTC program or the Platoon Leaders Course will head to The Basic School in Quantico, Va. Three more recent graduates of VMI will attend Officer Candidates School this summer to earn their commissions in the Marine Corps before heading to TBS.

Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations, administers the oath to cadets commissioning into the Marine Corps during the joint ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kevin Remington.

Seventy-eight cadets from Air Force ROTC units at Virginia Tech and University of Virginia visited VMI for a Joint Field Training Preparation Day earlier this semester. With Detachment 880 serving as host, the cadets took advantage of VMI’s ideal mix of drill fields, leadership reaction courses, obstacle courses, safe roads and trails, mess hall, and classrooms to prepare for field training. All were AS 200 – at VMI, 3rd Class – cadets planning to head out to Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., or Camp Shelby, Miss., for the training this summer.

VMI cadets scored very well in the day’s scenarios. Only 14 percent of the group were VMI cadets, but they received 42 percent of the awards. Will Johnston, Jack Smith, and Rachel Tanner all received Best in Flight while cadets Brian Colitti and Philip Jewett received Warrior Spirit awards.

All the day’s activities were planned and executed by cadets.

The day started at 8 a.m. when cadets were tested on their Field Training Manual knowledge, consisting of information each cadet must memorize to be successful at field training. After the test, it was time for drill, which is one of the most important parts of field training. This is an area VMI cadets traditionally need extra work on, as the Air Force drill is different than the Army drill they’re accustomed to using every day. This year, however, the VMI cadets excelled.

After drill, cadets moved to North Post to perform Leadership Reaction Courses. VMI cadets usually score impressively high marks in this event at field training, and cadets from the other detachments were able to enhance their skillsets in this area by working with cadets from VMI.

After lunch, the cadets moved to Nichols Engineering Building to learn dorm maintenance. Unlike at VMI, where cadets simply roll up their hays and stack their racks at the wall, at field training cadets must perfectly make their beds every morning. Also, at field training cadets roll their clothes, as opposed to the folding that is common at VMI. After dorm maintenance, cadets moved to the North Post drill fields to practice squad tactics and try out the obstacle course.

A joint formation of Air Force ROTC cadets from VMI, Virginia Tech, and University of Virginia passes in review at the conclusion of the Joint Field Training Preparation Day at VMI. – Photo courtesy of Air Force ROTC.
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. Every VMI staff member, faculty member and cadet has the right to work and study in an environment free from discrimination and should be treated with dignity and respect. VMI complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and cadets with the means for resolving complaints that this Statement has been violated. VMI is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Anyone having questions concerning discrimination or the application of Title IX regulations should contact 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, 2nd floor, Post Infirmary, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7667. For employment-related disability services, contact the Employee Disability Services Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7322.

Retirement Ceremony

VMI superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62 congratulates Col. Myke Gluck, head of the Department of Computer and Information Sciences, on his retirement. Also honored during the ceremony, which took place in Jackson Memorial Hall April 10, were (from left) Col. Gary Knick, treasurer; Col. Gordon Ball, professor of English; Col. Francis Bush, professor of economics and business; Col. Thomas Meriwether, professor of psychology; and Col. Patrick Looney, Naval ROTC commander. – VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.
Accomplishments Many Among 317 Graduating Cadets

When Hannah Dickinson ’15 walked across the stage at Cameron Hall May 16, she was part of the one of the largest graduating classes ever at VMI. And it was, quite possibly, the first time she had stopped running since arriving on post way back in 2011.

To say Dickinson has been busy would be an understatement. In addition to the academic responsibilities that came with her biology major with minors in chemistry and psychology, Dickinson was also a member of the VMI cross country and track teams. That certainly is enough to keep any cadet hopping, but add to that Dickinson’s volunteer work, which included membership in Keydets Without Borders, and one can understand why she might want to slow down. For a little while at least.

“To not have to wear a uniform anymore, to not have anyone telling me when I have to wake up, I’m very excited,” Dickinson said a couple of days before commencement exercises.

While Dickinson, like most graduating cadets, expressed that sense of relief, she also said there is another emotion that comes with graduating from VMI.

“I definitely think there’s a sense of pride to say I did this,” Dickinson explained. “I can say that I put myself through the ‘uncommon choice.’”

And VMI reciprocates that feeling. Superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62 may not have been talking directly to Dickinson when he delivered his opening remarks to the 317 graduating cadets, but what he said certainly applies to her. He

Not Once, Not Twice, But Thrice

VMI Boxing Takes First Individual Championships and Throws in a Team Victory

For the first two days of the United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association national tournament in Ann Arbor, Mich., the VMI contingent heard the questions “Who?” and “Where’s that?” more often than they cared to hear them. They aren’t hearing those questions anymore.

With three individual champions and one runner-up, the VMI boxers knocked off defending champion University of Michigan to grab the Institute’s first national title in the largest intercollegiate boxing tournament in history.

“That was what we were kind of wanting, the guys to do well and at least bring home one national champion. To have three national champions and then to also win the team title was amazing.”

“It was really satisfying,” echoed Liam Healy ’15, cadet in charge of club boxing and one of those three individual champions. “We’ve been working really hard for this for a while. People are finally starting to understand what we are doing down here.”

Healy returned to Lexington with the championship belt in the 201-pound open division. John Park ’16 won the 125 division title, and Armando Herrera-DosReis’16 outfought the rest of the field in the beginner bracket.
When Morgan Robinson ’15 was in high school, she was already thinking about the U.S. Navy, but chances are good she never imagined the assignment she’d get. This spring, Robinson became one of the first female cadets in VMI history to be selected for training as an explosive ordnance disposal technician, a post within the Navy’s Special Operations division that was only recently opened to women.

And she almost didn’t come to VMI.

Robinson had always dreamed of the U.S. Naval Academy, so when her father suggested a trip to VMI for an open house, Robinson was reluctant to go.

Getting out of the car after the drive from her hometown of Concord, Va., Robinson was still sure VMI wasn’t the school for her. But then the Corps of Cadets came pouring out of barracks for a parade while she and her father sat on a bench and watched.

In an instant, the teenage sulks had vanished, as Robinson found herself having a complete change of heart.

“Oh my gosh, I’ve got to go here,” she recalled thinking. “That’s all it took. . . . Ever since that moment out there on the bench, I’ve loved this place.”

On Friday, May 15, Robinson was one of just under 30 cadets to commission as ensigns in the Navy. More than 150 cadets in total commissioned in four branches of the service: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Approximately 52 percent of the Class of 2015 chose to commission.

Robinson and her fellow Navy ensigns took their commissioning oath from Rear Adm. James W. Kilby, commander of the Naval Surface Warfighting Development Center in San Diego, Calif.

Commissioning the nearly 100 Army second lieutenants was Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, 35th vice chief of staff of the Army, a four-star general with combat experience in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among many other locales.

The approximately 20 cadets commissioning as second lieutenants in the U.S. Marine Corps took the oath of office administered by Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations.


Like many of her Brother Rats commissioning that day, Robinson had been considering a military career for years before coming to VMI. Her father retired from the Navy after postings that included Spain and Italy, and her sister, Carrie Stone, is currently serving as a petty officer second class, stationed at Palm Beach, Fla.

Robinson will soon join her in the Sunshine State, as she’ll attend dive school in Panama City Beach, Fla., this summer in preparation for explosive ordnance disposal training. That training will prepare her to safely disable standard explosives as well as chemical, biological, and even nuclear weapons.

“She’s definitely somebody who’s not afraid to take a challenge and run with it,” said Cmdr. Randy Zamora, executive officer with the Naval ROTC.

Zamora said that to be selected for explosive ordnance disposal training, individuals need physical fitness, the ability to lead under pressure, and a strong propensity for teamwork.

“Leadership in that community in particular is not really about being out there on your own,” he commented. “It’s, ‘How well do you work as part of a team? They really emphasize that.”

Not surprisingly, Robinson feels VMI has prepared her well for one of the Navy’s most difficult and dangerous jobs.

She majored in civil and environmental engineering, becoming one of three women to receive a degree in that field this spring. Robinson described the major as “definitely the right pick” for her, adding, “In [explosive ordnance disposal], you use a lot of physics-based things, and we did a lot of that in civil.”

It was the cadre, though, on which Robinson chose to focus much of her time and energy. Even as a 4th Class cadet, she appreciated the military discipline of the Rat Line. “I loved it,” she said. “I ate it up.”

Once on the other side of the fence, Robinson embraced the role of cadre and mentor.

“That’s where I’ve spent all of my time and my focus, ever since I was a rat,” she said. “It’s the molding process. . . . When they come in as rats, they’re still high schoolers. You grow so much through the Rat Line. You grow into what your [executive officer] wants you to be.”

This year, Robinson served as executive officer of Bravo Company, eschewing a higher-ranking role in favor of spending more time with 4th Class cadets.

In the Navy, Robinson is looking forward to having mentoring relationships all around her.

“I’m getting ready to go through my own mentoring phase,” she noted. “At VMI it’s a one-way track most of the time. . . . For the Navy I’m going to have uppers and lowers. I’m excited about that. That’s a new dynamic that I’ve never experienced.”

Ensign Morgan Robinson takes the oath of office during her pinning ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kevin Remington.
As of May 1, the Institute’s comprehensive fundraising effort, An Uncommon Purpose: A Glorious Past, A Brilliant Future: The Campaign for VMI, had received $215.4 million in gifts and commitments. Since beginning its public phase last November, the campaign has raised more than $32 million in gifts and commitments, and it’s now closing in on its goal of $225 million.

The number of donors stands at 12,722. VMI alumni have shown their customary loyalty to the Institute with 7,728 of them participating in the campaign. It is interesting to note, however, that 4,994 or 39 percent of them are faculty, staff, parents, and friends, demonstrating how broadly based the VMI family is.

“The campaign’s successes tell me two key things,” said Donald M. Wilkinson ’61, the campaign chairman. “First, that the VMI family strongly endorses the Institute’s extraordinary effort to educate young people academically, physically, and morally. Second, they understand that to continue to do so, VMI must continually improve — to use a business term, it must continually hone its competitive edge — and that takes capital.

“On behalf of the campaign’s leadership, I extend thanks to everyone who has supported this critical effort so far. I also urge members of the VMI family who have not yet made a gift or commitment to do so and so help ensure a brilliant future for the Institute.”
spoke of the individual accomplishments of the Class of 2015.

“These accomplishments add to the luster of your class and the reputation of the Institute,” he said. “This is what I think makes the Class of 2015 unique: individual actions of young men and women that describe, [that] define the character of your class. I think you set an example for other classes to follow.”

Dickinson is one of those cadets whose exploits will be difficult to match. She was named a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors and recently won an Air Force Health Professional Scholarship, which will help her as she attends Eastern Virginia Medical School in pursuit of her dream of becoming a doctor.

For the last two years, she served as captain of the VMI cross country and track teams. The highlight of her career probably was her top-eight finish in the 3,000-meter run during the indoor season of her 2nd Class year, though this season she completed the Southern Conference Cross Country Championships with a time of 18 minutes, 27.98 seconds, topping her personal-best time by 30 seconds.

At the end of the track seasons, Dickinson was awarded the conference’s Mike Wood Graduate Scholarship.

While Dickinson says she will cherish those memories, along with time spent with her roommates, it is her work with Keydets Without Borders that she’ll remember as among her most meaningful experiences.

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After joining the organization as a 3rd Class cadet, she stuck with the program, serving as its president this past year. The last two summers she traveled with the group to Bolivia to help install water lines and VMI-developed eco-latrines in a tiny village. She also took the opportunity to do preliminary research on the health-care opportunities in that village and used her findings as the basis of her Institute Honors thesis.

“My experiences with KWB are the defining moments,” Dickinson said of her time at VMI. “I wanted something to help people; that’s what I feel like I’m called to do. I want to continue what I’ve been doing in Bolivia, helping people who don’t have access to good health care.”

She will get that chance. When she completes medical school, Dickinson will serve a stint in the United States Air Force, like her father before her, where she might pursue pediatrics and will surely get another opportunity to help the less fortunate overseas.

And she will never forget it started at VMI. “[The Institute] really did so much for me,” Dickinson said. “I think I have definitely grown in confidence the last four years. I will carry this with me for the rest of my life.”

“I’m thankful I came here,” she continued. “I would do it again.”

Two other outstanding cadets were honored during the graduation ceremony.

Robert Hardy Hendren, a biology major with minors in Arabic and French and a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors, was awarded the First Jackson-Hope Medal, given for highest attainment in scholarship, and the accompanying Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award. He also received the Society of Cincinnati Medal, for efficiency of service and excellence of character, and the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards that go along with that prize.

Wesley Cade Jacobs of North Carolina was the recipient of the Second Jackson-Hope Medal and the Col. Sterling Murray Heflin ’16 Academic Proficiency Award. An economics and business major, Jacobs was named a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors.

A total of 19 cadets were tapped as Distinguished Graduates with Institute Honors, and 43 more earned Distinguished Graduate recognition.
VMI Host to 14 Schools for Engineering Competition

By Mary Price

It’s a phenomenal challenge. The task is to arrange for seven competitions spread over 2 ½ days, with one of those competitions held in a remote area several miles from post. The participants, all of whom will require food and lodging, number over 300. Some will be traveling from out of state, and many will be towing trailers, each containing a most unusual, and surprisingly fragile, item: a concrete canoe.

No wonder VMI’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering hosts the American Society of Civil Engineers Virginia’s Conference only once a decade.

The conference, which was held in April both on post and at Lake Robertson, a publicly owned lake in the Collierstown area of Rockbridge County, went off without a hitch despite the immense logistical challenges, said Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering.

“We had lots of things to worry about but everything came together well,” Newhouse noted. “We had 14 schools here.”

The ASCE conference offers competitions in seven categories: concrete canoe, steel bridge, surveying, transportation, environmental sustainability, paper/presentation, and mystery quiz.

This year, the six members of VMI’s concrete canoe team had an inside track to success: they were led by Quinn Ellis ’15, a cadet with years of experience on the water. Thanks to his experience working in a boat yard, Ellis happily took on the job of lead designer of the boat the team christened Lady Virginia. The small gray craft wound up placing second in the races portion of the canoe competition.

“I’m from the Northern Neck [of Virginia], so I designed it after a Chesapeake Bay deadrise,” explained Ellis as he watched the Lady Virginia take to the waters at Lake Robertson on Friday, April 10. He explained that a deadrise is a boat frequently used by crabbers and oystermen — and it just happens to be the state boat of Virginia.

“It doesn’t look like your typical canoe, but so far it’s the most stable one in the competition,” Ellis continued. “You can stand up in our canoe,” added Sean Knick ’16, who served as project manager.

Knick explained that the concrete canoe team got a late start this year, thanks to a shortage of lab space. Once under way, though, the team was able to work quickly, thanks in part to Knick’s networking skills. He assembled a supply list that included 500 pounds of concrete, recycled tires, and scrap wood from the mechanical engineering department.

“I’m friends with everybody,” said Knick. “I talk to everybody. I was able to find a lot of resources for us, and at a cheap price as well. … We definitely came in under budget, and it all came together.”

“It’s a very durable canoe,” said Newhouse, who oversaw the team of six cadets. Working alongside Ellis and Knick were Max Makuch ’15, Morgan Robinson ’15, Kyle Volant ’15, and Jake Freeman ’15.

Newhouse, though, doesn’t take credit for the craft’s construction. “Our teams are fairly independent,” he said. “We just advise them. We think they get more out of it that way, and sometimes they learn from their mistakes.”

Learning from mistakes was a vital part of the experience this year for VMI’s steel bridge team, which completed its bridge only to learn that the structure was disqualified for not meeting one of myriad specifications.

The Keydets were hardly the only ones disappointed: of the 10 entries in the steel bridge competition, only two qualified for judging. The rest, explained Maj. Matt Swenty, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, either broke when a load was applied to them or simply didn’t meet all of the requirements set out in the 50-page rule book.

Swenty, though, wasn’t disappointed in his team, which was made up of 1st Class cadets Michael Souza, Matt Evans, Brent Schaufert, Matt Brau, and Michael Prifti.

“You learn as much or more from the process than [from] placing,” said Swenty. “[The competition] brings together a lot of skills — some from classes and some not, such as the softer skills that just have to be acquired over time.”

Newhouse added, “Getting these projects done and learning from them — we consider that success.”

One of the hopes going forward, said Newhouse, is to get more cadets involved in the ASCE competitions before their 1st Class year, so the Institute doesn’t lose its entire team to graduation.

“We’d like to build a dynasty going forward so they get involved earlier and keep doing it for many years,” he commented. “That’s our long-term goal.”
Recent Graduates Recognized for NASA Work

Five VMI alumni, including one 2015 graduate, were part of the NASA Solar Electric Propulsion Team, which was recently honored with the Rotary National Space Achievement Stellar Award. This major award in the aerospace community recognizes accomplishments that hold great promise for furthering future activities in space. The solar electric propulsion team is working toward the development of large solar arrays that would be capable of taking payloads to Mars and beyond. VMI alumni who contributed research for the team during their cadetships were Thomas Fleming Goolsby ’15, Jonathan Reardon ’14, Paul Cicero ’14, Kelvin Ulloa ’14, Luke Butler ’14, and Victor Deleon ’15. All six worked under the guidance of Col. Joseph Blandino, professor of mechanical engineering.

Dickinson Receives SoCon Scholarship

Hannah Dickinson ’15 recently received a $2,000 Mike Wood Scholarship from the Southern Conference, becoming the first Keydet athlete since 2010 to be selected for a SoCon post-graduate scholarship. Dickinson, a biology major, racked up accomplishments both academic and athletic during her cadetship, maintaining a 3.92 grade point average while becoming a four-year letter winner in both cross country and track. In addition, she has been heavily involved with Keydets Without Borders, a humanitarian group working in Bolivia each summer, and has served for three years as a biology tutor. She has been accepted into the Air Force’s Health Professional Scholarship Program and will enter the Air Force as a doctor after graduating from medical school. She plans to attend Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Three Winners at Undergraduate Research Symposium

A total of nine cadets gave presentations, and three cadets won awards for their presentations, at the Big South Undergraduate Research Symposium at Campbell University April 10-11. John Winalski ’16 won in the oral presentation category for biology, with a talk titled, “The Effects of Dantrolene on Nitric Oxide and Aromatase Inhibition in the Embryonic Zebrafish (Danio Rerio).” Winning in the oral presentation category for engineering/physics was Hunter Liu ’15, whose talk was, “Thickness Studies of Ionic Self-Assembled Monolayers Thin Films for Acidity Detection.” Matthew Tate ’15 won for poster presentation in physics. His topic was “Broad and Narrow Band Polarization Measurements of NGC 7380.”

Not Once, Not Twice, But Thrice

Continued from page 1

Receiving congratulations from Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62, superintendent, in his office are (from left) Liam Healy, John Park, Armando Herrera-DosReis, Ryker Convento, and partially obscured, Nathan Miller and Townsend Wilburn. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.

at 132 pounds. Chris Livingston ’15 finished as the runner up in the 165 novice class.

In his bout, Healy earned a second-round technical knockout over two-time champion Kevin Bosma to earn his individual title and clinch the team championship for the Keydets. It was an especially satisfying victory for Healy, who finished as the runner-up during his 3rd Class year but missed last season’s tournament because of an ROTC commitment.

“I’ve been working to get back,” Healy said. “To win the title for myself was great, but to win one with the team was even better.

“I just fought my fight,” continued the 1st Class cadet, who stung his opponent with an overhand right on a couple of occasions before the referee stopped the fight in the second round. “After one or two he was definitely hurt. I just followed up with that, and it was all she wrote.”

With that victory, VMI was crowned national boxing champion. And it brought more questions. How could such a small school, with only 1,700 students and 20 boxers on a good day, not only compete with but defeat these bigger institutions with pools of literally hundreds of potential competitors? “It’s always amazing to us how hard these guys work,” said Hinojosa. “We ask so much of them. As coaches, it’s humbling that they are willing to put themselves out there for the coaches and the team.”

“We’re blessed with a good team of guys that are focused,” added assistant coach Joe Shafer. “We’ve got a limited number of hours each week that the cadets can come down and train. It’s a lot of work we have to get done in a short amount of time. You’ve got to be disciplined, and you’ve got to have the tough mindset to just come in here and do it.”

A special dinner was held for the VMI boxers May 13, at which they heard another question: How do you top that?

“We wanted to win it; we had definitely talked about winning it, but the thing we hadn’t really thought about was what happens when you win it,” said Hinojosa. “I think now, more than anything, the guys want to defend the title. I really expect big things for next year as well.”
Peer Educators’ Dog Therapy Helps ‘Bust’ Stress

By Mary Price

It’s safe to say that on May 2 VMI simply went to the dogs — if only for a couple of hours.

Enjoying the unusually warm and sunny spring Saturday were seven therapy dogs from TheraPets of the Roanoke Valley, along with their handlers and a steady stream of cadets who seemed delighted to see a collection of canines in the courtyard of Old Barracks.

The dogs, who were making at least their third appearance at VMI, came as part of the Stress Busters event organized by the Cadet Peer Educators, an outreach group of the Cadet Counseling Center. Not surprisingly, the Stress Busters event was held two days before the start of exams.

“The goal is to get cadets to come down, learn about stress relief options, and learn coping skills,” explained Capt. Cera Wadsworth, program director at the Cadet Counseling Center. The dogs, she added, have become a powerful draw, with cadets asking her about the event days in advance.

She added that therapy dogs, who must pass a rigorous temperament and behavior evaluation in order to be admitted to the TheraPets program, have been shown to increase motivation in those who interact with them.

The cadets who stopped by the Stress Busters event weren’t disappointed in the selection of canine friends, which ranged from Angus, a large and loving rottweiler, to Roger, a well-behaved west highland terrier who lounged royally on a red, white, and yellow afghan made by the wife of a VMI alumnus.

“This is much appreciated,” said Cody Damewood ’16. “This is the first time I’ve touched a dog since spring … [furlough].” For Damewood, the dogs were a big reminder of home, as his parents run a dog rescue operation and currently have 12 canines in residence.

“I love them all,” added Bridgette Pouliot ’16, who was chatting with Damewood at the event. “They’re all so cute.” Both Pouliot and Damewood admitted to feeling some stress about exams, with the dogs providing a welcome reprieve from nervous anticipation.

That’s just the kind of relief that Stress Busters is designed to provide, noted Killian Buckley ’15, who served as cadet in charge of the Cadet Peer Educators this year.

“A lot of cadets are separated from their families and their pets so it’s kind of a nice opportunity to help them relax, especially this time of year,” she said. “It helps them enjoy life a little bit more and probably be more successful on their finals.”

Stress Busters events have been offered for at least a decade, said Wadsworth, but attendance increased markedly once the therapy dogs were added.

She estimated that approximately 200 cadets attend each Stress Busters event, although attendance is easier to tally in Cocke Hall, where the event is held in December, than it is in the courtyard of Old Barracks in May.

Seeing animals “definitely normalizes being away from home,” Wadsworth noted. “It’s a nice, simple, basic interaction.”

Offering stress reduction events and programs as the academic year winds down is a vital part of keeping cadets mentally healthy, said Maj. Kristin Hoff, psychologist with the Cadet Counseling Center. She explained that stress tends to build as the semester rolls along.

“For college counseling centers across the country, April is a challenging month,” she said. “For whatever reason, rates of suicide are higher in April. Any programs we can develop to foster self-care and connection with others in the context of busy schedules are certainly advantageous.”

Petting a dog, while talking with its handler, may seem like an easy way to pass a few minutes, but Wadsworth sees much more going on.

“The nice thing about Stress Busters in the larger context of mental health is that it de-stigmatizes the topic of help-seeking,” she said. “The cadets are meeting people, they’re connecting, and they’re engaging with their peer group in a friendly and social manner.”

If cadets can do that, and take some of the stress out of exam week, Buckley and her fellow Cadet Peer Educators will have done their job.

“We want to help cadets succeed here and remain healthy,” said Buckley.
The completion of renovations to Cormack Hall marks a major milestone in the Corps Physical Training Facilities project, a $122 million investment in the physical fitness of the Corps of Cadets.

Construction crews worked seven days a week in May to have the facility ready by the end of the month, when the Department of Physical Education and NCAA wrestling were to begin moving in. Cormack Hall will also serve as VMI’s primary weight training facility for cadets and employees, as the Cocke Hall weight room will close for renovation once Cormack is ready for use.

The renovation of Cormack is one of three major construction efforts that make up the CPTF project, the others being the renovation of Cocke Hall and the construction of the new Indoor Training Facility. Cocke Hall is expected to be ready by the summer of 2016 and the Indoor Training Facility by the fall of 2016.

Scaffolding is in place on the south side of Cocke Hall in preparation for exterior repairs, and interior work on the 100 level is underway.

Work on the Indoor Training Facility continues apace, with reinforced concrete rising ever higher at the construction site, located across Diamond Street from Cameron Hall. A major operation took place at the site in April when crews installed a vehicular bridge composed of massive precast concrete pieces over Town Branch.

The indoor training facility’s architects, HKS and Commonwealth Architects, were awarded the Merit Award for Excellence in Architecture for the project April 16 by the Richmond chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Work is also underway to stabilize the historic Knights of Pythias building, moved to its current location on Main Street in October to make way for construction of the Indoor Training Facility.

Repairs to the interior, which had suffered substantial water damage, have been completed, including supports to stabilize compromised roof trusses, floor joists, and floor decking.

Work continued in May to install a temporary cover over the entire galvanized metal roof to prevent additional water from entering the building. Fans are also being installed to keep the building properly ventilated, and inspections will be conducted periodically to ensure that no additional damage occurs.

The building then will be maintained as is indefinitely, with no plans to renovate the building for reuse until current construction projects are complete.

To see more photos, visit vminews.tumblr.com, post date May 4.

As construction continues, the site of the Indoor Training Facility changes daily. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.
Championing Wellness

Tomlin Recognized for Efforts to Improve Employee Health and Fitness

By Mary Price

At first glance, Lt. Col. Kathy Tomlin's office looks like that of any other hardworking professional. There are papers waiting to be filed, a desk that's obviously filled with work in progress, two chairs, and a small table.

Near the small table is a yoga ball. It's not an anomaly; it's appropriate because in addition to her duties as director of procurement services, Tomlin serves in two health-related roles. She's VMI's representative for the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management's CommonHealth program and director of VMI's employee wellness program, an offshoot of the superintendent's wellness initiative.

Last month, in recognition of her efforts to increase the well-being of faculty and staff, Tomlin received two awards, one for herself and one on behalf of the Institute. On April 14, Gov. Terry McAuliffe recognized Tomlin as an agency wellness champion. She was one of four individuals from around the state to receive the award, and the only one from the realm of higher education.

At the same ceremony, VMI was recognized as a DHRM wellness-certified agency. The Institute was one of only two four-year colleges and universities to receive the certification, with the other being Virginia Commonwealth University. VMI was also the only wellness-certified agency to have an employee recognized as a wellness champion.

While appreciative of the recognition for VMI, Tomlin was quick to credit others for the success of the employee wellness program, which was created in 2011 as an effort of the Employee Fitness and Nutrition Task Force chaired by Brig. Gen. Robert Green, deputy superintendent for finance, administration, and support.

“Our success is due to the support of senior leadership,” said Tomlin. “If they didn’t encourage participation, we wouldn’t have a program.”

The first Zumba and yoga classes were offered during the 2011-12 academic year. Now, approximately 90 to 100 employees per week participate in a wide array of fitness classes, despite ongoing challenges over where to hold them.

At first, classes were held in the pipe band practice room in Shell Hall. They then moved into a small building on Main Street that had once served as a grocery store, but that building was demolished to make way for the Indoor Training Facility.

This year, the classes have been held in Clark King Annex, and Tomlin expressed her appreciation to Col. James “Jimmy” Coale, head of the physical education department, for making this possible.

“He picked up where we left off, with not having a place to play,” Tomlin noted.

She continued, “We’ve listened to what people want. We have a very good program with lots of participation. We’ve hit right where we need to be, given our limited space.”

But VMI’s employee wellness efforts are hardly limited to classes. In years past, the wellness program has offered outdoor adventures such as tubing on the James River, kayaking on the Maury River, and hiking on the Chessie Trail. Last fall, a couch-to-5K program attracted around 16 participants, all new to running.

There’s also the employee wellness fair, held annually each April, which this year attracted approximately 200 employees. This event features healthy food and door prizes, along with a variety of health screenings.

“We’ve had great success with that,” said Tomlin. “We’ve expanded it as big as it can be for Marshall Hall.”

Looking forward, Tomlin said she’d like to see more beginner fitness classes offered. She’d also like to be able to open fitness classes to employees’ spouses and Institute retirees. Because of space limitations, those classes are currently limited to full-time and part-time employees of VMI and its auxiliary agencies.

Tomlin expects the space problem to be resolved once the renovation of Cocke Hall is complete in the summer of 2016, as plans call for the building to have dedicated space for employee fitness classes.

“We would like to get settled in our new home and see what we can do from there,” she said.
New English Minors Encourage Interdisciplinary Learning

By Mary Price

A number of cadets who took part in graduation last month received concentrations or minors offered for the first time this year by the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies.

The new concentrations, which are earned by cadets majoring in English, are offered in literary studies, philosophy, rhetoric and writing, and art history and visual culture. Minors are the same as concentrations, except that they are earned by cadets majoring in other disciplines.

Several graduating history majors, for instance, earned one of the minors. This, noted department head Col. Emily Miller, exemplifies the kind of cross-disciplinary learning that the new minors were intended to offer.

“Most of the students in most of our classes are not English majors,” said Miller. “[The minors are] a nice way for them to demonstrate that they have some expertise in these areas.”

One of those cadets, Brian Boyle ’15, graduated with a major in history and a minor in art history and visual culture. Boyle, who commissioned in the Army upon graduation, came to VMI with an interest in learning about art, thanks to his mother’s love of the subject.

Boyle’s journey toward the minor began in the fall of 2013, when he took an introduction to art history class taught by Maj. Andrew Eschelbacher, then-assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies.

“He hooked me on learning about art, and I really enjoyed it,” noted Boyle.

Boyle then took two more art history classes in the spring of 2014, before joining Eschelbacher and Maj. Jeff Kendrick, assistant professor of modern languages and cultures, on a trip to Paris that summer. Approximately 15 cadets took the trip, titled Paris as Art and Text, and museum visits were a central part of the itinerary.

“That was cool,” said Boyle. “I got to see the art I’d been studying for the past year.”

This spring, Boyle was enrolled in a visual studio art class taught by Maj. Julie Brown, assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies. In that class, he and the other cadets were asked to create three works of art: a still life, a piece of abstract art and a self-portrait.

Miller explained that a connection between learning and doing is integral to each of the minors, not just art history and visual culture.

“With all of these minors, there’s a similarity: They study what the great artists or thinkers have done, and then they try their hand with their own creative talents and abilities,” she explained. “They study great writing and then try to write themselves.”

The new minors, which were developed in the fall of 2013, replaced three minors previously offered by what was then the Department of English: English, fine arts, and writing. Then, as now, cadets could also earn a minor in philosophy, but philosophy was housed in the Department of Psychology until it was moved to the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies two years ago.

“We’ve always had minors and concentrations in the department, because we’ve felt it’s valuable for our majors to go in depth in a particular area of study,” said Miller. “We also get a number of students from other departments who take a number of our courses.”

Boyle, for one, wants to get the word out about the new minors, so others can benefit as he has. He noted that he could have earned a minor in French if he’d been more intentional about his class choices earlier in his cadetship.

“Often times, cadets have no idea [about minors],” he said. “It’s best to start as a [3rd Class cadet].”
Cadets Assist with Earth Day Project

By John Robertson IV

Keydets without Borders pitched in during Natural Bridge Park’s Earth Day celebration April 18, when more than 100 area volunteers worked on projects that made a lasting impact on the park’s sustainability efforts.

Several cadets were there for the effort, putting their engineering expertise to work.

“We’re constructing three compost bins from used pallets in preparation for the Youth Conservation Corps to come follow up and move those to the final staging site,” said Sean Knick ’16, local programs director for Keydets without Borders. “Then we’re also building raised gardening beds. These are elevated platforms for growing vegetables and flowers.”

The work will enhance the park’s conservation and educational missions.

“The composting bins will be used to compost kitchen food waste which will be used as fertilizer in our greenhouse and raised beds,” said Sarah Rourke, the park’s project coordinator. “The raised beds will have a dual purpose to help grow herbs and vegetables for the kitchen and to be used in our environmental education programs with students.”

Natural Bridge Park is currently owned by a non-profit organization, the Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund, which expects to eventually transfer it to the state of Virginia to become a park. It depends on volunteer efforts like these to accomplish conservation goals.

“Volunteer support has been vital in creating new initiatives and improving existing conservation, education, and outdoor recreation features on property,” said Rourke. “Through volunteer expertise and help over the past year, numerous features and resources have been added to the property.”

The Earth Day celebration ties in perfectly with the Keydets without Borders’ mission.

“Everything that we do is centered around conservation,” said Knick. “Whether we’re talking about providing clean water or making composting bins, it all has to do with the environment.”

The Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund is a subsidiary of Kissito Healthcare, a Roanoke-based non-profit organization that works in the U.S. and around the world to improve quality of life. It was through a partnership with Kissito that Keydets without Borders worked to improve water quality in Uganda in August 2013.

“They are a health-care organization, but they’re also strong proponents of eliminating health-care problems at the root,” said Lt. Col. Tim Moore, associate professor of civil engineering and the group’s faculty adviser. “They got involved with partnering with engineers to solve water and sanitation issues.”

Kissito helps identify and fund projects on which the cadets’ engineering expertise can be brought to bear. The work at Natural Bridge is part of what looks to be a continuing partnership with Kissito on local projects.

“We’re really trying to expand and tackle local projects as well as projects abroad,” said Moore. “It really strengthens the ties with the community, and working on different projects is a lot of fun for the cadets.”

Cadets in the organization are taking a hands-on approach to developing lasting ties with local organizations.

“My goal is to build a constant relationship between us and local community organizations, to the point where we can go out every single year and build traditions,” said Knick. “I’d love to see KWB come out each year for this Earth Day celebration in particular.”

Personal ties to the historic park make the work at Natural Bridge even more meaningful.

“I’ve been to Natural Bridge a couple of times, since my father grew up in Rockbridge County. The county is like a second home for me,” said Knick. “It’s nice that I can do service for a place that’s really close to me.”

It’s a feeling that’s shared by much of the community.

“Restoring and maintaining Natural Bridge is important for people in this area,” said Moore. “It’s really about restoring Virginia history.”

Members of Keydets without Borders construct composting bins from used pallets. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.
VMI Foundation Hosts Benefactors Luncheon

BY SCOTT BELLIVEAU ’83, VMI FOUNDATION

More than 100 people who had established the endowments that support scholarships, professorships, chairs, and other funds dined with 93 cadets and members of the faculty and staff April 13 at the benefactors luncheon. Also attending the 13th annual event, which took place in the Hall of Valor in Marshall Hall, were the members of the VMI Foundation’s Board of Trustees who were on post for their annual spring meeting.

During the program, Hugh M. Fain III ’80, president of the VMI Foundation, thanked the donors for their generosity toward VMI and for providing an “incredibly strong example [of support for the Institute] over many decades.”

Harper Niver ’15 also spoke, describing the influence that private money had on her decision to attend VMI and how it had allowed her pursue excellence as a cadet. She also spoke of her plan to “pay it forward and provide another eager high school senior the same opportunity that was afforded to me — to take part in the VMI experience.”

She closed by thanking the donors present and told them, “With more and more deserving cadets finding the burden of a college education overwhelming, each of you have and will continue to be their hope.”

Compost Project a First for VMI Living Laboratory

BY MARY PRICE

A small pilot project undertaken by a sustainability intern last summer morphed into a much larger undertaking involving not only 20 cadets from four academic departments, but also a model of learning new to VMI.

The compost collaborative is the first undertaking of the Living Laboratory, a concept that’s been gaining traction rapidly in academia over the past several years. Maj. Jenny deHart, physical plant staff engineer and sustainability coordinator, said living laboratory projects are now underway at schools including the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and George Mason University. At a faculty lunch event held in late April, she described the concept as “a real life environment for innovative research.”

The compost collaborative began in the summer of 2014, when an intern working for deHart did the necessary paperwork with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for VMI to begin a small-scale composting project. The project was designed to test the feasibility of composting food scraps from Crozet Hall, which are currently trucked away. The compost could then be used to fertilize trees and shrubs around post.

By the beginning of this year, deHart had a plan in hand for an experiment in which cadets and faculty from the departments of civil and environmental engineering, mechanical engineering, economics and business, and biology would compost four days’ worth of food scraps from Crozet Hall.

In mid-February’s frigid cold, the cadets loaded 2,500 pounds of reeking, decaying scraps into four composting bins outside Hinty Hall. Three of the bins contained scraps mixed with a bulking agent, to supply carbon as a food source for the bacteria aiding the decomposition, while the fourth was intentionally left with no bulking agent, so it could serve as a control.

Over four or five weeks, the scraps would be supplied with oxygen through a ventilation system made up of perforated plastic pipes at the bottom of the pile — the “aerated static pile” method. Moving the oxygen through the scraps also serves as the means of stirring the mixture, which must be done on a schedule. The process would produce temperatures high enough to kill any pathogens lurking in the food waste, after which the mixture would be spread outdoors for three to six months to finish decomposing.

In the end, the cadets and professors agreed that many kinks would still need to be worked out before large-scale composting at VMI becomes a reality. But no matter the fate of the compost collaborative, the Living Laboratory is likely to continue. Proposed projects include a hazard analysis of the Chessie Nature Trail, an infrared analysis of roof leakage on post, and energy recovery from information technology closets.
This spring’s compost collaborative project was not unlike a jigsaw puzzle, with cadets from four departments charged with bringing critical pieces to the table.

Civil and environmental engineering cadets were asked to come up with a way to measure temperatures in the compost heap. To do that, they inserted probes called thermocouples into various spots in the compost heap and then set up a computer to take measurements automatically every 10 minutes.

“We had thousands of data points that we had to plot into a graph,” explained Jake Freeman ‘15.

Very quickly, Freeman and his fellow cadets found that research can yield surprises. The temperature in the compost bins got up to a desirable 120 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit within the first week, despite outdoor temperatures that hovered near zero overnight.

“I don’t think they figured it … [would] get hot so fast,” said Gregory Oldland ‘15.

The civil and environmental engineering cadets, who also included Damian Arnaiz ‘15 and Andrew Rotermund ‘15, had two additional responsibilities: creating a feasibility plan for waste management and designing an appropriate structure for a large-scale composting project.

“That involves true civil engineering – roads, slabs, structure,” noted Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, who worked alongside Maj. Paul Ackerman Jr. ‘93, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, to supervise the cadets’ work.

In the end, the cadets recommended that a large-scale composting facility be built on the VMI-owned Lackey Farm at Hunter Hill, across the Maury River from the Institute. That site was chosen, Freeman and Oldland explained, because it was the largest of the three suggested and because its location would keep the smell of decomposing food well away from neighbors.

Both cadets agreed that the learning experience they’d received from the compost collaborative had outpaced a classroom-based capstone experience.

“This was beneficial because it was hands-on,” said Oldland. “We were actually going to the site.”

Freeman added, “We got to see the big picture, how much is involved in solving a problem.”

While the civil and environmental engineering cadets worked on temperature and site selection, three cadets from the mechanical engineering department – Fleming Goolsby ‘15, Ching-Wei Hu ‘15, and Joshua Ford ‘15 – were asked to design a ventilation system to keep the compost bins properly aerated, as well as to evaluate the viability of using solar cells to power that ventilation system.

Like many of their fellow cadets from other departments, the trio from mechanical engineering found themselves wishing for a longer semester as they sought to fine-tune their designs.

“They don’t have time to go back and apply what they’ve learned to fix those problems,” explained Col. Howard Arthur, professor of mechanical engineering. “It’s a very positive learning experience, from where I sit, but the students are frustrated.”

Arthur added that time constraints are hardly unique to VMI. “That’s not unlike what would happen out in the real world,” he noted.

Bringing a cost-benefit analysis of the project to the table was Brandon Goodwyn ‘16, with some assistance from Renee Reives ‘15. The cadets, both economics and business majors, took on the compost project as an independent study.

 “[Goodwyn has] got a number of dimensions that say the project will pay for itself in three to 12 years, based on a number of variables,” said Lt. Col. Sam Allen, associate professor of economics and business, who supervised the cadets’ work.

The final group of cadets, biology majors enrolled in a capstone course taught by Lt. Col. Anne Alerding, associate professor of biology, worked to evaluate the effectiveness of three different bulking agents, which are typically added to compost heaps to balance the carbon/nitrogen ratio.

“We actually found that there was no difference in which one we used,” noted David Kniffen ‘15. “We could achieve successful temperatures through all [of the bulking agents].”

Like his counterparts in civil and environmental engineering, Kniffen said he’d enjoyed a class that involved hands-on research.

“The lab time really stood out more than anything else,” he commented. “Some classes will take you on field trips off post, but nothing like this where you actually got your hands on it and you were actually looking for results.”

Agreeing with that assessment was Heather Magill ‘15, who described the capstone class as “a complete 180 from what I’m used to.”

Alerding, meanwhile, found herself in the dual role of student and teacher, learning the science of compost as she coached her students’ work. This learning, she believes, is vital to growth as a scientist, and as a professor.

“I liked doing [the capstone project] because I learned more, and every time you learn more from a class project, it trickles into your research,” Alerding said. “Then, when I learn more in research, it trickles into my class.”
The echoes of rifles reverberated off the walls as 4th Class cadets squeezed off shot after shot inside the shooting range at North Post. Others lined up outside, eagerly anticipating their turn on the firing lines as the New Cadet Military Training program continued.

On a Saturday morning in April, the 4th Class cadets engaged in the marksmanship phase of their training, a program designed to introduce the former rats to genuine military training.

“It’s a great program,” said Alexandra Hastings ’15, cadet in charge of NCMT. “It actually teaches them better military skills than what they received in the first year of ROTC. And for those who aren’t going to commission, they actually get a chance to [learn these skills].”

The NCMT program is broken down into four phases: first aid, survival skills, land navigation, and marksmanship. The cadets spend time learning and practicing these skills in both the classroom and the field, with the program culminating in the 4th Class FTX in early May.

“Every Tuesday throughout the second semester, all of the 4th classmen form up on the bricks, and we give them military training,” said Hastings. “We teach them survival skills, building shelters, building fires. … We put them on a course, let them find points, learning how to use a map and compass. Then we also bring them up here [to the firing range].”

Before the cadets can ever hold a weapon, however, they have to undergo intense classroom instruction. They have to learn about the firearms, from taking them apart to the fundamentals of firing them to all of the important safety issues involved in shooting.

“This is the first time many of them have ever shot a firearm at all,” said Sgt. Maj. John Neel. “We teach them how to make the weapon safe. When they come up here, they’re not untrained.”

Neel has been part of the NCMT program since its inception in 2002, and he has seen it grow over the last few years. So has Sgt. 1st Class Carmelo Echevarria, commandant’s office battle operations and training sergeant, who was running the marksmanship training this year.

Echevarria noted that the range of weapons the 4th Class cadets are exposed to — the M4, the M14, and the M9 pistol — has increased, as has the number of rounds each cadet fires. And while marksmanship is, of course, an important part of any military training, it has an important, more subtle, meaning for the former rats.

“Today is the one time when the new cadets get a chance to fire the weapon systems found here at the Institute,” he said, referring to the M14 rifle cadets carry in parade. “This gives them the [idea] that what they have in their rooms is a real rifle and not just a parade prop. Hopefully, they’ll better appreciate this rifle.”

At least one of the cadets did. Thomas McKellar ’18 was with Company H when it took its turn on the range. While he entered the fray as an experienced shooter, having honed his skills shooting in his native Texas, he emerged from the smoke and the noise with a different take on the rifle he has been lugging around, albeit without a firing pin, since August.

“We spend a lot of time with these rifles doing a lot of things [but] not … shooting,” McKellar said. “It’s good to get to use the weapons for what they are designed for.”

Even more than that, however, McKellar found another reason to enjoy the shooting range. He and his classmates have been through a great deal together over the course of the school year, and for him, this was one more chance to revel in that special connection they have developed.

“It was really fun to be able to shoot with my Brother Rats,” he explained. “This is a good time to bond, and it gives everybody a chance to get a little bit of military training before moving our separate ways.”

Coached by cadet range safety officers, 4th Class cadets practice shooting in the North Post firing range. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.
When the Athletic Academic Advising Office changed its name to the Cadet-Athlete Development Office in January, the change reflected more than terminology; it was indicative of sweeping changes in the mission and mindset.

J.B. Weber, the assistant athletic director for academic services and compliance, and Sarah Keller, assistant director of athletic academic services, were new to their posts this academic year. They initiated the shift after spending fall semester assessing the services offered.

“We went from being reactive to being proactive and focusing on developing our cadet athletes’ skills they need to be successful in college,” said Weber. “We want them to be empowered self-advocates … so that they can be effective on their own.”

Previously, if a cadet athlete was struggling in a particular class, the solution was to send him or her to a tutor. Tutoring is still offered, with 15 part-time, content-specific tutors available, but it represents only a part of the office’s support of cadet athletes’ development.

“The coaches bring us really bright cadet athletes, … and if they’re struggling in something … it may be that they don’t know how to study, plan, or organize themselves,” explained Weber. Weber and Keller reach out to these cadets, offering individualized action plans for academic success. They are required to check in once a week and to fill out guided study plans.

“We have a quiet study room for them in Scott Shipp Hall,” said Weber. “None of this is tutoring or content support – its engagement, relationship building, and creating the opportunity for the cadet athletes to succeed.”

Weber and Keller are also recognizing cadet athletes who are excelling academically, creating a series of honors lists. These include the Cadet-Athlete Honor Society for cadets with a 3.0 or higher semester GPA, the Athletic Director’s Honor List for those with a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA, and the Elite 18, which is composed of the top academic performer on each of the varsity athletic teams. Additionally, the team with the highest cumulative GPA at the end of every semester will now be recognized.
Paced by first-place finishes from Quincy Murphy ’15 and Aron Long ’16, the VMI men’s track and field team placed fourth at the Southern Conference Outdoor Championships held April 25 and 26 in Birmingham, Ala.

Meanwhile, Bria Anderson ’18 took first place in the long jump to lead the Keydet women to their best-ever finish in a conference meet, placing fifth at the SoCon Championships.

Murphy won his second straight conference decathlon title, adding this year’s Southern Conference crown to the Big South title he won last season. He tallied a personal-best 6,675 points to outdistance his nearest competitor by nearly 200 points. In the 10 events, Murphy finished no worse than fourth, earning wins in both the shot put and 110-meter hurdles.

Long captured first place in the 200 dash, crossing the line in 21.33 seconds. He also placed second in the 100 and, with Julian Jackson ’15, Davon Guerrier ’18, and Lamaris Reed ’16, ran a leg on the fourth-place 4x100 relay team.

Anderson leaped 19 feet, 6 inches, in the long jump to take first place and break the school record by nearly a full foot. She also joined Kerisha Goode ’18, Mia McClain ’18, and Yaa Agyepong-Wiafe ’18 in running to a third-place finish in the 4x100 relay.

Goode placed in two other events for VMI, finishing third in both the 100 and the 200, breaking the school record in the latter event with a time of 24.66.

VMI’s throwers enjoyed a banner day as well. Renee Reives ’15 placed in two throwing events, finishing as the runner-up in the shot put and taking fourth in the discus. Mary Grace Lemon ’15 was fourth in the hammer throw and seventh in the shot, while Logan Edwards ’16 placed fifth in the hammer. Emily Fulton ’18 earned an eighth-place finish in the javelin throw.

Julia Logan ’18 finished sixth in the triple jump and teamed up with Christina Hill ’18, Deborah Allison ’18, and Thireyona Legg ’15 for a fifth-place finish in the 4x400 relay. Legg also placed fifth in the 400, and Allison took eighth in the 100 hurdles. Logan rounded out the scoring for the Keydets with her fourth-place finish in the high jump.

After Murphy and Long, Avery Martin ’16 was the top finisher for the VMI men, placing second in the 1,500 with a time of 3:47.22. Martin was also a member of the 4x400 relay team that finished third. He was joined on the team by Brandon Hartman ’15, Andrew Gould ’18, and Jackson. Jackson also placed fourth in the 400, followed by Hartman, who took eighth place. Murphy added a third-place finish in the 110 hurdles to his stellar efforts, while Guerrier was right behind in fourth place.

In other top performances, Daniel DeNijs ’16 was eighth in the 5,000, and Brandon White ’17 and HP Paulitre ’15 finished sixth and eighth, respectively, in the 10,000. Sean Helmke ’16 was the sixth-place finisher in the 3,000 steeplechase. Reed placed seventh in the triple jump.

In the throwing events, Donovan Walton ’18 was the top VMI finisher, taking fifth in the javelin. Jordan White ’16 placed sixth in the hammer throw, while Grant Sanchez ’17 (discus) and William Condrey ’16 (shot put) both earned seventh-place medals.

Please see page 17
Eight members of the VMI rifle team were honored with All-Mid Atlantic Conference honors after the Keydets won the league’s smallbore title at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, Mass., last month. Jeremy Bolden ’15 led the way, earning first-team all-conference laurels in both smallbore and air rifle. Connor Sullivan ’15 and Kristen Voss ’15 were second-team selections in both disciplines. Matt Lusardi ’17 and Loran Dreelin ’16 both landed on the air rifle second team, while Zachary Johnson ’17 was named honorable mention in smallbore. Luis Hickey of the MAC all-freshmen team.

Dreelin led the Keydets, who placed fourth in air rifle at the conference meet, to the MAC smallbore title with a score of 560 points to finish third in the individual standings. Lusardi, with 553 points, placed fifth, and Bolden, with 550, was seventh. Andrew Hickey ’17 and Johnson also placed in the top 10.

After winning its last two games of the season to finish with 11 victories on the year, just one short of the school mark for wins in a season, VMI’s women’s water polo placed Shelby Barkley ’18 on the All-Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference honor squad. Barkley earned second-team laurels after scoring a team-leading 56 goals on the season. Scoring 33 goals in conference games, Barkley also led the team in shots and finished the season with six assists.

With Mike DeBlasio ’15 scoring five goals, VMI’s lacrosse team avoided a winless season with an 11-10 victory over the University of Massachusetts-Lowell April 26 in Scranton, Pa.

DeBlasio, who led VMI with 14 goals on the season, was named the Inside Lacrosse/Select Sector SPDR Player of the Week for his five-goal effort.

Six VMI players scored in the victory, including Wesley Sanders ’18, who found the net twice. Evan Windisch ’15 recorded seven saves to pick up the win in goal.

VMI’s baseball team opened Southern Conference tournament play in Charleston, S.C., Wednesday, May 20, as one of the hottest teams in the league.

The Keydets closed the regular season with five wins in their last seven games, including four of six against league foes. VMI, with a 20-28 overall record, 12-12 against Southern Conference opponents, was seeded fourth in the tournament and faced off with University of North Carolina-Greensboro in a first-round contest.

The Spartans were one of those teams VMI dispatched at the end of the regular season as the Keydets won two of the three contests in the final home series of 2015. Matt Winn ’15 and Will Connerley ’15 paced the Keydets in the two victories. Winn had four hits, including a home run, in the first two games, while Connerley was 3-for-3 with a double, home run, and three RBIs in the first contest. He belted another home run in the second game.

After defeating James Madison, VMI closed out the regular season with a pair of victories over Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C. Six Keydets had two or more hits in an 18-4 rout of the Catamounts, including Thomas Stallings ’15, who finished with a home run and three RBIs. Jordan Tarsovich ’14 and David Geary ’16 both had two hits and an RBI in an 11-6 victory, and Collin Fleischer ’18 added a home run and four RBIs.

“SAAC is a council of cadet-athlete leaders who have a direct voice to the athletic administration,” said Weber. “We’re doing a lot of programs with them — community service, partnering with the cadet counseling office to do mental health awareness training, and the athletic awards banquet. We’re engaging with the bottom and the top — if a cadet is succeeding, they’re not going to come see us, so we have to think about ways to engage with them.”

Also new to the office are expanded hours of operation. “We’re open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., then 7:45 p.m. to 11 p.m., because that’s when our cadets are available. . . . We’ve shifted to fit their schedule,” he said.

Another focus is revitalizing this fall’s transition program for new cadet athletes. “We’re going to start the very first day [the cadet athlete] steps on campus. . . . If you can help a [new cadet] to have success in the classroom the first six months they’re here, it’s unlikely that they will struggle for the next seven semesters because they’ve had a taste of academic success. . . . If you can get them in that routine, they’ll be successful.”

Dr. David Diles, athletic director, likes what he’s seeing so far.

“JB and Sarah have brought contemporary structures and new support systems to this important division of our department. . . . The early results are demonstrating that we are achieving higher levels of educational success with greater resource efficiency.”
VMI Army ROTC commissioned nearly 100 cadets in a joint commissioning ceremony at Cameron Hall May 15. The cadets were given the oath of office as second lieutenants by guest speaker Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, the 35th vice chief of staff of the Army. Allyn spoke to the cadets about their future as second lieutenants in today’s Army and the challenges and successes they would face in their careers. After he administered the oath of office, he presented VCSA coins to each new officer to commemorate the hard work and dedication they invested over their four years training to commission.

Following the joint ceremony, the cadets, their families, and the cadre moved to Moody Hall for individual commissioning and pinning-on ceremonies. Family members attached the rank insignia, and each new officer presented the traditional silver dollar to the individual rendering his or her first salute.

Seventeen more cadets will commission this summer and next fall. Ninety-three cadets have been accessed to active duty; 15 will join the U.S. Army Reserve or National Guard. Four cadets received educational delays in order to pursue advanced degrees as future Judge Advocate Corps Officers or Army Chaplains.

Twenty-six of the cadets were awarded Distinguished Military Graduate, and 10 cadets were in the top 10 percent of all second lieutenants accessed onto active duty. Ninety-seven percent of the cadets received one of their top three branch choices for duty and 65 percent received their number one choice of duty.

Thirty cadets were branched into the Army infantry; five were selected for aviation; five were selected as armor officers, six were branched engineer and 18 were selected to be Army logisticians. Other branches include artillery, Military Police, signal, chemical, medical service corps, and military intelligence.

Training continues for the rest of the cadets in the VMI unit. This summer, more than 100 will attend Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox, Ky. There, they will be tested and evaluated against other ROTC cadets from across the nation in platoon and squad field training exercises. The evaluations they receive will be the basis for accessions goals as they pursue careers in the Army.

Additionally, cadets from the VMI ROTC detachment will attend the Basic Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga., the Air Assault School at Fort Campbell, Ky., Cadet Field Training at West Point, the Combat Diver Qualification Course at Key West, Fla., and Cadet Troop Leader Training with active duty units stationed around the globe.

The department is also preparing to welcome more than 600 new Military Science Level I cadets this fall.

Eleven VMI cadets commissioned in the U.S. Air Force on May 15. Gen. Darren W. McDew ’82, the highest ranking active-duty VMI alumnus, administered the oath of office.

In the next few months, the new second lieutenants will proceed to their duty assignments as follows: William Barnett, network operations, Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.; Matthew Brau, Tiffany Haines, and John Wood, pilot, Columbus Air Force Base, Miss.; Brent Clark, space operations, Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.; Robert Davison, acquisition manager, Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass.; Justin Freeman and Timothy Hostler, intelligence officer, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas; Kyle Morse, developmental engineer, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif.; Parker Searing, civil engineer, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam; and Ryan Wilson, air battle manager, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

These new Air Force officers head to their duty assignments leaving VMI which McDew referred to as “forever their home.”
VMI’s Naval ROTC unit commissioned 28 new naval officers and 10 new Marine Corps officers in the May 15 commissioning ceremonies.

Nineteen of these officers will be heading to their first ships, where they will immediately take up leadership roles on board. These ships have homeports from San Diego to Japan and deployments from the Mediterranean to the South Pacific.

Three officers, having passed a rigorous screening process including a series of technical interviews, were accepted as Naval submarine officers. The foundation in mathematics, physics, and engineering that they gained at VMI will be vital to their success in Navy Nuclear Power School.

Four officers were selected to attend Aviation Preflight Indoctrination and Introductory Flight Screening in Pensacola, Fla. There they will learn the basics of aeronautics, aircraft systems, navigation, and water survival before beginning Primary Flight Training flying the T-6.

One officer was selected to attend the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training, and another was selected to join the Special Operations community and will be attending Explosive Ordinance Disposal training.

All of the Marine officers who commissioned through the Naval ROTC program or the Platoon Leaders Course will head to The Basic School in Quantico, Va. Three more recent graduates of VMI will attend Officer Candidates School this summer to earn their commissions in the Marine Corps before heading to TBS.

Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations, administers the oath to cadets commissioning into the Marine Corps during the joint ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kevin Remington.

Seventy-eight cadets from Air Force ROTC units at Virginia Tech and University of Virginia visited VMI for a Joint Field Training Preparation Day earlier this semester. With Detachment 880 serving as host, the cadets took advantage of VMI’s ideal mix of drill fields, leadership reaction courses, obstacle courses, safe roads and trails, mess hall, and classrooms to prepare for field training.

All were AS 200 – at VMI, 3rd Class – cadets planning to head out to Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., or Camp Shelby, Miss., for the training this summer.

VMI cadets scored very well in the day’s scenarios. Only 14 percent of the group were VMI cadets, but they received 42 percent of the awards. Will Johnston, Jack Smith, and Rachel Tanner all received Best in Flight while cadets Brian Colitti and Philip Jewett received Warrior Spirit awards.

All the day’s activities were planned and executed by cadets.

The day started at 8 a.m. when cadets were tested on their Field Training Manual knowledge, consisting of information each cadet must memorize to be successful at field training. After the test, it was time for drill, which is one of the most important parts of field training. This is an area VMI cadets traditionally need extra work on, as the Air Force drill is different than the Army drill they’re accustomed to using every day. This year, however, the VMI cadets excelled.

After drill, cadets moved to North Post to perform Leadership Reaction Courses. VMI cadets usually score impressively high marks in this event at field training, and cadets from the other detachments were able to enhance their skillsets in this area by working with cadets from VMI.

After lunch, the cadets moved to Nichols Engineering Building to learn dorm maintenance. Unlike at VMI, where cadets simply roll up their hays and stack their racks at the wall, at field training cadets must perfectly make their beds every morning. Also, at field training cadets roll their clothes, as opposed to the folding that is common at VMI. After dorm maintenance, cadets moved to the North Post drill fields to practice squad tactics and try out the obstacle course.

A joint formation of Air Force ROTC cadets from VMI, Virginia Tech, and University of Virginia passes in review at the conclusion of the Joint Field Training Preparation Day at VMI. – Photo courtesy of Air Force ROTC.
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, veterans status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. Every VMI staff member, faculty member and cadet has the right to work and study in an environment free from discrimination and should be treated with dignity and respect. VMI complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and cadets with the means for resolving complaints that this Statement has been violated. VMI is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Anyone having questions concerning discrimination or the application of Title IX regulations should contact 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, 2nd floor, Post Infirmary, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7667. For employment-related disability services, contact the Employee Disability Services Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7322.

Retirement Ceremony

VMI superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62 congratulates Col. Myke Gluck, head of the Department of Computer and Information Sciences, on his retirement. Also honored during the ceremony, which took place in Jackson Memorial Hall April 10, were (from left) Col. Gary Knick, treasurer; Col. Gordon Ball, professor of English; Col. Francis Bush, professor of economics and business; Col. Thomas Meriwether, professor of psychology; and Col. Patrick Looney, Naval ROTC commander. – VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.
Accomplishments Many Among 317 Graduating Cadets

By Chris Floyd

When Hannah Dickinson ’15 walked across the stage at Cameron Hall May 16, she was part of the one of the largest graduating classes ever at VMI. And it was, quite possibly, the first time she had stopped running since arriving on post way back in 2011.

To say Dickinson has been busy would be an understatement. In addition to the academic responsibilities that came with her biology major with minors in chemistry and psychology, Dickinson was also a member of the VMI cross country and track teams. That certainly is enough to keep any cadet hopping, but add to that Dickinson’s volunteer work, which included membership in Keydets Without Borders, and one can understand why she might want to slow down. For a little while at least.

“To not have to wear a uniform anymore, to not have anyone telling me when I have to wake up, I’m very excited,” Dickinson said a couple of days before commencement exercises.

While Dickinson, like most graduating cadets, expressed that sense of relief, she also said there is another emotion that comes with graduating from VMI.

“I definitely think there’s a sense of pride to say I did this,” Dickinson explained. “I can say that I put myself through the ‘uncommon choice.’”

And VMI reciprocates that feeling. Superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62 may not have been talking directly to Dickinson when he delivered his opening remarks to the 317 graduating cadets, but what he said certainly applies to her. He

Not Once, Not Twice, But Thrice

VMI Boxing Takes First Individual Championships and Throws in a Team Victory

By Chris Floyd

For the first two days of the United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association national tournament in Ann Arbor, Mich., the VMI contingent heard the questions “Who?” and “Where’s that?” more often than they cared to hear them. They aren’t hearing those questions anymore.

With three individual champions and one runner-up, the VMI boxers knocked off defending champion University of Michigan to grab the Institute’s first national title in the largest intercollegiate boxing tournament in history.

“That was what we were kind of wanting, the guys to do well and at least bring home one national champion. To have three national champions and then to also win the team title was amazing.”

“It was really satisfying,” echoed Liam Healy ’15, cadet in charge of club boxing and one of those three individual champions. “We’ve been working really hard for this for a while. People are finally starting to understand what we are doing down here.”

Healy returned to Lexington with the championship belt in the 201-pound open division. John Park ’16 won the 125 division title, and Armando Herrera-DosReis’16 outfought the rest of the field in the beginner bracket
When Morgan Robinson ’15 was in high school, she was already thinking about the U.S. Navy, but chances are good she never imagined the assignment she’d get. This spring, Robinson became one of the first female cadets in VMI history to be selected for training as an explosive ordnance disposal technician, a post within the Navy’s Special Operations division that was only recently opened to women.

And she almost didn’t come to VMI. Robinson had always dreamed of the U.S. Naval Academy, so when her father suggested a trip to VMI for an open house, Robinson was reluctant to go.

Getting out of the car after the drive from her hometown of Concord, Va., Robinson was still sure VMI wasn’t the school for her. But then the Corps of Cadets came pouring out of barracks for a parade while she and her father sat on a bench and watched.

In an instant, the teenage sulk had vanished, as Robinson found herself having a complete change of heart.

“Oh my gosh, I’ve got to go here,” she recalled thinking. “That’s all it took. … Ever since that moment out there on the bench, I’ve loved this place.”

On Friday, May 15, Robinson was one of just under 30 cadets to commission as ensigns in the Navy. More than 150 cadets in total commissioned in four branches of the service: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Approximately 52 percent of the Class of 2015 chose to commission.

Robinson and her fellow Navy ensigns took their commissioning oath from Rear Adm. James W. Kilby, commander of the Naval Surface Warfighting Development Center in San Diego, Calif.

Commissioning the nearly 100 Army second lieutenants was Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, 35th vice chief of staff of the Army, a four-star general with combat experience in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among many other locales.

The approximately 20 cadets commissioning as second lieutenants in the U.S. Marine Corps took the oath of office administered by Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations.


Like many of her Brother Rats commissioning that day, Robinson had been considering a military career for years before coming to VMI. Her father retired from the Navy after postings that included Spain and Italy, and her sister, Carrie Stone, is currently serving as a petty officer second class, stationed at Palm Beach, Fla.

Robinson will soon join her in the Sunshine State, as she’ll attend dive school in Panama City Beach, Fla., this summer in preparation for explosive ordnance disposal training. That training will prepare her to safely disable standard explosives as well as chemical, biological, and even nuclear weapons.

“She’s definitely somebody who’s not afraid to take a challenge and run with it,” said Cmdr. Randy Zamora, executive officer with the Naval ROTC.

Zamora said that to be selected for explosive ordnance disposal training, individuals need physical fitness, the ability to lead under pressure, and a strong propensity for teamwork.

“Leadership in that community in particular is not really about being out there on your own,” he commented. “It’s, ‘How well do you work as part of a team?’ They really emphasize that.”

Not surprisingly, Robinson feels VMI has prepared her well for one of the Navy’s most difficult and dangerous jobs.

She majored in civil and environmental engineering, becoming one of three women to receive a degree in that field this spring. Robinson described the major as “definitely the right pick” for her, adding, “In [explosive ordnance disposal], you use a lot of physics-based things, and we did a lot of that in civil.”

It was the cadre, though, on which Robinson chose to focus much of her time and energy. Even as a 4th Class cadet, she appreciated the military discipline of the Rat Line. “I loved it,” she said. “I ate it up.”

Once on the other side of the fence, Robinson embraced the role of cadre and mentor.

“That’s where I’ve spent all of my time and my focus, ever since I was a rat,” she said. “It’s the molding process. … When they come in as rats, they’re still high schoolers. You grow so much through the Rat Line. You grow into what your executive officer wants you to be.”

This year, Robinson served as executive officer of Bravo Company, eschewing a higher-ranking role in favor of spending more time with 4th Class cadets.

In the Navy, Robinson is looking forward to having mentoring relationships all around her.

“I’m getting ready to go through my own mentoring phase,” she noted. “At VMI it’s a one-way track most of the time. … For the Navy I’m going to have uppers and lowers. I’m excited about that. That’s a new dynamic that I’ve never experienced.”

Ensign Morgan Robinson takes the oath of office during her pinning ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kevin Remington.
As of May 1, the Institute’s comprehensive fundraising effort, An Uncommon Purpose: A Glorious Past, A Brilliant Future: The Campaign for VMI, had received $215.4 million in gifts and commitments. Since beginning its public phase last November, the campaign has raised more than $32 million in gifts and commitments, and it’s now closing in on its goal of $225 million.

The number of donors stands at 12,722. VMI alumni have shown their customary loyalty to the Institute with 7,728 of them participating in the campaign. It is interesting to note, however, that 4,994 or 39 percent of them are faculty, staff, parents, and friends, demonstrating how broadly based the VMI family is.

“The campaign’s successes tell me two key things,” said Donald M. Wilkinson ’61, the campaign chairman. “First, that the VMI family strongly endorses the Institute’s extraordinary effort to educate young people academically, physically, and morally. Second, they understand that to continue to do so, VMI must continually improve – to use a business term, it must continually hone its competitive edge – and that takes capital.”

James E. Rogers ’67 has been selected to receive the VMI Foundation’s highest honor, its Distinguished Service Award. Rogers, chairman of the board of BackOffice Associates LLC, a data management software and service provider, has served in several positions with the VMI Foundation and is vice chairman of VMI’s $225 million fundraising campaign. He served on the VMI Board of Visitors from 2004 to 2012.

First presented in 1969, the award recognizes alumni and friends whose service to the Institute, dedication to the mission of the VMI Foundation, and career achievements and distinctions are exceptional. Rogers will receive the award Nov. 11 at VMI during the Founders Day Convocation.

“Jimmy Rogers has devoted himself to the advancement of the Institute and the VMI Foundation for many years,” said Hugh M. Fain III, president of the VMI Foundation. “He also has taken on numerous leadership roles in which he has combined a keen business sense and an unwavering commitment to the Institute and its cadets.”

Rogers, who was president of SCI Investors Inc., a private equity investment firm specializing in venture capital and early stage private companies, from 1993 to 2011, serves on the boards of two public companies – Owens & Minor Inc. and New Market Corp. – and private companies including Mohawk Paper Mills Inc., Printpack Inc., and Service Center Metals Inc.

He started his career as a nuclear engineer at Virginia Power Co. in 1969 and joined James River Corp. in 1971. He later served as senior vice president of corporate development and group executive of the corporation’s specialty business. He was the founding president and chief executive officer of Specialty Coatings International from 1991 to 1993 and founding chairman of the board of directors of Customs Papers Group from 1993 to 1996. In 2003, he became the chairman of the board of Caraustar Industries Inc., a paperboard packaging company, serving until 2007.

Long involved in civic affairs, Rogers has held volunteer leadership positions in numerous organizations. He was the founding president of the Richmond Historic Riverfront Foundation, he is a trustee of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Foundation, and a former vice chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. He also is a member of the George C. Marshall Foundation’s Council of Advisors.

Rogers’ service to the Institute and the VMI Foundation has been extensive. He served on the VMI Foundation’s Board of Trustees from 1997 to 2004 and was the organization’s president from 2000 to 2002. From 2007 to 2012, he was the Board’s vice president. He also is a member of the Board of Overseers of VMI’s Jackson-Hope Fund.

Matriculating from Richmond, Rogers majored in physics and was a member of Sigma Pi Sigma, the physics honor society. A track and field athlete all four years of his cadetship, he also was a member of VMI’s Honor Court and was listed in Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities. After his graduation from VMI, Rogers earned a master of science degree in nuclear engineering from the University of Virginia. He also is a 1987 graduate of the Advanced Management Program of Harvard Business School.

Said Rogers on his selection, “I am truly honored to be following in the footsteps of some other great VMI alumni, such as Stan Navas ’41, who was responsible for my decision to attend VMI.”

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“On behalf of the campaign’s leadership, I extend thanks to everyone who has supported this critical effort so far. I also urge members of the VMI family who have not yet made a gift or commitment to do so and so help ensure a brilliant future for the Institute.”
spoke of the individual accomplishments of the Class of 2015.

“These accomplishments add to the luster of your class and the reputation of the Institute,” he said. “This is what I think makes the Class of 2015 unique: individual actions of young men and women that describe, [that] define the character of your class. I think you set an example for other classes to follow.”

Dickinson is one of those cadets whose exploits will be difficult to match.

She was named a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors and recently won an Air Force Health Professional Scholarship, which will help her as she attends Eastern Virginia Medical School in pursuit of her dream of becoming a doctor. For the last two years, she served as captain of the VMI cross country and track teams. The highlight of her career probably was her top-eight finish in the 3,000-meter run during the indoor season of her 2nd Class year, though this season she completed the Southern Conference Cross Country Championships with a time of 18 minutes, 27.98 seconds, topping her personal-best time by 30 seconds. At the end of the track seasons, Dickinson was awarded the conference's Mike Wood Graduate Scholarship.

While Dickinson says she will cherish those memories, along with time spent with her roommates, it is her work with Keydets Without Borders that she’ll remember as among her most meaningful experiences.

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After joining the organization as a 3rd Class cadet, she stuck with the program, serving as its president this past year. The last two summers she traveled with the group to Bolivia to help install water lines and VMI-developed eco-latrines in a tiny village. She also took the opportunity to do preliminary research on the health-care opportunities in that village and used her findings as the basis of her Institute Honors thesis.

“My experiences with KWB are the defining moments,” Dickinson said of her time at VMI. “I wanted something to help people; that’s what I feel like I’m called to do. I want to continue what I’ve been doing in Bolivia, helping people who don’t have access to good health care.”

She will get that chance. When she completes medical school, Dickinson will serve a stint in the United States Air Force, like her father before her, where she might pursue pediatrics and will surely get another opportunity to help the less fortunate overseas.

And she will never forget it started at VMI. “[The Institute] really did so much for me,” Dickinson said. “I think I have definitely grown in confidence the last four years. I will carry this with me for the rest of my life.”

“I’m thankful I came here,” she continued. “I would do it again.”

Two other outstanding cadets were honored during the graduation ceremony.

Robert Hardy Hendren, a biology major with minors in Arabic and French and a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors, was awarded the First Jackson-Hope Medal, given for highest attainment in scholarship, and the accompanying Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award. He also received the Society of Cincinnati Medal, for efficiency of service and excellence of character, and the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards that go along with that prize.

Wesley Cade Jacobs of North Carolina was the recipient of the Second Jackson-Hope Medal and the Col. Sterling Murray Heflin ’16 Academic Proficiency Award. An economics and business major, Jacobs was named a Distinguished Graduate with Institute Honors.

A total of 19 cadets were tapped as Distinguished Graduates with Institute Honors, and 43 more earned Distinguished Graduate recognition.

And valedictorian Henry W. Meredith counseled his classmates to preserve their friendships as they move forward in their lives, remarking, “You are strong and full of love and more than ready to overcome any failure.”
It’s a phenomenal challenge. The task is to arrange for seven competitions spread over 2 ½ days, with one of those competitions held in a remote area several miles from post. The participants, all of whom will require food and lodging, number over 300. Some will be traveling from out of state, and many will be towing trailers, each containing a most unusual, and surprisingly fragile, item: a concrete canoe.

No wonder VMI’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering hosts the American Society of Civil Engineers Virginia’s Conference only once a decade.

The conference, which was held in April both on post and at Lake Robertson, a publicly owned lake in the Collierstown area of Rockbridge County, went off without a hitch despite the immense logistical challenges, said Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering.

“We had lots of things to worry about but everything came together well,” Newhouse noted. “We had 14 schools here.”

The conference offers competitions in seven categories: concrete canoe, steel bridge, surveying, transportation, environmental sustainability, paper/presentation, and mystery quiz.

The six members of VMI’s concrete canoe team had an inside track to success: they were led by Quinn Ellis ’15, a cadet with years of experience on the water. Thanks to his experience working in a boat yard, Ellis happily took on the job of lead designer of the boat the team christened Lady Virginia. The small gray craft wound up placing second in the races portion of the canoe competition.

“It doesn’t look like your typical canoe, but so far it’s the most stable one in the competition,” Ellis continued. “You can stand up in our canoe,” added Sean Knick ’16, who served as project manager.

Knick explained that the concrete canoe team got a late start this year, thanks to a shortage of lab space. Once under way, though, the team assembled a supply list that included 500 pounds of concrete, recycled tires, and scrap wood from the mechanical engineering department.

“It’s a very durable canoe,” said Newhouse, who oversaw the team of six cadets. Working alongside Ellis and Knick were Max Makuch ’15, Morgan Robinson ’15, Kyle Volant ’15, and Jake Freeman ’15.

Newhouse, though, doesn’t take credit for the craft’s construction. “Our teams are fairly independent,” he said. “We just advise them. We think they get more out of it that way, and sometimes they learn from their mistakes.”

Learning from mistakes was a vital part of the experience this year for VMI’s steel bridge team, which completed its bridge only to learn that the structure was disqualified for not meeting one of myriad specifications.

The Keydets were hardly the only ones disappointed: of the 10 entries in the steel bridge competition, only two qualified for judging. The rest, explained Maj. Matt Swenty, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, either broke when a load was applied to them or simply didn’t meet all of the requirements set out in the 50-page rule book.

Swenty, though, wasn’t disappointed in his team, which was made up of 1st Class cadets Michael Souza, Matt Evans, Brent Schaufert, Matt Brau, and Michael Prifti.

“[The competition] brings together a lot of skills — some from classes and some not, such as the softer skills that just have to be acquired over time.”

Newhouse added, “Getting these projects done and learning from them — we consider that success.”

One of the hopes going forward, said Newhouse, is to get more cadets involved in the ASCE competitions before their 1st Class year, so the Institute doesn’t lose its entire team to graduation.

“We’d like to build a dynasty going forward so they get involved earlier and keep doing it for many years,” he commented. “That’s our long-term goal.”
Chris Livingston ’15 finished as the runner-up in the 165 novice class. In his bout, Healy earned a second-round technical knockout over two-time champion Kevin Bosma to earn his individual title and clinch the team championship for the Keydets. It was an especially satisfying victory for Healy, who finished as the runner-up during his 3rd Class year but missed last season’s tournament because of an ROTC commitment.

“I’ve been working to get back,” Healy said. “To win the title for myself was great, but to win one with the team was even better. “I just fought my fight,” continued the 1st Class cadet, who stung his opponent with an overhand right on a couple of occasions before the referee stopped the fight in the second round. “After one or two he was definitely hurt. I just followed up with that, and it was all she wrote.”

With that victory, VMI was crowned national boxing champion. And it brought more questions. How could such a small school, with only 1,700 students and 20 boxers on a good day, not only compete with but defeat these bigger institutions with pools of literally hundreds of potential competitors? “It’s always amazing to us how hard these guys work,” said Hinojosa. “We ask so much of them. As coaches, it’s humbling that they are willing to put themselves out there for the coaches and the team.”

“We’re blessed with a good team of guys that are focused,” added assistant coach Joe Shafer. “We’ve got a limited number of hours each week that the cadets can come down and train. It’s a lot of work we have to get done in a short amount of time. You’ve got to be disciplined, and you’ve got to have the tough mindset to just come in here and do it.”

A special dinner was held for the VMI boxers May 13, at which they heard another question: How do you top that? “We wanted to win it; we had definitely talked about winning it, but the thing we hadn’t really thought about was what happens when you win it,” said Hinojosa. “I think now, more than anything, the guys want to defend the title. I really expect big things for next year as well.”

Dickinson, a biology major, racked up accomplishments both academic and athletic during her cadetship, maintaining a 3.92 grade point average while becoming a four-year letter winner in both cross country and track. In addition, she has been heavily involved with Keydets Without Borders, a humanitarian group working in Bolivia each summer, and has served for three years as a biology tutor. She has been accepted into the Air Force’s Health Professional Scholarship Program and will enter the Air Force as a doctor after graduating from medical school. She plans to attend Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Three Winners at Undergraduate Research Symposium

A total of nine cadets gave presentations, and three cadets won awards for their presentations, at the Big South Undergraduate Research Symposium at Campbell University April 10-11. John Winalski ’16 won in the oral presentation category for biology, with a talk titled, “The Effects of Dantrolene on Nitric Oxide and Aromatase Inhibition in the Embryonic Zebrafish (Danio Rerio).” Winning in the oral presentation category for engineering/physics was Hunter Liu ’15, whose talk was, “Thickness Studies of Ionic Self-Assembled Monolayers Thin Films for Acidity Detection.” Matthew Tate ’15 won for poster presentation in physics. His topic was “Broad and Narrow Band Polarization Measurements of NGC 7380.”
Peer Educators’ Dog Therapy Helps ‘Bust’ Stress

By Mary Price

It’s safe to say that on May 2 VMI simply went to the dogs — if only for a couple of hours.

Enjoying the unusually warm and sunny spring Saturday were seven therapy dogs from TheraPets of the Roanoke Valley, along with their handlers and a steady stream of cadets who seemed delighted to see a collection of canines in the courtyard of Old Barracks.

The dogs, who were making at least their third appearance at VMI, came as part of the Stress Busters event organized by the Cadet Peer Educators, an outreach group of the Cadet Counseling Center. Not surprisingly, the Stress Busters event was held two days before the start of exams.

“The goal is to get cadets to come down, learn about stress relief options, and learn coping skills,” explained Capt. Cera Wadsworth, program director at the Cadet Counseling Center. The dogs, she added, have become a powerful draw, with cadets asking her about the event days in advance.

She added that therapy dogs, who must pass a rigorous temperament and behavior evaluation in order to be admitted to the TheraPets program, have been shown to increase motivation in those who interact with them.

The cadets who stopped by the Stress Busters event weren’t disappointed in the selection of canine friends, which ranged from Angus, a large and loving rottweiler, to Roger, a well-behaved west highland terrier who lounged royally on a red, white, and yellow afghan made by the wife of a VMI alumnus.

“This is much appreciated,” said Cody Damewood ’16. “This is the first time I’ve touched a dog since spring . . . [furlough].” For Damewood, the dogs were a big reminder of home, as his parents run a dog rescue operation and currently have 12 canines in residence.

“I love them all,” added Bridgette Pouliot ’16, who was chatting with Damewood at the event. “They’re all so cute.” Both Pouliot and Damewood admitted to feeling some stress about exams, with the dogs providing a welcome reprieve from nervous anticipation.

That’s just the kind of relief that Stress Busters is designed to provide, noted Killian Buckley ’15, who served as cadet in charge of the Cadet Peer Educators this year.

“A lot of cadets are separated from their families and their pets so it’s kind of a nice opportunity to help them relax, especially this time of year,” she said. “It helps them enjoy life a little bit more and probably be more successful on their finals.”

Stress Busters events have been offered for at least a decade, said Wadsworth, but attendance increased markedly once the therapy dogs were added.

She estimated that approximately 200 cadets attend each Stress Busters event, although attendance is easier to tally in Cocke Hall, where the event is held in December, than it is in the courtyard of Old Barracks in May.

Seeing animals “definitely normalizes being away from home,” Wadsworth noted. “It’s a nice, simple, basic interaction.”

Offering stress reduction events and programs as the academic year winds down is a vital part of keeping cadets mentally healthy, said Maj. Kristin Hoff, psychologist with the Cadet Counseling Center. She explained that stress tends to build as the semester rolls along.

“For college counseling centers across the country, April is a challenging month,” she said. “For whatever reason, rates of suicide are higher in April. Any programs we can develop to foster self-care and connection with others in the context of busy schedules are certainly advantageous.”

Petting a dog, while talking with its handler, may seem like an easy way to pass a few minutes, but Wadsworth sees much more going on.

“The nice thing about Stress Busters in the larger context of mental health is that it de-stigmatizes the topic of help-seeking,” she said. “The cadets are meeting people, they’re connecting, and they’re engaging with their peer group in a friendly and social manner.”

If cadets can do that, and take some of the stress out of exam week, Buckley and her fellow Cadet Peer Educators will have done their job.

“We want to help cadets succeed here and remain healthy,” said Buckley.
The completion of renovations to Cormack Hall marks a major milestone in the Corps Physical Training Facilities project, a $122 million investment in the physical fitness of the Corps of Cadets.

Construction crews worked seven days a week in May to have the facility ready by the end of the month, when the Department of Physical Education and NCAA wrestling were to begin moving in. Cormack Hall will also serve as VMI’s primary weight training facility for cadets and employees, as the Cocke Hall weight room will close for renovation once Cormack is ready for use.

The renovation of Cormack is one of three major construction efforts that make up the CPTF project, the others being the renovation of Cocke Hall and the construction of the new Indoor Training Facility. Cocke Hall is expected to be ready by the summer of 2016 and the Indoor Training Facility by the fall of 2016.

Scaffolding is in place on the south side of Cocke Hall in preparation for exterior repairs, and interior work on the 100 level is underway.

Work on the Indoor Training Facility continues apace, with reinforced concrete rising ever higher at the construction site, located across Diamond Street from Cameron Hall. A major operation took place at the site in April when crews installed a vehicular bridge composed of massive precast concrete pieces over Town Branch.

The indoor training facility’s architects, HKS and Commonwealth Architects, were awarded the Merit Award for Excellence in Architecture for the project April 16 by the Richmond chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Work is also underway to stabilize the historic Knights of Pythias building, moved to its current location on Main Street in October to make way for construction of the Indoor Training Facility.

Repairs to the interior, which had suffered substantial water damage, have been completed, including supports to stabilize compromised roof trusses, floor joists, and floor decking.

Work continued in May to install a temporary cover over the entire galvanized metal roof to prevent additional water from entering the building. Fans are also being installed to keep the building properly ventilated, and inspections will be conducted periodically to ensure that no additional damage occurs.

The building then will be maintained as is indefinitely, with no plans to renovate the building for reuse until current construction projects are complete.

To see more photos, visit vminews.tumblr.com, post date May 4.

As construction continues, the site of the Indoor Training Facility changes daily. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.
Championing Wellness

Tomlin Recognized for Efforts to Improve Employee Health and Fitness

By Mary Price

At first glance, Lt. Col. Kathy Tomlin’s office looks like that of any other hardworking professional. There are papers waiting to be filed, a desk that’s obviously filled with work in progress, two chairs, and a small table.

Near the small table is a yoga ball. It’s not an anomaly; it’s appropriate because in addition to her duties as director of procurement services, Tomlin serves in two health-related roles. She’s VMI’s representative for the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management’s CommonHealth program and director of VMI’s employee wellness program, an offshoot of the superintendent’s wellness initiative.

Last month, in recognition of her efforts to increase the well-being of faculty and staff, Tomlin received two awards, one for herself and one on behalf of the Institute. On April 14, Gov. Terry McAuliffe recognized Tomlin as an agency wellness champion. She was one of four individuals from around the state to receive the award, and the only one from the realm of higher education.

At the same ceremony, VMI was recognized as a DHRM wellness-certified agency. The Institute was one of only two four-year colleges and universities to receive the certification, with the other being Virginia Commonwealth University. VMI was also the only wellness-certified agency to have an employee recognized as a wellness champion.

While appreciative of the recognition for VMI, Tomlin was quick to credit others for the success of the employee wellness program, which was created in 2011 as an effort of the Employee Fitness and Nutrition Task Force chaired by Brig. Gen. Robert Green, deputy superintendent for finance, administration, and support.

“Our success is due to the support of senior leadership,” said Tomlin. “If they didn’t encourage participation, we wouldn’t have a program.”

The first Zumba and yoga classes were offered during the 2011-12 academic year. Now, approximately 90 to 100 employees per week participate in a wide array of fitness classes, despite ongoing challenges over where to hold them.

At first, classes were held in the pipe band practice room in Shell Hall. They then moved into a small building on Main Street that had once served as a grocery store, but that building was demolished to make way for the Indoor Training Facility.

This year, the classes have been held in Clark King Annex, and Tomlin expressed her appreciation to Col. James “Jimmy” Coale, head of the physical education department, for making this possible.

“He picked up where we left off, with not having a place to play,” Tomlin noted.

She continued, “We’ve listened to what people want. We have a very good program with lots of participation. We’ve hit right where we need to be, given our limited space.”

But VMI’s employee wellness efforts are hardly limited to classes. In years past, the wellness program has offered outdoor adventures such as tubing on the James River, kayaking on the Maury River, and hiking on the Chessie Trail. Last fall, a couch-to-5K program attracted around 16 participants, all new to running.

There’s also the employee wellness fair, held annually each April, which this year attracted approximately 200 employees. This event features healthy food and door prizes, along with a variety of health screenings.

“We’ve had great success with that,” said Tomlin. “We’ve expanded it as big as it can be for Marshall Hall.”

Looking forward, Tomlin said she’d like to see more beginner fitness classes offered. She’d also like to be able to open fitness classes to employees’ spouses and Institute retirees. Because of space limitations, those classes are currently limited to full-time and part-time employees of VMI and its auxiliary agencies.

Tomlin expects the space problem to be resolved once the renovation of Cocke Hall is complete in the summer of 2016, as plans call for the building to have dedicated space for employee fitness classes.

“We would like to get settled in our new home and see what we can do from there,” she said.
New English Minors Encourage Interdisciplinary Learning

BY MARY PRICE

A number of cadets who took part in graduation last month received concentrations or minors offered for the first time this year by the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies.

The new concentrations, which are earned by cadets majoring in English, are offered in literary studies, philosophy, rhetoric and writing, and art history and visual culture. Minors are the same as concentrations, except that they are earned by cadets majoring in other disciplines.

Several graduating history majors, for instance, earned one of the minors. This, noted department head Col. Emily Miller, exemplifies the kind of cross-disciplinary learning that the new minors were intended to offer.

"Most of the students in most of our classes are not English majors," said Miller. "[The minors are] a nice way for them to demonstrate that they have some expertise in these areas."

One of those cadets, Brian Boyle ’15, graduated with a major in history and a minor in art history and visual culture. Boyle, who commissioned in the Army upon graduation, came to VMI with an interest in learning about art, thanks to his mother’s love of the subject.

Boyle’s journey toward the minor began in the fall of 2013, when he took an introduction to art history class taught by Maj. Andrew Eschelbacher, then-assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies.

“He hooked me on learning about art, and I really enjoyed it,” noted Boyle.

Boyle then took two more art history classes in the spring of 2014, before joining Eschelbacher and Maj. Jeff Kendrick, assistant professor of modern languages and cultures, on a trip to Paris that summer. Approximately 15 cadets took the trip, titled Paris as Art and Text, and museum visits were a central part of the itinerary.

“That was cool,” said Boyle. “I got to see the art I’d been studying for the past year.”

This spring, Boyle was enrolled in a visual studio art class taught by Maj. Julie Brown, assistant professor of English, rhetoric, and humanistic studies. In that class, he and the other cadets were asked to create three works of art: a still life, a piece of abstract art and a self-portrait.

Miller explained that a connection between learning and doing is integral to each of the minors, not just art history and visual culture.

“With all of these minors, there’s a similarity: They study what the great artists or thinkers have done, and then they try their hand with their own creative talents and abilities,” she explained. “They study great writing and then try to write themselves.”

The new minors, which were developed in the fall of 2013, replaced three minors previously offered by what was then the Department of English: English, fine arts, and writing. Then, as now, cadets could also earn a minor in philosophy, but philosophy was housed in the Department of Psychology until it was moved to the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies two years ago.

“We’ve always had minors and concentrations in the department, because we’ve felt it’s valuable for our majors to go in depth in a particular area of study,” said Miller. “We also get a number of students from other departments who take a number of our courses.”

Boyle, for one, wants to get the word out about the new minors, so others can benefit as he has. He noted that he could have earned a minor in French if he’d been more intentional about his class choices earlier in his cadetship.

“Often times, cadets have no idea [about minors],” he said. “It’s best to start as a [3rd Class cadet].”
Cadets Assist with Earth Day Project

By John Robertson IV

Keydets without Borders pitched in during Natural Bridge Park’s Earth Day celebration April 18, when more than 100 area volunteers worked on projects that made a lasting impact on the park’s sustainability efforts.

Several cadets were there for the effort, putting their engineering expertise to work.

“We’re constructing three compost bins from used pallets in preparation for the Youth Conservation Corps to come follow up and move those to the final staging site,” said Sean Knick ’16, local programs director for Keydets without Borders. “Then we’re also building raised gardening beds. These are elevated platforms for growing vegetables and flowers.”

The work will enhance the park’s conservation and educational missions.

“The composting bins will be used to compost kitchen food waste which will be used as fertilizer in our greenhouse and raised beds,” said Sarah Rourke, the park’s project coordinator. “The raised beds will have a dual purpose to help grow herbs and vegetables for the kitchen and to be used in our environmental education programs with students.”

Natural Bridge Park is currently owned by a non-profit organization, the Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund, which expects to eventually transfer it to the state of Virginia to become a park. It depends on volunteer efforts like these to accomplish conservation goals.

“Volunteer support has been vital in creating new initiatives and improving existing conservation, education, and outdoor recreation features on property,” said Rourke. “Through volunteer expertise and help over the past year, numerous features and resources have been added to the property.”

The Earth Day celebration ties in perfectly with the Keydets without Borders’ mission.

“Everything that we do is centered around conservation,” said Knick. “Whether we’re talking about providing clean water or making composting bins, it all has to do with the environment.”

The Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund is a subsidiary of Kissito Healthcare, a Roanoke-based non-profit organization that works in the U.S. and around the world to improve quality of life. It was through a partnership with Kissito that Keydets without Borders worked to improve water quality in Uganda in August 2013.

“They are a health-care organization, but they’re also strong proponents of eliminating health-care problems at the root,” said Lt. Col. Tim Moore, associate professor of civil engineering and the group’s faculty adviser. “They got involved with partnering with engineers to solve water and sanitation issues.”

Kissito helps identify and fund projects on which the cadets’ engineering expertise can be brought to bear. The work at Natural Bridge is part of what looks to be a continuing partnership with Kissito on local projects.

“We’re really trying to expand and tackle local projects as well as projects abroad,” said Moore. “It really strengthens the ties with the community, and working on different projects is a lot of fun for the cadets.”

Cadets in the organization are taking a hands-on approach to developing lasting ties with local organizations.

“My goal is to build a constant relationship between us and local community organizations, to the point where we can go out every single year and build traditions,” said Knick. “I’d love to see KWB come out each year for this Earth Day celebration in particular.”

Personal ties to the historic park make the work at Natural Bridge even more meaningful.

“I’ve been to Natural Bridge a couple [of] times, since my father grew up in Rockbridge County. The county is like a second home for me,” said Knick. “It’s nice that I can do service for a place that’s really close to me.”

“It’s a feeling that’s shared by much of the community.”

“Restoring and maintaining Natural Bridge is important for people in this area,” said Moore. “It’s really about restoring Virginia history.”

Members of Keydets without Borders construct composting bins from used pallets. – VMI Photo by John Robertson IV.
VMI Foundation Hosts Benefactors Luncheon

By Scott Belliveau '83, VMI Foundation

More than 100 people who had established the endowments that support scholarships, professorships, chairs, and other funds dined with 93 cadets and members of the faculty and staff April 13 at the benefactors luncheon. Also attending the 13th annual event, which took place in the Hall of Valor in Marshall Hall, were the members of the VMI Foundation’s Board of Trustees who were on post for their annual spring meeting.

During the program, Hugh M. Fain III ‘80, president of the VMI Foundation, thanked the donors for their generosity toward VMI and for providing an “incredibly strong example [of support for the Institute] . . . over many decades.”

Harper Niver ’15 also spoke, describing the influence that private money had on her decision to attend VMI and how it had allowed her pursue excellence as a cadet. She also spoke of her plan to “pay it forward and provide another eager high school senior the same opportunity that was afforded to me — to take part in the VMI experience.”

She closed by thanking the donors present and told them, “With more and more deserving cadets finding the burden of a college education overwhelming, each of you have and will continue to be their hope.”

Harper Niver ’15 speaks at the benefactors luncheon. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Compost Project a First for VMI Living Laboratory

By Mary Price

A small pilot project undertaken by a sustainability intern last summer morphed into a much larger undertaking involving not only 20 cadets from four academic departments, but also a model of learning new to VMI.

The compost collaborative is the first undertaking of the Living Laboratory, a concept that’s been gaining traction rapidly in academia over the past several years. Maj. Jenny deHart, physical plant staff engineer and sustainability coordinator, said living laboratory projects are now underway at schools including the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and George Mason University. At a faculty lunch event held in late April, she described the concept as “a real life environment for innovative research.”

The compost collaborative began in the summer of 2014, when an intern working for deHart did the necessary paperwork with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for VMI to begin a small-scale composting project. The project was designed to test the feasibility of composting food scraps from Crozet Hall, which are currently trucked away. The compost could then be used to fertilize trees and shrubs around post.

By the beginning of this year, deHart had a plan in hand for an experiment in which cadets and faculty from the departments of civil and environmental engineering, mechanical engineering, economics and business, and biology would compost four days’ worth of food scraps from Crozet Hall.

In mid-February’s frigid cold, the cadets loaded 2,500 pounds of reeking, decaying scraps into four composting bins outside Hinty Hall. Three of the bins contained scraps mixed with a bulking agent, to supply carbon as a food source for the bacteria aiding the decomposition, while the fourth was intentionally left with no bulking agent, so it could serve as a control.

Over four or five weeks, the scraps would be supplied with oxygen through a ventilation system made up of perforated plastic pipes at the bottom of the pile — the “aerated static pile” method. Moving the oxygen through the scraps also serves as the means of stirring the mixture, which must be done on a schedule. The process would produce temperatures high enough to kill any pathogens lurking in the food waste, after which the mixture would be spread outdoors for three to six months to finish decomposing.

In the end, the cadets and professors agreed that many kinks would still need to be worked out before large-scale composting at VMI becomes a reality. But no matter the fate of the compost collaborative, the Living Laboratory is likely to continue. Proposed projects include a hazard analysis of the Chessie Nature Trail, an infrared analysis of roof leakage on post, and energy recovery from information technology closets.
This spring’s compost collaborative project was not unlike a jigsaw puzzle, with cadets from four departments charged with bringing critical pieces to the table.

Civil and environmental engineering cadets were asked to come up with a way to measure temperatures in the compost heap. To do that, they inserted probes called thermocouples into various spots in the compost heap and then set up a computer to take measurements automatically every 10 minutes.

“We had thousands of data points that we had to plot into a graph,” explained Jake Freeman ’15.

Very quickly, Freeman and his fellow cadets found that research can yield surprises. The temperature in the compost bins got up to a desirable 120 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit within the first week, despite outdoor temperatures that hovered near zero overnight.

“I don’t think they figured it … [would] get hot so fast,” said Gregory Oldland ’15.

The civil and environmental engineering cadets, who also included Damian Arnaiz ’15 and Andrew Rotermund ’15, had two additional responsibilities: creating a feasibility plan for waste management and designing an appropriate structure for a large-scale composting project.

“That involves true civil engineering – roads, slabs, structure,” noted Lt. Col. Chuck Newhouse, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, who worked alongside Maj. Paul Ackerman Jr.’93, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, to supervise the cadets’ work.

In the end, the cadets recommended that a large-scale composting facility be built on the VMI-owned Lackey Farm at Hunter Hill, across the Maury River from the Institute. That site was chosen, Freeman and Oldland explained, because it was the largest of the three suggested and because its location would keep the smell of decomposing food well away from neighbors.

Both cadets agreed that the learning experience they’d received from the compost collaborative had outpaced a classroom-based capstone experience.

“This was beneficial because it was hands-on,” said Oldland. “We were actually going to the site.”

Freeman added, “We got to see the big picture, how much is involved in solving a problem.”

While the civil and environmental engineering cadets worked on temperature and site selection, three cadets from the mechanical engineering department – Fleming Goolsby ’15, Ching-Wei Hu ’15, and Joshua Ford ’15 – were asked to design a ventilation system to keep the compost bins properly aerated, as well as to evaluate the viability of using solar cells to power that ventilation system.

Like many of their fellow cadets from other departments, the trio from mechanical engineering found themselves wishing for a longer semester as they sought to fine-tune their designs.

“They don’t have time to go back and apply what they’ve learned to fix those problems,” explained Col. Howard Arthur, professor of mechanical engineering. “It’s a very positive learning experience, from where I sit, but the students are frustrated.”

Arthur added that time constraints are hardly unique to VMI. “That’s not unlike what would happen out in the real world,” he noted.

Bringing a cost-benefit analysis of the project to the table was Brandon Goodwyn ’16, with some assistance from Renee Reeves ’15. The cadets, both economics and business majors, took on the compost project as an independent study.

 “[Goodwyn has] got a number of dimensions that say the project will pay for itself in three to 12 years, based on a number of variables,” said Lt. Col. Sam Allen, associate professor of economics and business, who supervised the cadets’ work.

The final group of cadets, biology majors enrolled in a capstone course taught by Lt. Col. Anne Alerding, associate professor of biology, worked to evaluate the effectiveness of three different bulking agents, which are typically added to compost heaps to balance the carbon/nitrogen ratio.

“We actually found that there was no difference in which one we used,” noted David Kniffen ’15. “We could achieve successful temperatures through all [of the bulking agents].”

Like his counterparts in civil and environmental engineering, Kniffen said he’d enjoyed a class that involved hands-on research.

“The lab time really stood out more than anything else,” he commented. “Some classes will take you on field trips off post, but nothing like this where you actually got your hands on it and you were actually looking for results.”

Agreeing with that assessment was Heather Magill ’15, who described the capstone class as “a complete 180 from what I’m used to.”

Alerding, meanwhile, found herself in the dual role of student and teacher, learning the science of compost as she coached her students’ work. This learning, she believes, is vital to growth as a scientist, and as a professor.

“I liked doing [the capstone project] because I learned more, and every time you learn more from a class project, it trickles into your research,” Alerding said. “Then, when I learn more in research, it trickles into my class.”
In NCMT Cadets Get to Shoot – Not Just Carry – the M14

By Chris Floyd

The echoes of rifles reverberated off the walls as 4th Class cadets squeezed off shot after shot inside the shooting range at North Post. Others lined up outside, eagerly anticipating their turn on the firing lines as the New Cadet Military Training program continued.

On a Saturday morning in April, the 4th Class cadets engaged in the marksmanship phase of their training, a program designed to introduce the former rats to genuine military training.

“It’s a great program,” said Alexandra Hastings ’15, cadet in charge of NCMT. “It actually teaches them better military skills than what they received in the first year of ROTC. And for those who aren’t going to commission, they actually get a chance to [learn these skills].”

The NCMT program is broken down into four phases: first aid, survival skills, land navigation, and marksmanship. The cadets spend time learning and practicing these skills in both the classroom and the field, with the program culminating in the 4th Class FTX in early May.

“Every Tuesday throughout the second semester, all of the 4th classmen form up on the bricks, and we give them military training,” said Hastings. “We teach them survival skills, building shelters, building fires. … We put them on a course, let them find points, learning how to use a map and compass. Then we also bring them up here [to the firing range].”

Before the cadets can ever hold a weapon, however, they have to undergo intense classroom instruction. They have to learn about the firearms, from taking them apart to the fundamentals of firing them to all of the important safety issues involved in shooting.

“This is the first time many of them have ever shot a firearm at all,” said Sgt. Maj. John Neel. “We teach them how to make the weapon safe. When they come up here, they’re not untrained.”

Neel has been part of the NCMT program since its inception in 2002, and he has seen it grow over the last few years. So has Sgt. 1st Class Carmelo Echevarria, commandant’s office battle operations and training sergeant, who was running the marksmanship training this year.

Echevarria noted that the range of weapons the 4th Class cadets are exposed to – the M4, the M14, and the M9 pistol – has increased, as has the number of rounds each cadet fires. And while marksmanship is, of course, an important part of any military training, it has an important, more subtle, meaning for the former rats.

“Today is the one time when the new cadets get a chance to fire the weapon systems found here at the Institute,” he said, referring to the M14 rifle cadets carry in parade. “This gives them the [idea] that what they have in their rooms is a real rifle and not just a parade prop. Hopefully, they’ll better appreciate this rifle.”

At least one of the cadets did. Thomas McKellar ’18 was with Company H when it took its turn on the range. While he entered the fray as an experienced shooter, having honed his skills shooting in his native Texas, he emerged from the smoke and the noise with a different take on the rifle he has been lugging around, albeit without a firing pin, since August.

“We spend a lot of time with these rifles doing a lot of things [but] not … shooting,” McKellar said. “It’s good to get to use the weapons for what they are designed for.”

Even more than that, however, McKellar found another reason to enjoy the shooting range. He and his classmates have been through a great deal together over the course of the school year, and for him, this was one more chance to revel in that special connection they have developed.

“It was really fun to be able to shoot with my Brother Rats,” he explained. “This is a good time to bond, and it gives everybody a chance to get a little bit of military training before moving our separate ways.”

Coached by cadet range safety officers, 4th Class cadets practice shooting in the North Post firing range. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.
New Names, New Faces, New Programs for Athletic Advising

By Daniel Stinnett ’07

When the Athletic Academic Advising Office changed its name to the Cadet-Athlete Development Office in January, the change reflected more than terminology; it was indicative of sweeping changes in the mission and mindset.

J.B. Weber, the assistant athletic director for academic services and compliance, and Sarah Keller, assistant director of athletic academic services, were new to their posts this academic year. They initiated the shift after spending fall semester assessing the services offered.

“We went from being reactive to being proactive and focusing on developing our cadet athletes’ skills they need to be successful in college,” said Weber. “We want them to be empowered self-advocates … so that they can be effective on their own.”

Previously, if a cadet athlete was struggling in a particular class, the solution was to send him or her to a tutor. Tutoring is still offered, with 15 part-time, content-specific tutors available, but it represents only a part of the office’s support of cadet athletes’ development.

“The coaches bring us really bright cadet athletes, … and if they’re struggling in something … it may be that they don’t know how to study, plan, or organize themselves,” explained Weber. Weber and Keller reach out to these cadets, offering individualized action plans for academic success. They are required to check in once a week and to fill out guided study plans.

“We have a quiet study room for them in Scott Shipp Hall,” said Weber. “None of this is tutoring or content support – its engagement, relationship building, and creating the opportunity for the cadet athletes to succeed.”

Weber and Keller are also recognizing cadet athletes who are excelling academically, creating a series of honors lists. These include the Cadet-Athlete Honor Society for cadets with a 3.0 or higher semester GPA, the Athletic Director’s Honor List for those with a 3.5 or higher cumulative GPA, and the Elite 18, which is composed of the top academic performer on each of the varsity athletic teams. Additionally, the team with the highest cumulative GPA at the end of every semester will now be recognized.

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Class of 2015 Gift

Three leaders of the Class of 2015 – (from left) vice president Will Luxhoj, treasurer Sam Trumps, and historian Jake Freeman – presents the Institute with the proceeds of the First Class Campaign May 14 during the graduation parade. With 93 members of the class, 25.5 percent, making a gift or short-term pledge, the gift totaled $25,420.15. Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62, VMI superintendent, and (obscured) Stewart Wilkinson ’12, VMI Foundation assistant director of annual and reunion giving, accepted the gift on behalf of the Institute and the VMI alumni agencies. – VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

50th Reunion Gift

Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62, superintendent, congratulates Thomas A. “Mickey” Finn, Class of 1965 class agent, during the presentation April 25 of the class’s 50th Reunion Campaign proceeds: more than $13.2 million in gifts and commitments. With 211 Brother Rats donating, the class enjoyed a participation rate of 88 percent, well over the goal of 80 percent. The campaign also beat its original fundraising goal of $12.5 million. – Photo courtesy of the VMI Foundation.
Track Teams Place in SoCon Championships

Individual Honors Mark Close of Season for Other Teams

BY CHRIS FLOYD

Paced by first-place finishes from Quincy Murphy ’15 and Aron Long ’16, the VMI men’s track and field team placed fourth at the Southern Conference Outdoor Championships held April 25 and 26 in Birmingham, Ala.

Meanwhile, Bria Anderson ’18 took first place in the long jump to lead the Keydet women to their best-ever finish in a conference meet, placing fifth at the SoCon Championships.

Murphy won his second straight conference decathlon title, adding this year’s Southern Conference crown to the Big South title he won last season. He tallied a personal-best 6,675 points to outdistance his nearest competitor by nearly 200 points. In the 10 events, Murphy finished no worse than fourth, earning wins in both the shot put and 110-meter hurdles.

Long captured first place in the 200 dash, crossing the line in 21.33 seconds. He also placed second in the 100 and, with Julian Jackson ’15, Davon Guerrier ’18, and Lamaris Reed ’16, ran a leg on the fourth-place 4x100 relay team.

Anderson leaped 19 feet, 6 inches, in the long jump to take first place and break the school record by nearly a full foot. She also joined Kerisha Goode ’18, Mia McClain ’18, and Yaa Agyepong-Wiafe ’18 in running to a third-place finish in the 4x100 relay.

Goode placed in two other events for VMI, finishing third in both the 100 and the 200, breaking the school record in the latter event with a time of 24.66.

VMI’s throwers enjoyed a banner day as well. Renee Reives ’15 placed in two throwing events, finishing as the runner-up in the shot put and taking fourth in the discus. Mary Grace Lemon ’15 was fourth in the hammer throw and seventh in the shot, while Logan Edwards ’16 placed fifth in the hammer. Emily Fulton ’18 earned an eighth-place finish in the javelin throw.

Julia Logan ’18 finished sixth in the triple jump and teamed up with Christina Hill ’18, Deborah Allison ’18, and Thireyona Legg ’15 for a fifth-place finish in the 4x400 relay. Legg also placed fifth in the 400, and Allison took eighth in the 100 hurdles. Logan rounded out the scoring for the Keydets with her fourth-place finish in the high jump.

After Murphy and Long, Avery Martin ’16 was the top finisher for the VMI men, placing second in the 1,500 with a time of 3:47.22. Martin was also a member of the 4x400 relay team that finished third. He was joined on the team by Brandon Hartman ’15, Andrew Gould ’18, and Jackson.

Jackson also placed fourth in the 400, followed by Hartman, who took eighth place. Murphy added a third-place finish in the 110 hurdles to his stellar efforts, while Guerrier was right behind in fourth place.

In other top performances, Daniel DeNijs ’16 was eighth in the 5,000, and Brandon White ’17 and HP Paulite ’15 finished sixth and eighth, respectively, in the 10,000. Sean Helmke ’16 was the sixth-place finisher in the 3,000 steeplechase. Reed placed seventh in the triple jump.

In the throwing events, Donovan Walton ’18 was the top VMI finisher, taking fifth in the javelin. Jordan White ’16 placed sixth in the hammer throw, while Grant Sanchez ’17 (discus) and William Condrey ’16 (shot put) both earned seventh-place medals.

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Eight members of the VMI rifle team were honored with All-Mid Atlantic Conference honors after the Keydets won the league's smallbore title at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, Mass., last month.

Jeremy Bolden '15 led the way, earning first-team all-conference laurels in both smallbore and air rifle. Connor Sullivan '15 and Kristen Voss '15 were second-team selections in both disciplines. Matt Lusardi '17 and Loran Dreelin '16 both landed on the air rifle second team, while Zachary Johnson '17 was named honorable mention in smallbore. Loyce Lightfoot '18 and Katherine Watson '18 were both named to the MAC all-freshmen team.

Dreelin led the Keydets, who placed fourth in air rifle at the conference meet, to the MAC smallbore title with a score of 560 points to finish third in the individual standings. Lusardi, with 553 points, placed fifth, and Bolden, with 550, was seventh. Andrew Hickey '17 and Johnson also placed in the top 10.

After winning its last two games of the season to finish with 11 victories on the year, just one short of the school mark for wins in a season, VMI's women's water polo placed Shelby Barkley ’18 on the All-Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference honor squad.

Barkley earned second-team laurels after scoring a team-leading 56 goals on the season. Scoring 33 goals in conference games, Barkley also led the team in shots and finished the season with six assists.

With Mike DeBlasio ’15 scoring five goals, VMI’s lacrosse team avoided a winless season with an 11-10 victory over the University of Massachusetts-Lowell April 26 in Scranton, Pa.

DeBlasio, who led VMI with 14 goals on the season, was named the Inside Lacrosse/Select Sector SPDR Player of the Week for his five-goal effort.

Six VMI players scored in the victory, including Wesley Sanders ’18, who found the net twice. Evan Windisch ’15 recorded seven saves to pick up the win in goal.

VMI’s baseball team opened Southern Conference tournament play in Charleston, S.C., Wednesday, May 20, as one of the hottest teams in the league.

The Keydets closed the regular season with five wins in their last seven games, including four of six against league foes. VMI, with a 20-28 overall record, 12-12 against Southern Conference opponents, was seeded fourth in the tournament and faced off with University of North Carolina-Greensboro in a first-round contest.

The Spartans were one of those teams VMI dispatched at the end of the regular season as the Keydets won two of the three contests in the final home series of 2015. Matt Winn ’15 and Will Connerley ’15 paced the Keydets in the two victories. Winn had four hits, including a home run, in the first two games, while Connerley was 3-for-3 with a double, home run, and three RBIs in the first contest. He belted another home run in the second game.

After defeating James Madison, VMI closed out the regular season with a pair of victories over Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C. Six Keydets had two or more hits in an 18-4 rout of the Catamounts, including Thomas Stallings ’15, who finished with a home run and three RBIs. Jordan Tarsovich ’14 and David Geary ’16 both had two hits and an RBI in an 11-6 victory, and Collin Fleischer ’18 added a home run and four RBIs.

“SBAC is a council of cadet-athlete leaders who have a direct voice to the athletic administration,” said Weber. “We’re doing a lot of programs with them – community service, partnering with the cadet counseling office to do mental health awareness training, and the athletic awards banquet. We’re engaging with the bottom and the top – if a cadet is succeeding, they’re not going to come see us, so we have to think about ways to engage with them.”

Also new to the office are expanded hours of operation.

“We’re open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., then 7:45 p.m. to 11 p.m., because that’s when our cadets are available. . . . We’ve shifted to fit their schedule,” he said.

Another focus is revitalizing this fall’s transition program for new cadet athletes.

“We’re going to start the very first day [the cadet athlete] steps on campus. . . . If you can help a new cadet to have success in the classroom in the first six months they’re here, it’s unlikely that they will struggle for the next seven semesters because they’ve had a taste of academic success. . . . If you can get them in that routine, they’ll be successful.”

Dr. David Diles, athletic director, likes what he’s seeing so far.

“JB and Sarah have brought contemporary structures and new support systems to this important division of our department. . . . The early results are demonstrating that we are achieving higher levels of educational success with greater resource efficiency.”
Army ROTC Commissions Nearly 100

VMI Army ROTC commissioned nearly 100 cadets in a joint commissioning ceremony at Cameron Hall May 15. The cadets were given the oath of office as second lieutenants by guest speaker Gen. Daniel B. Allyn, the 35th vice chief of staff of the Army. Allyn spoke to the cadets about their future as second lieutenants in today’s Army and the challenges and successes they would face in their careers. After he administered the oath of office, he presented VCSA coins to each new officer to commemorate the hard work and dedication they invested over their four years training to commission.

Following the joint ceremony, the cadets, their families, and the cadre moved to Moody Hall for individual commissioning and pinning-on ceremonies. Family members attached the rank insignia, and each new officer presented the traditional silver dollar to the individual rendering his or her first salute.

Seventeen more cadets will commission this summer and next fall.

Ninety-three cadets have been accessed to active duty; 15 will join the U.S. Army Reserve or National Guard. Four cadets received educational delays in order to pursue advanced degrees as future Judge Advocate Corps Officers or Army Chaplains.

Twenty-six of the cadets were awarded Distinguished Military Graduate, and 10 cadets were in the top 10 percent of all second lieutenants accessed onto active duty. Ninety-seven percent of the cadets received one of their top three branch choices for duty and 65 percent received their number one choice of duty.

Thirty cadets were branched into the Army infantry; five were selected for aviation; five were selected as armor officers, six were branched engineer and 18 were selected to be Army logisticians. Other branches include artillery, Military Police, signal, chemical, medical service corps, and military intelligence.

Training continues for the rest of the cadets in the VMI unit. This summer, more than 100 will attend Cadet Summer Training at Fort Knox, Ky. There, they will be tested and evaluated against other ROTC cadets from across the nation in platoon and squad field training exercises. The evaluations they receive will be the basis for accessions goals as they pursue careers in the Army.

Additionally, cadets from the VMI ROTC detachment will attend the Basic Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga., the Air Assault School at Fort Campbell, Ky., Cadet Field Training at West Point, the Combat Diver Qualification Course at Key West, Fla., and Cadet Troop Leader Training with active duty units stationed around the globe.

The department is also preparing to welcome more than 600 new Military Science Level I cadets this fall.

Air Force ROTC Commissions 11 VMI Cadets

Eleven VMI cadets commissioned in the U.S. Air Force on May 15. Gen. Darren W. McDew ’82, the highest ranking active-duty VMI alumnus, administered the oath of office.

In the next few months, the new second lieutenants will proceed to their duty assignments as follows: William Barnett, network operations, Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.; Matthew Brau, Tiffany Haines, and John Wood, pilot, Columbus Air Force Base, Miss.; Brent Clark, space operations, Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.; Robert Davison, acquisition manager, Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass.; Justin Freeman and Timothy Hostler, intelligence officer, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas; Kyle Morse, developmental engineer, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif.; Parker Searing, civil engineer, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam; and Ryan Wilson, air battle manager, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

These new Air Force officers head to their duty assignments leaving VMI which McDew referred to as “forever their home.”
VMI’s Naval ROTC unit commissioned 28 new naval officers and 10 new Marine Corps officers in the May 15 commissioning ceremonies. Nineteen of these officers will be heading to their first ships, where they will immediately take up leadership roles on board. These ships have homeports from San Diego to Japan and deployments from the Mediterranean to the South Pacific.

Three officers, having passed a rigorous screening process including a series of technical interviews, were accepted as Naval submarine officers. The foundation in mathematics, physics, and engineering that they gained at VMI will be vital to their success in Navy Nuclear Power School.

Four officers were selected to attend Aviation Preflight Indocdrination and Introductory Flight Screening in Pensacola, Fla. There they will learn the basics of aeronautics, aircraft systems, navigation, and water survival before beginning Primary Flight Training flying the T-6.

One officer was selected to attend the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training, and another was selected to join the Special Operations community and will be attending Explosive Ordinance Disposal training. All of the Marine officers who commissioned through the Naval ROTC program or the Platoon Leaders Course will head to The Basic School in Quantico, Va. Three more recent graduates of VMI will attend Officer Candidates School this summer to earn their commissions in the Marine Corps before heading to TBS.

Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, deputy commandant for plans, policies, and operations, administers the oath to cadets commissioning into the Marine Corps during the joint ceremony. – VMI Photo by Kevin Remington.

Virginia Air Force ROTC Cadets Train at VMI

Seventy-eight cadets from Air Force ROTC units at Virginia Tech and University of Virginia visited VMI for a Joint Field Training Preparation Day earlier this semester. With Detachment 880 serving as host, the cadets took advantage of VMI’s ideal mix of drill fields, leadership reaction courses, obstacle courses, safe roads and trails, mess hall, and classrooms to prepare for field training. All were AS 200 – at VMI, 3rd Class – cadets planning to head out to Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., or Camp Shelby, Miss., for the training this summer.

VMI cadets scored very well in the day’s scenarios. Only 14 percent of the group were VMI cadets, but they received 42 percent of the awards. Will Johnston, Jack Smith, and Rachel Tanner all received Best in Flight while cadets Brian Colitti and Philip Jewett received Warrior Spirit awards.

All the day’s activities were planned and executed by cadets.

The day started at 8 a.m. when cadets were tested on their Field Training Manual knowledge, consisting of information each cadet must memorize to be successful at field training. After the test, it was time for drill, which is one of the most important parts of field training. This is an area VMI cadets traditionally need extra work on, as the Air Force drill is different than the Army drill they’re accustomed to using every day. This year, however, the VMI cadets excelled.

A joint formation of Air Force ROTC cadets from VMI, Virginia Tech, and University of Virginia passes in review at the conclusion of the Joint Field Training Preparation Day at VMI. – Photo courtesy of Air Force ROTC.
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Retirement Ceremony

VMI superintendent Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III ’62 congratulates Col. Myke Gluck, head of the Department of Computer and Information Sciences, on his retirement. Also honored during the ceremony, which took place in Jackson Memorial Hall April 10, were (from left) Col. Gary Knick, treasurer; Col. Gordon Ball, professor of English; Col. Francis Bush, professor of economics and business; Col. Thomas Meriwether, professor of psychology; and Col. Patrick Looney, Naval ROTC commander. – VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.