

Joseph M. Spivey, IV

June 25, 2024

V.M.I. Board of Visitors
Mr. Thomas Watjen, President
Virginia Military Institute
P.O. Box 932
Lexington, VA 24450

Re: Executive Committee, VMI Board of Visitors meeting June 26, 2024

Dear Mr. Watjen, Members of the Committee,

As the “supervisory board of Virginia Military Institute” the Board has a solemn obligation to ensure the integrity of the Institute, ensuring visitors, employees, faculty, staff, the Corps, and Alumni feel well treated, respected, and welcome on Post. From this commitment, I request the Committee in conjunction with the Board, direct the Superintendent and his staff to conclude their dispute with The Cadet newspaper and The Cadet Foundation. It is past time to resolve the unnecessary and unfortunately frequently acrimonious relationship the newspaper, its sponsor, and the Superintendent’s office maintain.

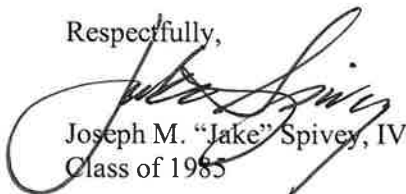
The Cadet. is an award-winning periodical, valued by its readers, and embraced by the Corps. Its editors and staff have been singularly focused on writing about the Corps, the Ratline, the faculty, athletics, and Alumni. It is entering its fourth year of publication, in print and online, providing a corpus of stories, cartoons, photographs, critiques, and commendations (Darts & Laurels) to amply demonstrate it is not yellow journalism, an adversary of the Institute, nor an enemy of the Superintendent or his office. The same cannot be said of the administration.

Lacking a permit allowing The Cadet staff to conduct their work on Post requires staff writers to work off-Post and segregated from the Corps. This demonstrates a persistent uncooperative attitude by the Superintendent’s office, a position contrary to good leadership. The Superintendent’s office’s intractable attitude over the Cadet Foundation’s association with The Cadet newspaper prevents the newspaper from reaching much greater success. The administration’s actions are a leadership failure. Principles of leadership success would have an administration promote:

- High standards. Where is the high standard in a four-year quarrel? Whose side loses the most, the senior’s or the subordinate’s?
- Adaptability. Which side reflects leadership? The side seeking news and opportunity or the tenaciously unresponsive side?
- Communication. Which side reflects a broader communication, the side publicly publishing its work, or the side that allegedly attempted to malign the other?
- Conditions for success. Why hasn’t the administration worked to make The Cadet newspaper the very best college student newspaper in the country? How helpful could a highly successful cadet-run newspaper be for recruiting quality underrepresented persons, ROTC-scholarship candidates, or exceptional athletes?

For the betterment of Institute, the Board must do the right thing and direct the administration to immediately settle its dispute with The Cadet newspaper and the Cadet Foundation enabling The Cadet to become an integral Publication in the Corps’ Clubs and Activities.

Respectfully,



Joseph M. “Jake” Spivey, IV
Class of 1985