



SUPERINTENDENT
VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

5 May 2021

Ms. Marge Connelly, Chair
Commonwealth of Virginia
State Council on Higher Education for Virginia
101 North Fourteenth Street
Richmond, VA 23210

RE: VMI Equity Audit and Investigation

Dear Ms. Connelly:

We are responding to your letter of April 13 regarding the ongoing “equity audit” of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). We respect your view that the current activities of Barnes & Thornburg (B&T) are aligned with the contract. We appreciate your willingness to convene a meeting with VMI on this subject. Please note that VMI’s request is not only to have input regarding any recommendations contained in B&T’s final report, but also to ensure that any recommendations are fact-based and aligned with overall Virginia educational policy goals. VMI looks forward to any and all constructive suggestions from B&T, as, we are sure, do the other institutions of higher education that will be contextualized and compared in the findings. Moreover, it should be clear, based on the Institute’s prior letters to SCHEV, that VMI is already implementing (and will continue to expand on) an aggressive slate of DEI initiatives for the Institute’s community. Nonetheless, for the upcoming B&T recommendations to have long-lasting value as well a common understanding of adoption and implementation, the auditor’s findings must be derived from accurate factual bases. Thus, VMI has asked (and continues to request) a meeting with SCHEV and B&T to review and comment on the accuracy of the final report prior to its release – whether to the Governor’s office or more broadly to the Commonwealth.

VMI makes this request on professional, moral, and contractual grounds. The SCHEV-B&T contract text anticipates and expressly references this direct dialogue. B&T itself said this dialogue would occur, recognizing, as a common sense measure, that they wanted to be sure of accuracy in the final product. Other audit processes administered by the Auditor of Public Accounts, the Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee, and others in the Commonwealth (and throughout higher education in America) routinely use this approach. Similarly, the accrediting processes of SACSCOC provide this approach consistently to thousands of educational institutions across eleven states in the southeastern United States inclusive of higher educational institutions (public and private) in Virginia. Last but not least, the serious nature of the allegations against VMI, and the far-reaching implications for all institutions under SCHEV’s umbrella, warrant a meeting to discuss B&T’s recommendations in advance of public discourse. For SCHEV to adopt (and then ask VMI to implement) a broad slate

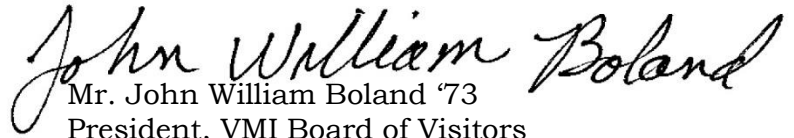
of suggestions for change – without a candid dialogue to confirm the recommendations are well founded and aligned with changes that are already being implemented or under consideration by VMI – is a recipe for failure. This conversation should not start at the conclusion of the audit – it is a fundamental and essential part of an audit.

We thus look forward to scheduling a constructive meeting in the next two weeks with key representatives of SCHEV, B&T and VMI. Thank you for your continued courtesy and respectful treatment of these matters.

Sincerely,



Cedric T. Wins '85
Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)
Superintendent, VMI



Mr. John William Boland '73
President, VMI Board of Visitors

cc: Ramona Taylor, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General
Peter Blake, Director, SCHEV
Thomas G. Slater, Jr., Esq., Vice Chair, SCHEV