

---

# **“Living in a New World”: World War One and the Decline of Military Tradition at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1916–1923**

*Daniel C. Newcomb*

## **Introduction**

In June 1916, the commandant of Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (shortened in popular usage to Virginia Polytechnic Institute or VPI),<sup>1</sup> Lt. Col. Sheldon W. Anding, asked professors to send him their thoughts on the value of military education at VPI. The professors who responded—J. B. McBryde, A. W. Drinkard Jr., J. R. Parrott, and J. S. A. Johnson—all shared a few common beliefs about military education at the school. First, they believed that all college-aged students, both at VPI and other universities, should participate in some degree of mandatory military training. Second, they connected the academic and post-graduate success of students at VPI directly to the system of military training and discipline students received through the institution’s corps of cadets. Finally, they all believed that military education encouraged good behavior and prepared students for citizenship. In sum, they viewed the military nature of VPI as both a positive force and an integral part of the institution’s mission.<sup>2</sup>

Seven years later, in the spring of 1923, a faculty committee tasked with studying student life at VPI had an entirely different opinion. Instead of viewing the military nature of the institution as a positive force, they viewed it, and the corps of cadets, as the sole source of the “evils” of student life. Unlike professors in 1916 who believed military training encouraged student success and good behavior, VPI professors in 1923 directly connected the problems of student life to the system of military education at the college. As a solution, the committee recommended that military education at VPI either be significantly reduced or entirely abandoned.

A few months later, when VPI President Julian A. Burruss met with the institution’s board of visitors, he concurred with the faculty report. In his “President’s Report,” he told the board that it was his belief that military education at VPI was “archaic” and that it stunted the growth of the institution, impeding the ability of VPI to compete with other state and

regional colleges. Furthermore, Burruss wrote that such a “despotic system” did not prepare students for “citizenship in a democracy.”<sup>3</sup>

Between 1916 and 1923, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute community dramatically reconsidered the nature of its institution. The central question was whether or not VPI should remain an institution rooted in traditional military education or become one akin to other standard colleges that were centered on academics. The First World War, rather than reinforcing traditional military education at VPI, instead provided the impetus for some of the first challenges to it. During the war itself, VPI played host to intense wartime mobilization during which the student body, curriculum, and campus were all mobilized in ways that directly and indirectly assisted the American war effort. But the wartime uses of VPI also consistently challenged and undermined the authority of the faculty and administrators on campus, revealing a growing gap between the military and academic natures of the institution. In the immediate post-war years, the changes wrought upon the institution, along with those in larger American society, combined with the arrival of new leadership in VPI’s administration, led to the wholesale questioning of VPI’s military nature and a permanent change in the institution’s educational identity. This article examines the evolution of those changes.

### **A Short History of Military Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute**

Even though VPI was not founded as a land-grant institution until 1872, the story of that institution began in 1862, when Congress enacted the Morrill Land-Grant Act. Passed in the midst of the Civil War, the act provided each state an allotment of 30,000 acres of federal land per senator and representative in Congress that could be sold or used by individual states to establish educational institutions specifically dedicated to teaching agriculture, mechanical arts, and military tactics. During the Civil War, these funds were reserved for those states still members of the Union; however, in the years after the Civil War, the Morrill Act was extended to southern states. It was during these years that Virginia was accepted back into the Union and then took advantage of the Morrill Act to found its white land-grant institution, Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, later renamed Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute.<sup>4</sup>

Like VPI’s southern counterparts—the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama (now Auburn University), Clemson, and North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (now NC State)—VPI was



The Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College cadets in this 1880s photograph are Cadet Cap. R. E. L. Aylor (left) and an unnamed cadet. The first uniforms used by VAMC were gray and were inspired by uniforms worn by Confederate soldiers and by those worn by keydets at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia (Harry Downing Temple Jr. Papers, Ms1988-039 Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech)

heavily influenced by the tradition of military education prominent in the South. Although the Morrill Act required land-grant institutions to provide some form of military education, it issued no clear guidelines regarding the level of that military education. While northern land-grant institutions tended to offer almost no military education to their students, southern land-grant institutions usually took the military requirements of the Morrill Act much more seriously. Historians like Rod Andrew Jr. have even suggested that land-grant institutions, like VPI for example, actually assisted the re-birth of military education in the South.<sup>5</sup>

There are two main reasons for the entrenchment of military education in the South via land-grant institutions. First, many of the faculty members hired at these new institutions founded in the 1870s and 1880s were former Confederate officers. Many of these men took their ideas and experiences during the war with them to their institutions. Influenced by the developing “lost cause” mentality, many of them pushed their institutions toward

becoming military-centered institutions similar to Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel. A second reason for the entrenchment was that many southerners, particularly those of the middle and upper classes, generally supported military-style education because they believed that it was vital to preserving social order. For example, in its 1906 course catalogue, the Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical Institute (a land-grant university known today as Mississippi State), claimed that the habits of obedience and adherence to lawful authority were promoted by the military education in which all cadets participated. Furthermore, as Andrew explained, southerners generally believed that military life at land grants also trained young southerners to assume leadership roles that were reserved solely for white men within southern society.<sup>6</sup>

Due to these factors, nearly all of the white land-grant institutions founded in the South were established firmly upon military grounds. On most of these campuses, as was the case at VPI, military education revolved around a cadet corps. All able-bodied students at the all-male VPI were required to be both students and cadets. Thus, student life was dominated by the military nature of the institution. Each student was required to live in barracks, participate in daily drills, and wear a uniform during school hours. Students also were organized into ranks based upon seniority and had to submit to a system of military discipline administered by upperclassmen and the commandant, who was usually a current or former military officer placed in charge of the corps of cadets. Tradition at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, then, was firmly entrenched. By 1916, 44 years after its founding as a land-grant school, VPI still bore a striking resemblance to the college of the past.

### **Preparedness: VPI and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps**

In August 1914, following the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the mobilization of massive armies throughout Europe, that continent, along with many of its countries' colonial possessions, went to war. Noticeably absent was the United States. Many Americans, including President Woodrow Wilson, viewed the war as strictly a European conflict and generally believed that the United States should stay out of direct military involvement. However, by 1916, with increasing financial ties to the Allied powers and with repeated German attacks on Allied ships carrying American passengers, it was becoming increasingly clear to many in Washington, D.C., that the U.S. could, eventually, become directly involved in the conflict.<sup>7</sup>

If the United States did become involved, the country obviously would not be prepared. In 1916, the United States Army, the largest branch

of America's armed forces, numbered just over 100,000 men, making it only the seventeenth largest army in the world. Of even more concern was that the army was ill equipped, undertrained, and underprepared. In early 1916, advocates of war "preparedness" in Congress, alongside the War Department and the Wilson Administration, took the first steps to put the United States on a more solid war footing. Their solution was the National Defense Act of 1916, and one of the first places they looked for solutions was America's colleges and universities.<sup>8</sup>

While the National Defense Act modernized America's military structure, laid the foundation to dramatically increase the army, and gave the country's president the authority to federalize the National Guard, it also created the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). From its inception, the ROTC program was designed as a voluntary program in which colleges and universities could participate by requesting the War Department to establish an ROTC unit on their campuses. Once a unit was created, the War Department supplied at least one army officer to lead each unit and instruct participating students in standard army tactics and knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

ROTC had two primary purposes in 1916. The first was to federalize most military training on college campuses. In this way, the War Department could ensure that the basic quality of military education students received was consistent and that all students who participated would receive the same standard education regardless of the institution they attended. Second, ROTC allowed for the rapid expansion of the army's officer corps. Students who completed their college education along with the ROTC would, upon graduation, enter the ranks as second lieutenants. If the United States did become involved in the war, the ROTC program ensured that there would be a large, highly trained officer corps ready to train recruits and draftees and eventually lead men into battle.<sup>10</sup>

During the summer of 1916, VPI Corps of Cadets Commandant Anding, who was himself an active-duty captain in the United States Army, was particularly excited about the possibility of VPI establishing an ROTC unit on campus. Just a week after Congress passed the National Defense Act, Anding sent a letter to faculty members, asking them to write letters in support of ROTC and military education at VPI. In his letter, Anding stated his belief that the most valuable department at VPI was the military department. He further encouraged President Joseph D. Eggleston Jr. to apply to the War Department on VPI's behalf for an ROTC unit. It was Anding's hope that with an ROTC unit, all students would be "under military control, and instruction where[ever] possible."<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned previously, the professors who responded were wholeheartedly in support of military education at VPI. James McBryde, professor of chemistry, wrote that he believed every student should receive military training because the success of the institution's graduates was largely due to the training they had received through the corps of cadets. Alfred Drinkard, professor of economics, stated emphatically that VPI was, at its core, a military school. He told Eggleston that it was the president's duty not only to support military education, but also to strengthen it. Establishing an ROTC unit on campus, Drinkard wrote, would strengthen military education by training students with modern military equipment that could prepare them for modern warfare. Even the self-proclaimed pacifist, professor of shops John Parrott, believed that all students should take part in military training. Parrott, despite his pacifism, told Anding that he believed VPI's military nature shaped students into dutiful citizens and morally sound men.<sup>12</sup>

When students returned to campus that fall, it seemed that even they supported establishing an ROTC unit on campus. Student columnists for *The Virginia Tech*, the campus newspaper, commented favorably on the ROTC program by highlighting opportunities it offered to students. In their estimation, ROTC not only would give them an opportunity to serve their country, but it also would afford them opportunities to advance the careers they would enter after their military service ended. Students also voiced their support in the debate halls of VPI's most prominent literary societies. In a November debate hosted by the Lee Literary Society, for example, a large audience of students decided overwhelmingly in favor of their institution establishing an ROTC unit on campus. The support of both faculty and students had the desired effect, and by the beginning of December, President Eggleston recommended to the board of visitors that VPI establish an ROTC unit on campus. The board voted unanimously to establish a unit that would begin to enroll students during the upcoming spring 1917 semester.<sup>13</sup>

When ROTC enrollment began in January and February 1917, a staggering number of students signed up, including more than 50 percent of all juniors and seniors. These students perhaps were enticed to join the ROTC because (1) it afforded them the opportunity to earn a nominal salary while enrolled in school, (2) they liked the idea of military service, and/or (3) they believed that the United States would eventually enter the war in Europe. A year later, in the spring of 1918, when the United States began sending more significant numbers of soldiers to France, nearly 90 percent of all VPI upperclassmen were members of the ROTC program.<sup>14</sup>

## The Outbreak of War

Unknown to VPI during January and February 1917 was that the next two months would be crucial in moving the United States into World War I. That February, Germany announced that it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare on shipping lanes in the Atlantic, putting both American citizens and ships at risk. That same month, the American government learned about a coded telegram from the German government to Mexico, proposing an alliance between the two in the event America entered the war. In return for Mexico's alliance and help, Germany ensured the return of New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona to Mexico. President Woodrow Wilson released the communication, known as the Zimmerman Telegram, to the media on February 28, an event that mobilized American support for war. On April 2, Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. Congress acquiesced on April 6 and the United States joined forces with the Allies.

The declaration of war had immediate effects on VPI. In the days following Congressional authorization, almost all athletic events on campus were cancelled in light of the uncertain wartime situation. Meanwhile, students occupied their time by organizing additional military drills under the guidance of the army ROTC instructors who had arrived on campus only four months earlier. According to *The Virginia Tech*, two-year agricultural students, graduate students, young faculty members, and young men in Blacksburg were motivated by the declaration of war and organized their own volunteer training company, which drilled alongside the corps of cadets at least three days a week. There were even some students who wondered whether or not it would be appropriate for the entire corps of cadets to leave VPI to enlist and offer their services to the War Department.<sup>15</sup>

Publicly, President Eggleston supported the efforts of students. Privately, however, he was deeply concerned about the effect the war would have on VPI. Eggleston's main concern that spring was that most students would enlist during the summer instead of returning to VPI. If that did happen, he feared that the college would have to struggle to remain open due to the loss of tuition revenue. To confront this possibility, he expressed his fears in his commencement address and implored parents to send their sons back to school the following fall. If their sons did not return, he said, it would place "an almost hopeless handicap upon them" because it was the duty of their sons "if not called to war, to go to college and prepare themselves for efficient citizenship."<sup>16</sup>

For Eggleston, attending college despite the war was the patriotic and civic duty of every VPI student. He stated:

It is even more necessary that the colleges be filled in time of war than in peace, because the colleges do prepare our leaders for every walk of life; and if war decimates the men of the land, it is essential that other leaders be prepared promptly to take their places. It is not consistent with a high ideal of national service to keep a young man at home, if it is possible to send him to a good college.

Eggleston assured students that they would still contribute to the war effort, even though the students themselves were not enlisted. Although Eggleston wanted to keep his students out of military service to benefit the university, he promised them that VPI would support the war effort in any way possible.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1**

<b>Enrollment at Selected Virginia Universities, 1916–1918</b>			
<i>School</i>	<i>1916-1917</i>	<i>1917-1918</i>	<i>Percent change between 1916/1917 and 1017/1918</i>
Virginia Polytechnic Institute	533	519	-3%
Virginia Military Institute	406	584	+44%
University of Virginia	418	313	-25%
College of William and Mary	276	204	-26%

Data taken from Michael Faughnan, “You’re in the Army Now: The Students’ Army Training Corps at Selected Virginia Universities in 1918,” PhD dissertation, College of William and Mary (2008), 40, and Clara B. Cox and Jenkins M. Robertson, “Enrollments,” *History and Historical Data of Virginia Tech*, [www.unirel.vt.edu/history/students\\_alumni/enrollments.html](http://www.unirel.vt.edu/history/students_alumni/enrollments.html).

Eggleston’s concern was not unique. University presidents and administrators across the nation worried that they would be forced to close their doors if too many of their students enlisted. Fortunately for Eggleston, VPI experienced little attrition that summer, particularly when compared with other Virginia institutions. When students returned in the fall, enrollment had fallen only by 3 percent, whereas enrollment at the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary fell by around 25 percent. In fact, while VPI’s enrollment stayed roughly the same, the only major institution to experience an increase was Virginia Military



Institute, where enrollment expanded by 44 percent. It is possible that both VPI and VMI were better protected from wartime loss of enrollment due to the military nature of both institutions. Since the two schools already offered military training, many underclassmen may have decided to return in the hopes of becoming officers upon graduation. Even though 64 VPI students, almost all of them juniors, left VPI to enlist during the summer of 1917, Eggleston's fear of declining enrollment was not realized when students returned in the fall.<sup>18</sup>

### **“A small cog in the machine”: Wartime Uses of VPI**

When students returned to VPI during the fall of 1917, enthusiasm for war pervaded the campus. Patriotic red, white, and blue replaced the institution's maroon and orange colors at student dances; war training continued to be introduced; and students received weekly war updates in the pages of the campus newspaper. President Eggleston, sticking to his course of publicly embracing the war, implored incoming freshmen to do their part in helping VPI assist the war effort. He urged freshmen to cease wasteful spending and to use their time wisely by preparing both their bodies and minds for war.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, the divide between the military and academic sides of VPI was beginning to grow. Even though the United States was now at war with Germany, there continued to be a large and vocal anti-war movement throughout the country. Among the loudest voices for isolationism were women and college professors. One such professor was VPI's J. R. Parrott, who had written Commandant Anding and President Eggleston just a year before, in June 1916, about his support for ROTC and military education at VPI. While Parrott supported military education during peacetime, his opinions were starkly different during wartime. For Parrott, his support of military education was rooted in the idea that it helped to maintain order and instilled good character in students. But when military education during wartime meant training his students to fight on the battlefields of France, that support changed completely.<sup>20</sup>

In late October, a visiting minister to VPI's campus delivered a sermon in support of the American war effort. Within his sermon, the minister insinuated that anti-war advocates, particularly isolationists and pacifists, were not patriotic Americans. Parrot, who was himself a pacifist, took to paper to write his thoughts about the sermon and the war to President Eggleston. In his letter, which he titled “A Little Preachment from the Pew to the Pulpit,” Parrot made it clear that he believed the war was, at its core, the just punishment God was giving Europe. In his stated opinion, it would

have been best if the United States had kept out of the war to avoid God's wrath. He blamed U.S. involvement on "the Morgan money and the munition crowd" (mainly manufacturing owners and preparedness advocates), who were "worked up by the jingoists" and their extreme and aggressive patriotism. Now that the country was directly involved, Parrott wrote, the war would not end "till this proud, rich United States is thoroughly humbled and on her knees, not to Germany, but to Almighty God." Parrott closed by writing that the sooner the United States was humbled in the war, "the better." When Eggleston responded to Parrott, he was characteristically guarded. While the president admitted that he was not a strong supporter of the war, he wrote that it was the duty of VPI and American citizens to do everything they could to help win it.<sup>21</sup>

Another indication of growing differences between the academic and military sides of campus, particularly between the faculty and cadets, can be seen in how professors responded to increasing coverage of the war in the campus newspaper. During the fall of 1917, student editors at *The Virginia Tech* added two pages to the newspaper to cover more war stories. The additional war coverage drew several complaints from some faculty members who wanted to see more local and college news instead of national and international wartime stories, a feature that was not present in any previous campus papers. Responding to the complaints, the student editors wrote on January 24, 1918, that it was their patriotic duty to cover the war. They claimed that the majority of their readers, primarily students, wanted to be presented with "America's standpoint in this great war" and wanted to know what was "being done for the country and her fighting men." The editors acknowledged that the War Department sent many of the articles published about the war. Including these articles, the editors said, was the main way *The Virginia Tech* could help mobilize campus opinion and support for the war. This, they said, made *The Virginia Tech* a vital, yet "small wheel in the machinery of America" that was working for victory.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, as the bulk of American troops arrived in France during the spring of 1918, the War Department continued to devise ways to rapidly mobilize millions more men for combat. As with ROTC, the War Department looked to American colleges for solutions. In April 1918, the department announced plans to use land-grant colleges, VPI among them, to provide special wartime training to detachments of working class men during the summer. Following VPI's commencement, the War Department billeted more than 220 men, mostly from manufacturing plants in Ohio, on campus to receive training from the faculty. For two months, VPI's professors were asked to train these men in blacksmithing, mechanics, carpentry, machinery,

construction, and wireless communication, which were considered useful skills for the battlefield when these men were shipped to France that fall.<sup>23</sup>

When this first detachment left for France, a second detachment of 225 men, mostly working class men from Washington D.C., arrived at VPI to receive the same training before students returned to campus in September. Through this program, the War Department effectively turned VPI into a training camp. First, the program utilized the physical structures of campus as barracks for men as they trained to enter military service. Second, and most importantly, the program turned the faculty, along with their knowledge and instruction, into a weapon by requiring them to educate and train men, who were not VPI students, in fields that were deemed militarily useful by the War Department.<sup>24</sup>

A second, more ambitious plan to use American colleges to mobilize for war was unveiled by the War Department that spring: the Students Army Training Corps (SATC). Similar to the summer training detachments sent to VPI during summer 1918, the SATC was administered by the department and utilized college campuses to train for military service young drafted men who were college-aged but not enrolled in an institution of higher education. Unlike the summer detachments that only targeted vocational schools like VPI, however, the SATC program eventually involved more than 600 institutions, including VPI. The program essentially federalized these institutions, keeping administrators and faculty members in place to govern and run their institutions in the name of the United States War Department. In return, colleges would receive detachments of draftees to house, feed, and train on their campuses with the promise that the War Department would foot the bill. The hope was that the SATC would be mutually beneficial. The draftees sent to campuses would help colleges who had lost large numbers of students to enlistment, and it would also help the War Department add to the officer corps by giving drafted men some degree of college education while training them for war.<sup>25</sup>

The draftees sent to VPI assumed the novel status of student-soldiers. They were subject to the military discipline of their army commanders and were required to follow all army regulations. Yet, they were also considered partially to be VPI students subject to the institution's regulations and discipline within their academic world. However, authority over all military matters on campus was given to ROTC and SATC commanders assigned to VPI. While academic aspects of the institution were left to the control of administrators and faculty, the SATC required VPI to make curricular changes that aligned with wartime needs and technologies. In a circular letter sent to Eggleston on September 18, the War Department informed him that

VPI was required to introduce courses on “military law and practice, hygiene and sanitation, surveying, and map-making.” Additionally, Eggleston was informed that VPI needed to offer a “War Issues Course,” as outlined by the War Department, that would teach a “sympathetic understanding” for the reasons why the United States was fighting, essentially requiring VPI to become an agent in the government’s campaign to win support at home for the war.<sup>26</sup>

The War Department assured Eggleston that these curricular changes were not meant to “deaden the initiative” of VPI or its faculty. Instead, they were meant to ensure that every SATC unit received the same collegiate and military education. These changes, however, made many professors, as well as Eggleston, unsure of where military authority ended and where academic authority began. When the new courses were introduced or old courses were modified to meet specific military needs, it was unclear whether or not military leaders on campus had the authority to intervene. Even more complicated was the fact that the institution already offered its own form of military education through the corps of cadets. Eggleston, among others, was understandably confused over whether the corps and military education offered by VPI would also be transferred to the authority of the ROTC and SATC programs and commanders on campus.<sup>27</sup>

Potential problems with the SATC were identified by the War Department as the program went into effect. Maj. John Skuse, the SATC commander assigned to VPI, and President Eggleston both received a memorandum detailing rules required by the War Department. First, to avoid serious problems between military and academic authority on campus, Skuse and Eggleston should maintain constant contact with each other. Since the SATC was an unprecedented federal program, the War Department believed that solutions to unforeseen problems would best be solved by cooperation between SATC and university officials. Second, the department reminded Eggleston that VPI was contractually obligated to overhaul student and campus schedules, methods of instruction, housing, dining, and the campus social system to align with military requirements. Finally, the department warned both men that problems on campus might arise between academic and military authority. However, the memorandum continued, solutions to these disagreements might have to be “unsympathetically approached” as VPI “slowly assimilated” into its wartime role.<sup>28</sup>

When the new semester began on October 1, 1918, VPI and SATC officials held a ceremony on the parade grounds (today’s Drillfield) at the center of VPI’s campus. The event was both official and symbolic. Officially, it was held for more than 600 young men, both draftees and many

VPI students, to take the oath of allegiance and formally join the army. Symbolically, according to one student, it was the moment when VPI

lost its individuality, and became a small but efficient cog in a powerful organization [the United States war effort]. The old, dearly beloved blue and gray [VPI's institutional uniform] vanished ... and its place was taken by a more modern, even more symbolic khaki and olive drab.

In addition to the regular student population of 477 men, the SATC brought an additional 650 uniformed student-soldiers to campus. With nearly all students voluntarily in ROTC and some others compelled to join the SATC, VPI no longer looked or felt like it once did; instead, it looked and felt like a training ground.<sup>29</sup>

In the weeks following the ceremony, the nature of the SATC and the power of the War Department still remained unclear. On September 4, a mere three days after the ceremony, Eggleston tried to clear misunderstandings about the authority of the department. One of his main concerns was that federal authority would trump institutional authority in the matter of African-American men training with SATC units. While the War Department challenged traditions at VPI in a number of ways, integration was not one that any War Department official had planned. Later that day, the department responded to Eggleston, telling him that no white institution would be required to accept black students. Instead, black institutions were being required to establish SATC units where black men would be sent for training.<sup>30</sup>

Eggleston was not the only person confused about what the SATC meant for VPI. Parents, too, expressed concern about how the program would affect the education of their sons. Even before the semester began, in early August, Eggleston received a steady stream of letters from parents on the subject. One of those parents was William Jeffreys, a member of the Virginia Senate from Mecklenburg County. Jeffreys wrote Eggleston on August 10, 1918, asking if he could obtain draft deferments for his two sons. The state senator wanted to know if his sons becoming students at VPI and, subsequently, joining the SATC would be enough for them to immediately avoid the draft. Eggleston responded that Jeffreys' sons, since they were students and not simply SATC student-soldiers, would be placed in a deferred class within the SATC that would allow them to complete their education before they were forced into service.<sup>31</sup>

Other parents, however, did not want their sons participating in any kind of military training or service. One such parent was W. T. Goodloe,

who wrote Eggleston on October 8, asking if his son could resign from VPI and return home. Goodloe explained that his son had entered VPI to receive a traditional collegiate education, believing that his only exposure to military training would be that which was required by VPI. With the changes underway on campus, Goodloe continued, he thought it best for his son to return home since he was only seventeen and, thus, was not eligible for the draft.<sup>32</sup>

Reflecting on the growing divide between the institution and the military, Eggleston wrote Goodloe, agreeing with the parent that it would be a good idea for his son to leave VPI and return home. Revealing his disillusionment with the SATC, Eggleston lamented that VPI had been “compelled to subordinate everything here to the wishes of Washington officials.” Further, he frankly told Goodloe, he believed it would take VPI “years to recover from present conditions.” Clearly, Eggleston believed that the SATC was not only hampering the institution’s core mission and identity, but he also believed that the SATC could potentially destroy that mission and identity for years to come.<sup>33</sup>

The confusion over military authority versus institutional authority because of the SATC program was, perhaps, compounded by the fact that it ended as quickly as it began. After the American-led fall offensives at the Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and the Meuse-Argonne on the Western Front, Germany finally agreed to an armistice on November 11, 1918, effectively ending the costly four-year struggle. With the war over, Congress and the War Department saw little reason to continue supporting the SATC program and the colleges operating it. Since the SATC was primarily designed to rapidly train young men for military service and not to support colleges, federal officials decided that the SATC should be terminated as quickly as possible. On November 26, just two weeks after the armistice, the War Department informed SATC institutions that the contracts they signed with the department would be adjusted and that the institutions should completely demobilize their SATC units by January 1, 1919.<sup>34</sup>

This news infuriated Eggleston. He responded to the War Department the next day, angrily writing to E. K. Hall, business director of the Committee on Education and Special Training within the War Department, reminding him that the contract VPI had signed stated that the SATC would be continued through July 30, 1919. Furthermore, the president reminded Hall that the contract had required VPI to make long-term arrangements and investments in campus infrastructure to accommodate the SATC unit for the rest of the year. Eggleston made it clear to Hall that he believed the War Department was obligated to fulfill the financial promises it had

made to VPI and its students. He further advised that discontinuing the SATC quickly would put both VPI and its students under extreme hardship. Eggleston further stated that the rapid SATC demobilization would be “an injustice to this institution and the students.”<sup>35</sup>

Eggleston’s plea was ignored. By January 1, 1919, the VPI SATC, which had only existed for three months, was completely dismantled. After years of struggling with the Virginia House of Delegates to attain funding for VPI and dealing with an upsurge in student misbehavior toward the end of the war, the demobilization of the SATC was the last straw for Eggleston. On January 24, to the surprise of the VPI community, President Eggleston submitted his resignation to the board of visitors. Though he offered no reason for his departure, his private correspondence made it clear that his decision was facilitated by his dissatisfaction over how VPI was treated and used by the War Department in the last year of the war. He believed that the War Department had abused VPI and that the SATC was, in the end, nothing more than a “dismal failure.”<sup>36</sup>

### **“An Archaic and Despotic Institution”: Post-War Challenges to Military Education at VPI**

With Eggleston’s departure, the task of putting VPI on a postwar footing fell to the incoming president, Julian Ashby Burruss, a graduate of VPI and former president of Virginia’s State Normal and Industrial School for Women.<sup>37</sup> Burruss embraced the post-war possibilities for change at VPI rather than resisted them. He believed that the United States and the world at large had changed dramatically during the war. In his opinion, if VPI wanted to remain relevant in the post-war world, the institution would have to change as well.

In the first months of his presidency, Burruss began a fact-finding mission to assess the administrative structure and the curriculum of the institution. What he found disappointed him. In a letter to his friend, Dr. William E. Dodd, a professor at the University of Chicago, Burruss lamented the military and academic structure of VPI, writing that he could not “imagine a more unsatisfactory program than our students are required to follow here.” Burruss put his findings in a multi-page report to the board of visitors that called for a fundamental reorganization of the school’s curriculum and institutional goals.<sup>38</sup>

The first area Burruss concentrated on changing was that of the curriculum. Burruss’s plan proposed eliminating low-performing courses (those with low student enrollment) and restructuring those that had not yet adapted to the technological advances made during the war. In fact, some

of Burruss's changes aligned well with some of the curricular changes that had occurred at VPI to accommodate the SATC. Thus, he opted to continue many of these courses. His curriculum restructuring left the institution more heavily focused on agriculture and the sciences at the expense of military education. He also expanded curricular offerings at VPI by creating new concentrations within programs that allowed students to specialize in particular fields. Between 1919 and 1922 alone, Burruss expanded undergraduate curricula from only fifteen courses of study to a total of twenty-two. These curricular changes were in line with his main belief that the war had called for VPI to become a more "standard university." In other words, it should be one primarily focused on academics rather than military instruction.<sup>39</sup>

This belief led Burruss to call for changes in a second area: military education. In his "Report to the Board of Visitors" in the summer of 1920, he called for the board to consider changes in VPI's military requirements, particularly to reducing the number of hours students spent in military training. In his report, Burruss pointed to the fact that VPI required students to complete more hours of military training than almost any other college in the United States, with the notable exceptions of the military academies. Instead of believing that military training supported student success at VPI, Burruss believed that it reduced the quality of student work. Further, he feared that it impeded the school's ability to compete with other state and regional higher institutions for students.

While the faculty agreed with Burruss's reasoning, the commandant of the VPI Corps of Cadets was, predictably, displeased. Commandant C. C. Carson, who had replaced the former commandant, Sheldon Anding, during the war, notified the War Department of Burruss's proposed changes to the military identity of the institution. Carson warned the federal department that Burruss's proposals would take VPI off the department's list of Distinguished Colleges and would fundamentally undermine military education. Burruss responded frankly to Carson's notification by informing him that VPI students were already completing 50 percent more time in military training than was required to be placed on the War Department's Distinguished Colleges list. Despite Commandant Carson's objections, the board of visitors approved the president's request to reduce the number of hours students were required to complete military training. However, board members maintained that every student would still be required to complete a military education through the corps of cadets for all four years of their education. Burruss's successful move to reorganize military education at VPI deepened the divide between the academic and military spheres on campus.<sup>40</sup>



At the same time Burruss was reorganizing VPI during the first years of his administration, the college was experiencing an unprecedented rise in enrollment in the immediate post-war years. During the entirety of Eggleston's administration directly preceding that of Burruss, enrollment rarely exceeded 500 students. However, by the 1919–1920 school year, barely 10 months after the armistice, enrollment skyrocketed to 757 students. Two school years later, that figure rose to a total of 975 students.<sup>41</sup>

**Table 2**

<b>Virginia Polytechnic Institute Student Enrollment, 1916–1924</b>							
<i>1916-17</i>	<i>1917-18</i>	<i>1918-19</i>	<i>1919-20</i>	<i>1920-21</i>	<i>1921-22</i>	<i>1922-23</i>	<i>1923-24</i>
533	519	477	757	798	975	977	1,110

Table created from data taken from Cox and Robertson, "Enrollments."

The increase in VPI's enrollment in the post-war years likely resulted from a number of causes. First, a number of students left VPI during the war before they finished their education. When many of these men finished military service in 1919, they returned to Blacksburg to complete their education. Second, in 1918, Congress created the Soldier's Rehabilitation Act, which allotted federal funds for veterans to attend vocational colleges and universities. By 1920, at least 54 veterans who had not previously attended VPI were enrolled as students through this program. Finally, a number of men received an education at VPI through their participation in the SATC. After the program was terminated, some of these men may have enrolled as regular students in 1919 and 1920.<sup>42</sup>

Increasing student enrollment at VPI, however, also coincided with rising student misbehavior and, incidentally, may have even facilitated misbehavior. This problem led President Burruss and the VPI faculty to take their most ardent stance against military education at the school. The main source of these behavior incidents related primarily to hazing in the corps of cadets. Hazing then, as now, usually meant the imposition of strenuous or humiliating tasks as part of "initiation" into the corps. Hazing was directed predominately at freshman students, known to VPI upperclassmen as "rats." While a number of types of hazing were common within the VPI Corps of Cadets, the most serious types involved actual physical assault of younger students. Perhaps the most common style of physical hazing in the corps was known as "bucking," which, in the words of historian Rod Andrew Jr.,

“involved several older students holding a freshman by his hands and feet and striking him against a wall or post, or paddling his backside with a plank or scabbard.” Even though there had been multiple attempts to curb hazing at VPI, upperclassmen saw hazing as both a formative “rite of passage” into the corps and as a right they had earned due to their seniority and rank within the corps itself.<sup>43</sup>

Even before Burruss became president of VPI, his predecessor, Joseph Eggleston, noticed an increase in behavior incidents related to hazing during the war. The most serious of these incidents occurred in the last months of Eggleston’s presidency when a young cadet was brutally assaulted, presumably by “bucking,” by a handful of upperclassmen. The assaulters—the details of the assault remain unclear, possibly intentionally—inflicted significant injury to the freshman cadet, resulting in his extended hospitalization. Authorities promptly arrested the guilty students, who were dismissed from the institute. Following the incident, Dean T. P. Campbell, alongside other faculty members, met with corps leaders, and all agreed to extend the honor system to ban certain forms of physical hazing, particularly bucking. However, as Burruss realized, these bans did not go far enough to resolve the problem, mainly because the extension to the honor system only banned physical hazing and failed to include types of non-physical hazing, which Burruss considered to be just as dangerous.<sup>44</sup>

In 1923, the conflict between academic and military authority came to a head when three students were dismissed from VPI for hazing freshmen. Burruss confronted the commandant and senior cadets about their unwritten “rat regulations,” which had not been approved by the administration but had tacitly been approved by corps authorities without the authorization of college authorities. Burruss stated firmly that the “rat regulations” clearly constituted hazing and, thus, directly violated the institution’s honor system, which had been established by the faculty and administration and which had banned all forms of physical hazing a few years earlier. Burruss received his strongest support relating to the situation from the board of visitors, which adopted a resolution that clearly stated that all authority for adopting rules affecting VPI students lay with the board. Further, the board wrote firmly that no such authority over student discipline had ever been delegated to the corps of cadets.<sup>45</sup>

Two months later, the situation escalated. An unofficial committee composed of upperclassmen in the corps of cadets found a freshman cadet guilty of not conforming to the “rat regulations” and informally dismissed him from the corps. When the freshman appealed to the administration, faculty members found him not guilty because the “rat regulations”

remained unapproved by the administration. Seeing the actions of Burruss and the faculty as a direct assault on their traditional authority and right to haze, senior student officers within the corps resigned en-masse. Their resignations, which were to take place the next day, came with a demand: they would fulfill their resignations only if the faculty committee did not rescind its decision.<sup>46</sup>

But it was Burruss who claimed victory in the dispute. He sent a telegram to the parents of every insubordinate cadet and asked for their help. He warned the parents that if their sons did not desist in defying his authority, they would be dismissed from VPI for blatant disobedience. Over the next two days, as parents flooded the VPI Telegraph Office with messages for their sons, the cadets rescinded their resignations, ending the crisis. But for the president, the incident was a call to action. Burruss, who had previously seen the military system of education as a hindrance to VPI, now saw it as the main source of student misbehavior and as the main threat to academic and administrative authority.<sup>47</sup>

To devise solutions, Burruss created a faculty committee tasked with studying student life and the problems facing VPI. By May, the committee had reached its conclusions. In the opinion of its members, problems with student behavior were directly connected to the system of military education and discipline at VPI. Members further believed that reducing the number of hours students spent in military training did not offer enough of a solution. Instead, the committee went radically further and suggested that the military department, mainly the corps of cadets, be severely reduced or eliminated altogether. In their report, the faculty members of the committee conveyed their opinion that the “evils of our student life” resulted directly from military instruction and that such problems were “inherent” in a military system. Further, they noted that of the forty-eight land-grant colleges in the United States, VPI was one of only three that compelled all students to complete a military education for all four years. They also noted that it was one of only two land grants that required all students to live in barracks for the entirety of their student career.<sup>48</sup>

Additionally, the faculty noticed that both students and army officers on campus had changed since the end of the war. In their report, committee members expressed to President Burruss their belief that most of VPI’s new students were not from “a more sophisticated class of students” willing to submit themselves to military discipline. Furthermore, the faculty noted that since the establishment of ROTC in 1916, army officers assigned to VPI regarded themselves more as instructors in ROTC-related courses and not “enforcers of military discipline.” In the end, the faculty believed that

“except for the government academies [West Point and Annapolis], no large institution of college grade [should have] an absolutely strict system of military discipline.”<sup>49</sup>

President Burruss concurred. With the committee recommendations in hand, he crafted his own report to the VPI Board of Visitors, which he presented in June 1923. Unlike his 1920 report to the board, in which he suggested adjustment to military education at VPI, his 1923 report was much more dramatic. Burruss admitted that that he did not believe VPI could continue to expand and attract more students if the institute continued to be organized upon a firm military basis. He told the board that no other “standard college in America ... is even attempting to do [this], unless we included the United States military and naval academics.” Burruss wrote bluntly in his report that “the arbitrary military system of government of students in college is archaic.” Breaking with the pre-war opinion of his predecessors, Burruss stated that if the military system of education at VPI continued, it would put the institute under “insufferable handicaps in its effort to grow and maintain a place in the group of standard colleges [in the nation].” Burruss believed that military education at VPI was not beneficial for students, and he found it difficult to believe that “young men trained under a despotic system ... are receiving the best preparation for citizenship in a democracy.”<sup>50</sup>

The board of visitors, perhaps unwilling to take such a dramatic step as completely erasing the military nature of VPI, decided upon a moderate course. Instead of eliminating the corps of cadets, it decided to reduce the number of years students were required to be cadets from four years to only two. However, the board made it clear that administrative authority trumped military authority, primarily that of the corps of cadets, by reaffirming that the management of VPI rested solely under the board’s authority and that of other college officials. The board confirmed that only certain college officials, the president and faculty to whom the board had delegated certain powers, were responsible for the enforcement of college regulations governing student conduct. Further, board members stated that any by-laws of the corps of cadets that had not been approved by them, like the rat regulations, were in no way recognized by college authorities and were thus unenforceable. Finally, and most emphatically, the board specified that “no constitution, by-law, rule, or regulations of the corps of cadets or any group of students shall take the place of, or have precedence over the regulations made by the college authorities.”<sup>51</sup>

After Burruss’s presentation to the board, Professor J. R. Parrott submitted a letter of support to the president. Just seven years earlier, Parrott

had proclaimed his support for military education and discipline at VPI. It had been his belief that the military system at VPI was a source of good moral behavior for students and helped ensure student success. But in the letter he sent Burruss on June 23, 1923, he took a different stance. Agreeing with Burruss and his colleagues, Parrott expressed himself as “eternally opposed to unnecessary military in our schools or our nation.” No longer did Parrott view military education as beneficial for students; instead, he, too, now saw it as unnecessary and detrimental.<sup>52</sup>

In 1927, President Burruss was asked to write a statement about how the war had affected VPI. Looking back upon the period, Burruss wrote that the war had led to a “deliberate criticism of all the content of instruction.” Instead of returning to the pre-war traditions of VPI, he stated, the war had forced VPI to justify the work at the college based upon the contributions it had made to solving problems faced by the nation after the war. More importantly, he stated his belief that the war had put a “premium” on a college education and that the education offered at VPI could never be the same as it had been once before. Perhaps one of the most monumental changes in Burruss’s mind was the reduction of military education at VPI from four to two years. In the end, Burruss believed that the war had been a turning point in VPI’s history. For him, it had proven that VPI could not live in a world rooted in tradition; instead, VPI had to live in the “new world” created by the war and that “if it [VPI] is to live it all, it must be responsive [to the changes].”<sup>53</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The time between 1916 and 1923 was a period of immense change at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Though there were still ways that the VPI of 1923 resembled that of the past, there were also ways in which it did not. Perhaps the single largest change was that of military education. During the war, VPI was a site of intense wartime mobilization in which the United States War Department consistently found ways to utilize VPI’s curriculum, faculty, campus, and student body to assist the war effort. These wartime uses of VPI, however, challenged academic authority and widened the gap between the academic and military spheres on campus.

After the war, post-war challenges to the institution, along with the arrival of new leadership under President Julian A. Burruss, brought the differences between academic and military education at VPI to a head. In the end, it was academic authority that won the day. While military education was not eliminated, it was reduced, and the authority of the faculty and administrators was solidified as supreme to that of the corps of cadets. In

the proceeding decades, VPI's institutional identity shifted further to that of a standard non-military university. By the 1950s, increasing numbers of upperclassmen opted out of the corps of cadets, and by 1964, the board of visitors struck the two-year requirement to be in the corps, making military education at VPI entirely voluntary. While the challenges of the 1950s and 1960s proved to be the most significant to military education at VPI, World War I and the changes it wrought upon the college spurred the first challenges to its military education, setting VPI on a course of becoming more like the land-grant university it is today.

### Endnotes

1. The popular name for Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute was simply Virginia Polytechnic Institute or VPI. The Virginia General Assembly did not officially rename the school Virginia Polytechnic Institute until 1944 (Clara B. Cox and Jenkins M. Robertson, "A School of Many Names," *History and Historical Data of Virginia Tech*, [www.unirel.vt.edu/history/historical\\_digest/index.html](http://www.unirel.vt.edu/history/historical_digest/index.html)). Throughout this article, the author will use Virginia Polytechnic Institute or, more commonly, VPI.
2. Lt. Col. Sheldon W. Anding to Joseph Eggleston, 19 June 1916; J. R. Parrott to Anding, 15 June 1916; J. B. McBryde to Anding, 16 June 1916; J. S. A. Johnson to Anding, 16 June 1916; and A. W. Drinkard Jr. to Anding, 16 June 1916. These letters are located in Records of Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Box 4, Folder 305, Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), Blacksburg, Va.
3. "Report of Special Committee on Student Life," spring 1923, Records of Julian A. Burruss, Box 32, Folder 1940, Special Collections, Virginia Tech.
4. While other colleges and schools, like the University of Virginia and Washington and Lee, for example, tried to convince the Virginia legislature to allocate land-grant funds to their respective institutions, the legislature settled on a plan that converted the existing Preston and Olin Institute, a small Methodist college for boys in Blacksburg, Va., into the commonwealth's white land-grant college, appropriating two thirds of the land-grant funds for that purpose. The legislature used the remaining one third of the funds to convert Hampton Institute, an all-black school in Hampton, Va., into the state's black land-grant college. Today, Virginia State University serves that role (Peter Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872–1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* (Blacksburg, Va.: Pocahontas Press, Inc., 1997), 37–43).
5. Rod Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines: The Southern Military School Tradition, 1839–1915* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 39–42.
6. Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines*, 39–42.
7. John Milton Cooper Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 373–379, and John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 350–353.
8. Keegan, *The First World War*, 372.
9. Keegan, *The First World War*, 372; Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," *Bulletin of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute* 21:1 (November 1927, Blacksburg, Va.), 18; Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 223; U.S. Army Cadet Command, "History of Army ROTC," [www.cadetcommand.army.mil/history.aspx](http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil/history.aspx); and United States of America War Office, "United States National Defense Act," 23–26.
10. U.S. Army Cadet Command, "History of Army ROTC," and United States of America War Office, "United States National Defense Act, 23–26.
11. Anding to Eggleston.
12. Parrott to Anding; McBryde to Anding; Johnson to Anding; and Drinkard to Anding.

13. "Lee Society Has Interesting Program," *The Virginia Tech*, Blacksburg, Va., 16 November 1916), 1, and "Reserve Officer's Training Corps," *The Virginia Tech*, 7 December 1916, 1, 8.
14. Unlike today, the ROTC program in 1917 only accepted college juniors and seniors (United States of America War Office, "United States National Defense Act," 23–26, and "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 18). The percentage of students who joined ROTC was calculated by using the 1918–1919 student yearbook, *The Bugle*. By adding the listed names of students in ROTC companies and comparing that number to regular student enrollment, the author learned that 75 percent of regular students were in an ROTC company (Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *The War Bugle 1919* (Charlotte, N. C.: Observer Printing House, 1919), Special Collections, Virginia Tech, [spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/bugle/bugl1919/1919\\_BUGLE.pdf](http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/bugle/bugl1919/1919_BUGLE.pdf)).
15. D. Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Richmond, Va.: William Byrd Press, 1972), 240; "War Cripples Athletics," *The Virginia Tech*, 12 April 1917, 1; and "War Spirit Prevailing," *The Virginia Tech*, 2 May 1917, 1, 8.
16. "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 32–40.
17. "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 32–40.
18. Records of Eggleston, 18 September 1918, Box 5, Folder 404; "Sixty-Four VPI Cadets at the Reserve Officer's Training Camp," *The Virginia Tech*, 17 May 1917, 1, 8; and "Y.M.C.A. Rat Reception," *The Virginia Tech*, 27 September 1917, 1.
19. "Y.M.C.A. Rat Reception," *The Virginia Tech*, 1.
20. For a more detailed treatment of the American peace movement during World War I, consult Charles Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 27–50, and Frances H. Early, *A World Without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997).
21. J. R. Parrott, "Little Preachment from the Pew to the Pulpit," to Joseph Eggleston, Records of Eggleston, 31 October 1917, Box 6, Folder 509, and Eggleston to Parrott, Records of Eggleston, 1 November 1917, Box 6, Folder 509.
22. "The Tech Must Do Her Part," *The Virginia Tech*, 24 January 1918, 4.
23. "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 50–57.
24. "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 50–57.
25. "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 50–57; War Department General Orders No.1, Records of Eggleston, 15 September 1918, Box 5, Folder 385; Michael J. Faughnan, "You're in the Army Now: The Students' Army Training Corps at Selected Virginia Universities in 1918" (PhD diss, College of William and Mary, 2008), 2; and Gruber, *Mars and Minerva*, 213–217.
26. Committee on Education and Special Training to Eggleston, Records of Eggleston, 18 September 1918, Box 5, Folder 385.
27. Committee on Education and Special Training to Eggleston.
28. Committee on Education and Special Training to Eggleston.
29. Similar ceremonies were held on campuses across the United States. Including the 600 men who took the oath at VPI, more than 140,000 young American men were compelled to join the SATC between September and October 1918 (Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, *The War Bugle 1919*; Virginia Tech Special Collections, *The Bugle* archive, [spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/bugle/bugl1919/1919\\_BUGLE.pdf](http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/bugle/bugl1919/1919_BUGLE.pdf); "Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War," 103–107.
30. Western Union Telegram, Records of Eggleston, 4 October 1918, Box 5, Folder 385.
31. Letters exchanged between William H. Jeffreys Jr. and Joseph Eggleston, Records of Eggleston, 10 August 1918, Box 5, Folder 416.
32. W. T. Goodloe to Eggleston, Records of Eggleston, 8 October 1918, Box 5, Folder 439.
33. Eggleston to Goodloe, Records of Eggleston, 21 October 1918, Box 5, Folder 439.
34. Committee on Education and Special Training to Eggleston, Records of Eggleston, 26 November 1918, Box 5, Folder 385.

35. Eggleston to E. K. Hall, Records of Eggleston, 27 November 1918, Box 5, Folder 385.
36. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 247, 249–250.
37. Today, the State Normal and Industrial School for Women is known as James Madison University. It is located in Harrisonburg, Virginia.
38. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 225, and Faith Skiles, “Change Amidst Tradition: The First Two Years of the Burruss Administration at VPI,” *The Smithfield Review* 20 (2016), 30.
39. In keeping with turning VPI into a more standard institution, Burruss also proposed that women finally be admitted to VPI. In his proposal to the VPI Board of Visitors in January 1921, Burruss reminded the board of the vital roles women assumed during wartime, both locally and nationally. Further, he reasoned that VPI could no longer legitimize the exclusion of women since they were now full citizens under the law. The board approved Burruss’ proposal, and in the following fall session, five women enrolled as full-time students and seven enrolled as part-time students (Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 225; Skiles, “Change Amidst Tradition,” 30; and Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997*, 132).
40. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 225, and Skiles, “Change Amidst Tradition,” 30.
41. Expanding enrollment was not unusual. Similar rates of growth in student enrollment were happening at other institutions of higher education across the United States. For example, enrollment at the University of Illinois doubled between 1919 and 1922, increasing from 3,000 students to over 6,000. Likewise, enrollment at the Ohio State University grew from 4,000 to 8,000 students (Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 123–124).
42. According to Skiles, the veterans’ programs established in the wake of World War I allowed VPI to hire its first female faculty member responsible for teaching elementary subjects to incoming veterans (Skiles, “Change Amidst Tradition,” 31–32, and Earl D. Gregory Collection, Ms 1972-004, Box 1, Folder 1, Special Collections, Virginia Tech).
43. According to Rod Andrew Jr., the VPI faculty and administration tried in 1891 to prevent the traditional “bucking” session on the day incoming freshmen received their uniforms. When the freshmen resisted the upperclassmen, a “near-riot” ensued, and bucking continued to be practiced without interference in the years afterward (Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines*, 72).
44. Papers of Eggleston, Box 5, Folder 433.
45. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 270.
46. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 270.
47. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, 270.
48. Report of Special Committee on Student Life, Records of Burruss.
49. Report of Special Committee on Student Life, Records of Burruss.
50. Julian A. Burruss, “Report to the VPI Board of Visitors,” June 1923, Records of Burruss, Box, 32, Folder 1940.
51. Report of Special Committee on Student Life, Records of Burruss.
52. Parrott to Burruss, 23 June 1923, Records of Burruss, Box 7, Folder 455.
53. “Virginia Polytechnic Institute in the World War,” 109–110.

**About the Author:** Daniel C. Newcomb holds graduate degrees in history and secondary social studies education. He manages “VPI in World War One,” an online project and database that explores the lives of VPI alumni who served in WWI, and is an academic and career advisor in Virginia Tech’s Department of Engineering Education.