

James Harrison Whetstone

James Harrison Whetstone graduated from The Citadel in 1960 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. A native of Long Island, New York, Mr. Whetstone was part of a recruiting effort initiated by General Mark Clark to expand The Citadel's reach outside the southeast and make it a national college. As a cadet, Mr. Whetstone personified General Clark's "whole man' concept of education" whereby cadets were trained "mentally, physically, morally, and militarily." Mentally, Mr. Whetstone excelled in the classroom, earning Gold Star and Dean's List honors and membership in the Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society. Physically and militarily, he was a member of the Bond Volunteers, the Summerall Guards, and the Regimental Color Guard. Morally, he was an active participant in campus religious activities, to include serving as a member of the Chapel Color Guard.

These formative experiences served Mr. Whetstone well after graduation, and he quickly put into practice the leadership skills he had learned at The Citadel. He gained valuable managerial and staff experience at Milliken and Company before assisting with the start-up and development of Knit-away, a textile knitting and dyeing company where he had direct responsibility for marketing and product development and worked with leading clothing companies and designers. Obviously the entrepreneurial spirit, vision, and organizational skills required to start a company demonstrate that even as a young professional, Mr. Whetstone had learned his leadership lessons well.

Mr. Whetstone's talents quickly attracted considerable attention in the industry. He soon joined Unifi Inc., the largest producer of textile yarns in the U. S. and one of the largest international companies of this type in the world. As Corporate Director of Product and Market

Development, Mr. Whetstone oversaw an international operation that included business relationships with such domestic organizations as DuPont, Hoechst, Monsanto, Eastman, JC Penney, Sears, Burlington Industries, Ford, GM, and the U. S. Army Soldiers System Center (Natick) and internationally with Marks and Spencer, Toray, and Benetton. He managed a global product development staff and used his creativity to help advance and design corporate public relations, market research, publicity, and corporate publications such as the annual report and videos. Long before “globalization” became the norm it is today, Mr. Whetstone was travelling to and interfacing with leading retail companies worldwide.

Mr. Whetstone retired from Unifi after a twenty-three year career and then served in an advisory capacity for five more years. Driven by creativity and passion, Mr. Whetstone built on this success to create his own company, Source Decor International, LLC, which specialized in advising companies in the textile segment of business.

Throughout his career, Mr. Whetstone has epitomized the senior leader who mentors and develops junior leaders. While at Unifi he was a much-sought after lecturer to business students at Auburn University, the Philadelphia School of Engineering and Design, and Clemson University. He also served on the Advisory Board of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro’s School of Textile and Design. After moving to Charleston, he became involved with the initial effort of The Citadel School of Business Mentor Program, and then served as Vice Chair and as a Director, responsible for Cadet Program Development. He still maintains a relationship with the School of Business in assisting to guide their mentor program.

Mr. Whetstone’s experience with the success of the Business School Mentor Association convinced him of the need to expand the mentor effort school wide to include all majors and career goals. Of his own accord and with his own energy, he developed and implemented this

effort. Out of this initiative grew the formalized Cadet Corps Leaders Mentor Program. The program began with a membership limited to the “Regimental Top 10.” Under Mr. Whetstone’s vision, it expanded to include the Athletic Team Captains and then the Class President. Building on this success, Mr. Whetstone created the Company Commander Mentor Program and the Junior Leadership Forum. In 2015, these programs were succeeded by the current Company-level Program. Cadet appreciation for these programs is readily apparent. One company commander, for example, reports “the mentor program has given me the opportunity to develop short term and long term goals with someone who has been successful in my desired profession. My mentor has always been available to discuss any topics on my mind. His advice on leadership, personal development and my future in the Army has been a valuable experience that has better prepared me to be a Second Lieutenant.”

To support these cadets, Mr. Whetstone has assembled an impressive group of some fifty mentors representing a variety of military, civilian, government, and private sector fields. One mentor credits Mr. Whetstone with “working tirelessly to find the most qualified and diverse mentors and speakers to provide these young men and women cadets with caring, interesting and highly successful role models that will challenge the cadets to rise to their highest levels in life.” The depth of this pool allows Mr. Whetstone to make such appropriate pairings as ROTC cadets with retired colonels, cadet athletes with former professional football players, law school aspirants with practicing attorneys, and criminal justice majors with FBI agents. Mr. Whetstone purposely has created a balance between Citadel graduates and non-Citadel graduates among his mentors in order to expose the cadets to varied backgrounds, frames of reference, and perspectives. His ability to attract such a diverse and talented collection of mentors is a testimony to the passion with which he champions the program, The Citadel, and its cadets. In

the words of one mentor, Mr. Whetstone's efforts have "provided the Citadel cadets with potential networking and career opportunities that graduating college seniors from other colleges and universities around the United States would only dream are possible."

Mr. Whetstone describes the mentor program as serving three purposes. It assists the cadets in the performance of their current leadership responsibilities at The Citadel, it helps prepare them to accomplish their career goals, and it teaches far-reaching and broad life lessons. He also emphasizes the responsibility these cadets have to share the lessons they have learned from the program with their fellow cadets. In this way, the program reaches far beyond its actual cadet members into the entire corps. As an added bonus, by exposing the mentors, many of whom are not Citadel graduates, to cadets, The Citadel benefits from a positive outreach into the community. In the words of one mentor, his first meeting with his protégé "made a resoundingly impressive statement to me about what The Citadel is all about, particularly as I ponder my own son's future options."

While Mr. Whetstone closely coordinates his activities with the Commandant's Department, he is the program's animating force and its chief laborer. He maintains a steady stream of communication between the cadets, the mentors, the Commandant's Department, and the various support agencies. He hosts gatherings at his home. He gets head counts and double-checks calendars. He coordinates for meals, parking, and audio-visual support. No detail escapes his notice. He embodies Rudyard Kipling's admonition to "walk with kings, yet lose not the common touch." One day he might be meeting with President Rosa to keep him abreast of program developments and the next he might be running a vacuum in the Regimental Commander's Riverview Room to ensure the venue meets his exacting specifications before an

event. One mentor no doubt spoke for the entire program when he said, “Jim Whetstone’s passion for supporting the future of the Citadel cadets is second to none.”

When asked why he does what he does, Mr. Whetstone humbly says it is all about “giving back.” He is a servant leader who obviously considers his investment in cadet development to be a labor of love. All he wants, he says, is for “our young men and women Citadel graduates to achieve high success, the emphasis on high, and their time at The Citadel to be rewarding, beneficial and worth the effort.” On behalf of its cadets, the Office of the Commandant is extremely grateful to Mr. Whetstone and his team of mentors for their generous and selfless support to leader development.