

The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2020 | VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 6

My fellow alumnae and friends,

I have been blessed to be marooned here at Sweet Briar on this bucolic campus working day in and day out with President Meredith Woo and my colleagues to prepare the campus for reopening at the beginning of August. You and your family have been in our thoughts throughout this challenging time, when so many of us have not seen our extended family for weeks or months. Even though we have challenges ahead, I feel we must ask ourselves "Where is the joy?" We need to look for it, remark about it and be grateful for it especially for the young women joining us.

As I write this letter, Sweet Briar will be the first college reopening in Virginia on August 5 with classes beginning on August 11. We are delighted to see our students again and they say they are so excited to be coming back (see page 3 for an interview with Madeleine McAllister '21). As we look around, there is so much to be energized about, including classes that connect the students to our wildflower meadow, greenhouse, apiary and vineyards. The Women's Leadership Core Curriculum is in its third year and much has happened to make sure that the classrooms and living spaces are clean and meet the new requirements for safety. We've included a summary of our reopening plan as well as a link to the full plan on our website. I encourage you to take a look at the extensive plan prepared for our Sweet Briar community and any visitors coming to campus.

Despite the difficult environment all colleges have faced since March, we are proud to celebrate the great news that we have not only met, and exceeded, our fundraising goals, but also met our enrollment goals. Sweet Briar is truly distinctive with its healthy and spacious environment and is uniquely suited to deliver a superior education in a small and supportive setting.

We are a community that has faced challenges together before and we will adapt and become more resilient together. You have made this remarkable success possible and will help us navigate the future!

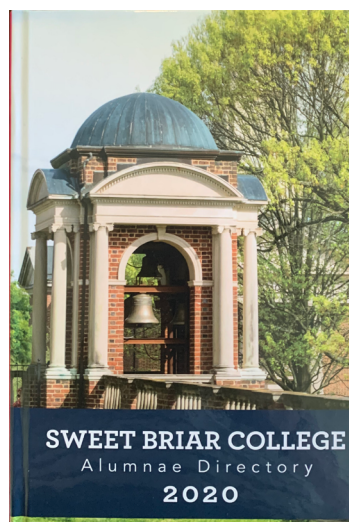
Take care of yourself and family and keep looking for the joy!
Thinking of you,

Mary Pope M. Hutson '83
Vice President for Alumnae Relations, Development and Communications

P.S.: Welcome to the Class of 2024 and our other new students!

There's a new digital format of The Briar Wire available!

If you're receiving our newsletter by mail, it's because we do not have an email address on file for you. If you would prefer to receive The Briar Wire by email, please write to alumnae@sbc.edu.



The 2020 Alumnae Directory is here!

If you placed an order for Sweet Briar's updated Alumnae Directory, the orders have shipped and you will receive your copy by mail very soon!

Looking ahead to the September issue of The Briar Wire:

Update on Sweet Briar's
newly-remodeled Health Center

More updates about the Stables and
Bailey Room renovations
(see page 4 of this issue for photos!)

A synopsis of Sweet Briar's Summer
Sessions and Summer Alumnae Colleges

Board of Directors of Sweet Briar College

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Kelley Manderson Fitzpatrick '85,
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Lee Anne MacKenzie Chaskes '83,
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Debbie Cochran, *Executive Assistant*

Emily Dodson '18, *Alumnae Relations and Development Associate*

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Lea Harvey '90, *Director of Strategic Initiatives, Corporate and Foundation Relations*

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Sarah Lewis, *Associate Director of Stewardship*

Lisa Wray Longino '78, *Director of Major Gifts*

Kathleen Placidi, *Faculty Grants Officer*

Julia Paris '99, *Director of Advancement Services*

Rachel Pietsch, *Assistant Director of Alumnae Relations*

Bonnie L. Seitz '01, *Assistant Director of Advancement Services*

Clélie D. D. Steckel, *Director of the Sweet Briar Fund and Editor of The Briar Wire*

Wanda Vest, *Data Entry Manager*

Returning to Sweet Briar: Residential learning



The COVID-19 pandemic descended upon us with such rapidity in March that our response needed to be similarly rapid. Now, having made the move to remote teaching and learning for the second half of the spring 2020 semester, we look ahead to the fall. All areas of the college are involved in planning for having in-person instruction in the fall semester. This work is complicated by the ever-changing landscape of what is known about COVID-19 infectivity, impacts and best practices to combat the virus. In all of this work, we are guided by the desire to safeguard the health and wellness of the Sweet Briar community and to deliver an excellent education to Sweet Briar women with minimal disruption.

Sweet Briar leadership organized several groups focused on the areas of healthy living, healthy student mental and physical health and healthy learning. Each group is working hard to move forward with its work and efforts are expected to converge with a coordinated response that will safeguard faculty, staff, students and the local community. Each group is focused on developing a set of supportive and protective policies, plans and guidelines, as well as the supplies needed to safely be together on campus in the fall.

The College has developed a plan that outlines its return to a living and learning community. It is based on the assumption that Virginia is in at least Phase 3, however, certain precautions may still exist that are implemented but yet not mandated by the state.

The landscape is changing daily.

The three primary teams involved in the Sweet Briar planning process are: Living (Marcia Thom-Kaley), Learning (Teresa Garrett) and Health Care (Luther Griffith). After these groups formed a framework, a task force group was created to address communication, implementation and coordination of the efforts. This group includes three faculty members as suggested by the Faculty Senate (August Hardy, Bethany Brinkman and Carrie Brown), Rich Meyer (director of Physical Plant), and Mimi Fahs, a member of the Sweet Briar Board of Directors. Jodi Canfield is the campus COVID-19 coordinator.

The Sweet Briar plan addresses each of the following areas.

- Social distancing
- Increased cleaning and sanitization
- Increased signage
- Use (in some cases mandated) of personal protective equipment
- Effective communication to and from students, faculty and staff
- Health monitoring and contact tracing

Please visit
sbc.edu/campus-safety/covid-19
to read the comprehensive
reopening plan.

Madeleine McAllister '21: Exemplifying student leadership during a pandemic

When Madeleine McAllister '21 was elected as president of the Student Government Association in March of 2020, she could not have anticipated all of the complexities of leading Sweet Briar students in such a tumultuous time in the world. But like any Sweet Briar woman, Madeleine is prepared to lead our students with the resilience and determination that is a hallmark of the College's community.

In addition to planning and preparing to implement projects for the Student Government Association, Madeleine is also Orientation Chairwoman, working with orientation leaders to welcome first-years to campus on August 5. This role is critical under normal circumstances, but is especially important in the time of a pandemic. She and her fellow student leaders have been working with the Office of Student Life to ensure that students will adhere to COVID policies and guidelines but will also still be able to build community along with faculty and staff and form friendships among their classes and all students, primarily through outdoor events. Along with Dean Marcia Thom-Kaley, student leaders including SGA, student committee chairs, and class presidents have been working to develop COVID policies for students to discuss all of the options and how campus life will change. "It's really about looking out for each other and making sure that everyone is being safe, including ourselves, and determining how we can help with the impact of the pandemic," she said. "We recognize that it's different and that it will be hard, but that we need to put in as much effort as we can and try."

When asked how students have managed to stay so resilient during this time, Madeleine said, "Students really want to be back on campus, and at this point they understand that everything is going to look different and needs to look different, so they're willing to accommodate a lifestyle change. They've asked me what they can do to help so that we can come back to school." One of the biggest challenges that students are faced with is keeping traditions intact while also being socially distanced. Events like Step Singing are easier, since they're already outside, but other events will have to be adapted throughout the year. "That doesn't mean that we're not trying to figure out what that will look like, but right now, we haven't stopped thinking about it or making adjustments. I want to tell everyone not to lose hope in it, we're rolling with every punch to try to adjust what we can do."

In addition to managing her Orientation Chairwoman responsibilities, Madeleine has been building her knowledge base for student leadership over the summer. On the day of her interview for this issue of The Briar Wire, she was preparing to attend an online Student Government Conference with other SGA organizations across the country. "That is helping



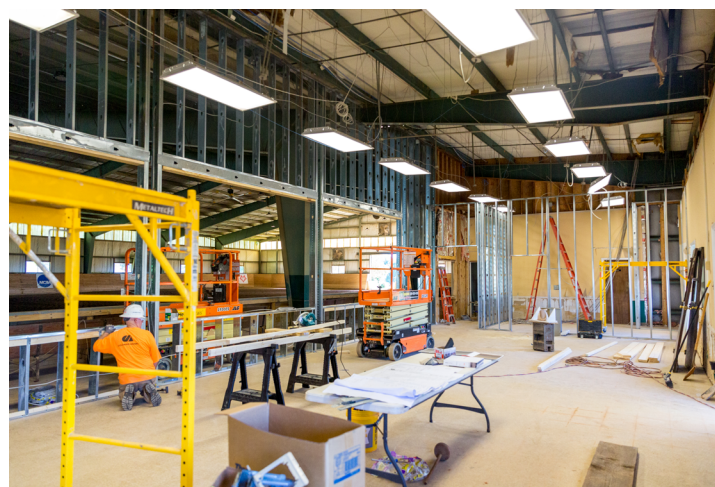
me to develop ideas that I've had and give us ways that we can flesh them out into initiatives that we can implement," said Madeleine. She and the SGA Board will be evaluating the SGA Constitution, evaluating structures that need to be changed or enhanced in order to understand the student body and be more effective. New to the SGA Board this year is the Director of Community Service position, held by Dara Keffer '23, which will evaluate new ways for students to be involved in our community while adhering to social-distancing guidelines. Sweet Briar's SGA is also working on building diversity and inclusion along with the President's Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion to inform students, seek feedback, and make changes based on student needs. Orientation leaders and resident advisors will also be provided with training on diversity and inclusion by a consultant before school begins to help them support each other.



Riding center and Bailey Room renovations are galloping toward the fall



The Bailey Room at the Harriett Howell Rogers Riding Center before the new window framing was constructed.



The new window framing is under construction in the Bailey Room.



In addition to new stalls, flooring, and infrastructure updates, the stables are receiving new roofs.



A new model stall in the stables.

Sweet Briar Tennis resumes for the FY 2021 season

The Second Annual Battle of the Blue Ridge is tentatively scheduled to take place from Friday, September 11 through Sunday, September 13. The tournament will include bracketed flights of singles and doubles play featuring student-athletes from NCAA Division III Women's Tennis programs. All six of Sweet Briar's tennis courts will be in use and live video of a feature court will be streamed online throughout the tournament. Tentatively scheduled participating teams: Brevard College (N.C.), Methodist University (N.C.), Randolph College (Va.), Shenandoah University (Va.) and Sweet Briar College.

Allison Wandling '23



Sweet Briar College donors contribute more than \$11.7 million in fiscal year 2020



During fiscal year 2020, Sweet Briar College received gifts and pledge commitments totaling more than \$11.7 million. Support came from individual gifts from alumnae, faculty, staff, the Board of Directors and friends of the College, as well as from corporate and foundation donors.

Of the total, \$6.09 million came as unrestricted annual fund dollars and \$598,137 as restricted dollars. In addition, donors fulfilled \$1.55 million in previous year pledges. There were additional gifts totaling nearly \$600,000 in gifts to the endowment and \$2.9 million supporting strategic priority projects on the campus for viticulture, other agricultural enterprises and renovations to the stables at the Harriet Howell Rogers Riding Center. Remarkably, the College saw its highest level of alumnae participation—24.5%—since 2017, while also exceeding enrollment goals.

“Despite the difficulties of dealing with a global pandemic, we have had some real success this year,” says President Meredith Woo. “Our donors’ generosity is once again the model for the nation, helping us exceed our goal and ensuring that Sweet Briar will continue to be able to offer an exceptional education in a beautiful setting.”

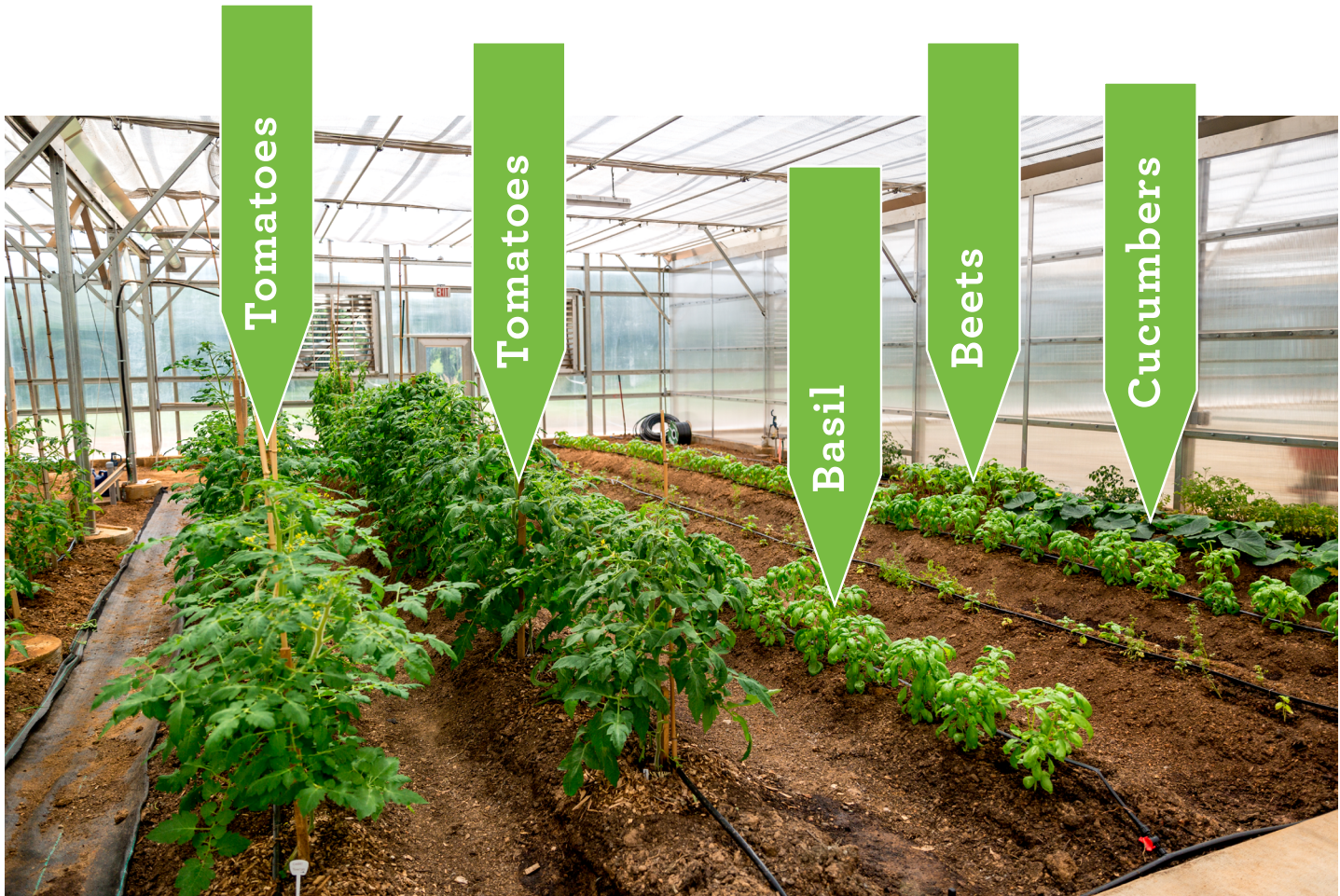
The importance of giving to Sweet Briar during this time cannot be overstated. These generous contributions allow College leadership to take advantage of opportunities and face unanticipated challenges. When the global pandemic hit in March, the College was able to pivot to online teaching and learning, while continuing to maintain its campus. As Sweet Briar prepares to welcome students back in a few weeks, the College is implementing a number of improvements to keep its community safe by enhancing on-campus health services, social distancing and testing. We are fortunate that Sweet Briar can give students the opportunity to have their own rooms at no extra cost. All donations to Sweet Briar help the College effectively respond to these challenges.

Donations also support student scholarships, course development, the student experience and faculty, as well as Sweet Briar’s natural and built environment.

Since 2015, Sweet Briar alumnae and friends have contributed \$75.7 million. We are so grateful to everyone who made this possible.

Know a young woman who may be
interested in Sweet Briar? Visit
sbc.edu/admissions/refer-a-student
so she can receive our
admissions materials!

Sweet Briar Grows: Progress on the Greenhouse



Lisa Powell, associate professor of environmental studies and director of the Center for Human and Environmental Sustainability, has been hard at work this summer along with Gary Canfield, Business Office Project Manager and Grounds staff to begin planting produce in Sweet Briar's new 26,000 square-foot greenhouse. Earlier this summer, lettuces were harvested from the greenhouse and distributed to Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Dining services provider Meriwether-Godsey has also used cucumbers and lettuces in preparing meals for smaller events this spring and summer and is very excited to use our fresh produce for students this fall.