



# The Briar Wire

SPECIAL EDITION OF THE ALUMNAE ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

*Dear Sweet Briar Alumnae,*

*We, the Alumnae Alliance, thank you all for your input in and patience with the process of forming the Alumnae Alliance. We are building on a foundation created by the Alumnae Association Board and what we've learned from their hierarchical organization, which has been expanded into a matrix model. Below you will find a description of how the Alumnae Alliance Council ("the Council") was formed, the list of its members, a graphic model of its matrix structure, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section, and the biographies of its members.*

*This Council has been designed to ensure the alumnae of our beloved alma mater have a voice and a way of communicating with the Administration and the Board of Directors and are contributing their time and talents in the best ways possible.*

*I urge you to be engaged with the Alumnae Alliance as much as you can. Volunteer for a working group. Become an Alumnae Admissions Recruiter (AAR). Talk about Sweet Briar College as much as you can. Be leaders and "first followers" whenever possible.*

*Onward!*

*Alice Dixon '82*

*Member, Board of Directors*

*Board of Directors Liaison to the Alumnae Alliance*



## Sweet Briar College Alumnae Alliance

The Sweet Briar College Alumnae Alliance has named co-chairs and a 15-member Council to guide seven working groups that will engage our alumnae. Debra Elkins '93 and Sarah von Rosenberg '72 will lead the Alliance's Council as co-chairs. Alice Dixon '82, the Board of Directors member who spearheaded development of the Alumnae Alliance, will continue as the Board of Directors' liaison to the organization. The Alliance will connect to the College through working group co-chairs, who work closely (i.e., on a daily basis) with key staff in the Office of Alumnae Relations & Development.

We envision the Alumnae Alliance as a "hub and spokes" organization, with our co-chairs and Board liaison as the hub, and each working group as a spoke. Further, each working group will also have its own set of spokes representing subtopics within that working group. Each of these subtopics will have their own operational lead(s).

The members of the Alumnae Alliance Council were drawn from over 120 nominations received from alumnae, as well as recommendations from leaders in the former Alumnae Association Board, the Saving Sweet Briar Campaign and the Sweet Briar 2.0 movement. Please read more details about the appointment process under the FAQs section on page 2.

All members of the Council co-chair one of the working groups (hubs) that focus on key areas where alumnae can contribute their subject matter expertise to support the College. The list of the Council members follows below.

### **The Network**

Katie Schellhammer '95 & Sarah Clement '75

### **Class Acts/Reunions**

Phyllis Jordan '80 & Amy Leigh Campbell '97

### **Clubs/Geographic**

Cady Thomas '98 & Kathryn Yunk '91

### **Development**

Lisa Longino '78 & Beth Ann Newton '86

### **Media, Marketing & Communications (MMC)**

Meg Guegan '92 & Margaretta Colangelo '87

### **Recruiting & Retention**

Julia Schmitz '03 & Michelle Badger '06

### **Council Strategic Initiatives**

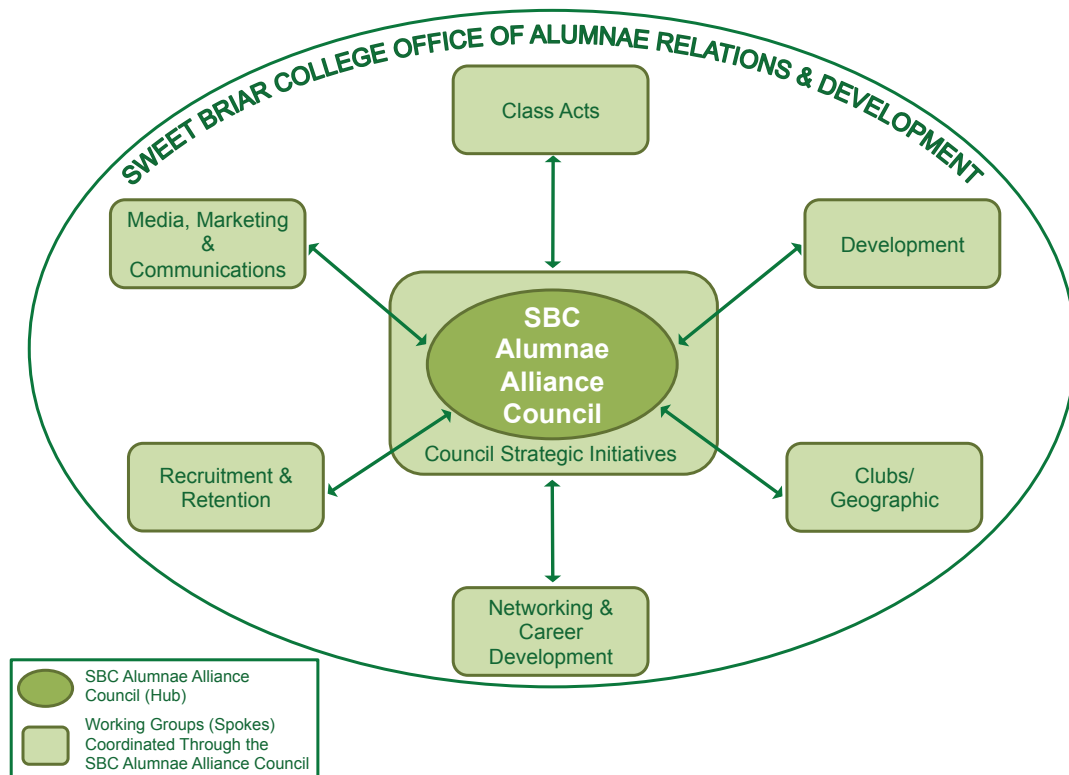
Debra Elkins '93, Sarah von Rosenberg '72 & DeDe Conley '72

In forming this structure, members of the alumnae Council did a significant amount of research on leadership and best practices prior to the creation of groups that deal with a large number of topics with a large number of stakeholders. Then we aligned our alumnae's voices with the current structure of the College to coordinate and target our efforts. It is our intent for the Alliance to be flexible, nimble and align with the College's needs. Our hubs and spokes may evolve as we

**"ALUMNAE ALLIANCE" CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

continue to evolve.

Most importantly, it is the sincere intent of this Council to channel the passion and enthusiasm of our alumnae, and direct our efforts to productive outcomes to foster the growth of our shared heritage. We need to be engaged and respectful in working together to serve our beloved College. We, as Alumnae volunteers in service to the College, will all be asked to reaffirm the Honor Code and uphold the Core Values that connect the Sweet Briar community. ■



mentioned above, the members of the Council were drawn from more than 120 nominations received from alumnae, as well as recommendations from a task force of leaders made up from the former Alumnae Association Board, the Saving Sweet Briar Campaign and Sweet Briar 2.0. The original eight members then selected another seven Council members from those nominations, two of whom were from the Alumnae Association Board. The 15-member Council elected two leaders. (Every woman of the 120+ nominated will be offered a spot on one of the seven working groups.) As matrix organization, the Alliance supports the College first by serving the Administration through the Office of Alumnae Relations & Development. Second, this Council supports the liaison to the Board of Directors.

Working group co-chairs have identified a number of potential operational leads (spokes), who will take charge of specialized areas of interest. For example, Catherine O'Brien West '99 will be an operational lead of the International Relations spoke, a subtopic within the Networking and Career Development Programs working group.

### **What criteria were used to pick Council members and operational leads?**

In constructing the 15-member Council, the initial eight volunteer members weighed past involvement with Sweet Briar and the professional skill sets offered by nominees, as well as the need for a mix of geographic regions and age groups. Additionally, operational leads, working with Council members in their roles as working group co-chairs, will continue to evolve and change as needs of the working groups also evolve and change. The intention of this structure is to be flexible, nimble and a matrix organization where alumnae may engage in many ways across working

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Alumnae Alliance?**

The Alumnae Alliance replaces the former Alumnae Association as the organization that harnesses and maximizes the power and impact of Sweet Briar women to sustain and improve our alma mater. The membership includes all those who attended Sweet Briar College whether they completed a four-year degree or not.

Building on the extraordinary response to the events of Spring 2015, the Alliance will continue to support the College with fundraising, planning reunions and serving as Alumnae Admissions Recruiters (AARs). It will also expand its scope to support other strategic initiatives of the College such as career development and other volunteer-led projects. We are counting on participation from our alumnae. Our charge is to be actively engaged in responsibly supporting the College's mission in order to help secure the College's future.

### **How were the Council members chosen?**

The process began when Sweet Briar's new Board of Directors designated one of its members, Alice Dixon '82, to determine how best to engage all alumnae in the continued success of the College through a new and larger volunteer organization. Alice agreed to take this project on provided that once a Council was established, she would turn its operations over to the Council members and resume her original role as a member of the College's Board of Directors.

Alice worked with eight volunteers, half of them recommended by the groups who led the efforts to save and reimagine Sweet Briar and half from the existing Alumnae Association Board. That group created a structure that went beyond the previous Alumnae Association Board's work, then asked the alumnae to nominate themselves or others for the Council through the newsletter nominations link. As

groups.

### **How long will they serve?**

The Council members will serve two-year terms, with a two-term limitation.

### **Was any thought given to electing the Council?**

We know that there is a strong interest in electing Council members. The Council will explore whether it's feasible to do that for all or part of the Council in the future. In keeping with best practices of organizations going through major change management, appointments are commonly interim at first and then are elected or selection-process driven. This approach enables the Council to establish effective connections between the College and alumnae, until the College is stabilized, at which point the Council governance will be revisited.

### **How can I get involved?**

Alumnae can contact the Alumnae House for information on how they can be connected with the co-chairs of the working group with which they want to be involved. The co-chairs will then get in touch with the volunteer alumna to find out how she can contribute to the working group.

### **Can you describe the working groups (the hubs) in more detail? What does each one do?**

We envision the Alumnae Alliance as a hub and spokes organization. The hub is the Council, but much of the work will happen in the seven initial working groups. All of the working groups will coordinate with and support Sweet Briar College staff leaders. We expect the working groups' efforts to interface and coordinate with each other (e.g., reunion planning will coordinate closely with fundraising efforts) and we expect the groups' focus to shift over time. Here is the current focus of each group:



- **Networking & Career Development**

This group connects alumnae across the generations, supporting student internships and the Senior Class Campaign (welcoming graduating seniors to the Alumnae Alliance), career networking and graduate school advising. It also connects alumnae via affinity groups, like Sweet Work Weeks and continuing educational programs. Key team members must be approved by the Alumnae Relations & Development Office.

- **Class Acts/Reunions**

This group as elected by the classes will work with class presidents, secretaries, social media leads, to support organizing class reunions, managing the class notes publication cycle, creating Pinterest Class boards, manage Facebook pages, raise class donations and most importantly, update alumnae contact information.

- **Club/Geographic**

This group will coordinate geographic alumnae clubs and supporting regions. Club officers will continue to be elected by their constituents. Areas that are being rebuilt may begin by term appointments until constituents are re-engaged. These units will serve as points of contact for multiple objectives in supporting the College's mission.

- **Development**

This team will support the College's fundraising efforts for operating expense management, special financial projects, annual and reunion giving, future capital campaigns, foundation and corporate proposals, major gift cultivation, and affinity/friends groups fundraising. Key team members must be approved by the Alumnae Relations & Development Office.

- **Media, Marketing & Communications**

This group will provide expertise, advice, research, and will execute assignments from Sweet Briar's staff in marketing and spreading the word about the College as well as in reaching out to the media. Key team members must be approved by the Alumnae Relations & Development Office.

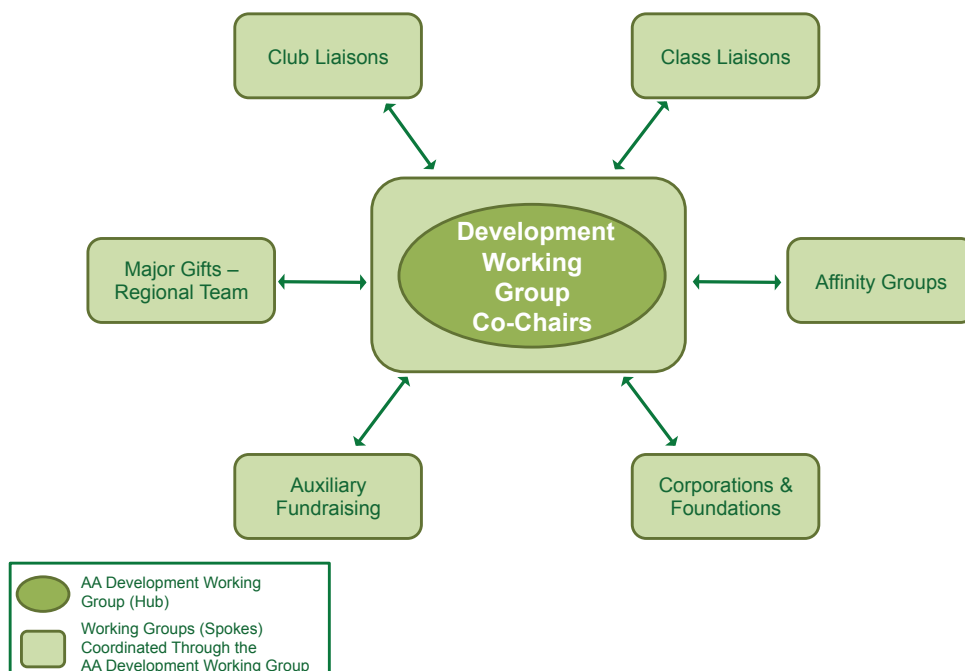
- **Recruitment and Retention**

This group will coordinate the work of alumnae who work with the College's Admissions Office as Alumnae Admissions Recruiters (AARs). It will also include alumnae-supported retention efforts, such as the Vixen Den, which aims to make the Sweet Briar experience a better one for all students. Key team members must be approved by the Alumnae Relations & Development Office.

- **Council Strategic Initiatives**

This group will assist in research and development by assignment, with focus on priorities for the College including alumnae engagement, branding, global outreach, recruiting, land use and environmental sustainability, partnerships, academics, student life, singularity, women's education and operational initiatives as identified. Key team members must be approved by the Alumnae Relations & Development Office.

## an example of a current working group substructure



### Who are the operational leads?

In addition to the Council members acting as co-chairs, certain alumnae will be asked to function as leads for various priority areas. These leads are still evolving. If you are interesting in leading a priority area, please approach the working group co-chairs as we begin to populate our new matrix organization. We want as much engagement from as many alumnae as possible.

### What happened to the old Alumnae Association Board?

The Alumnae Association Board has been dissolved and replaced with the Alumnae Alliance Council; six members of the former Board now serve on the Council.

### The Alumnae Association Board was working to become independent of the College. Will the Alumnae Alliance pursue that?

Although the former Alumnae Association Board had explored the idea of creating an independent organization separate from the College, the needs of Sweet Briar College are best served if the Alumnae Alliance remains within the governance of the Board of Directors of the College. This is a common best practice model active in higher education. By remaining connected, as it traditionally has been, the Council will continue to share the protections and benefits provided to the College by trust law, the value of which is evident as a result of the recent crisis. Prudently, the Council's subordinate relationship to the College streamlines auditing expenses and administrative resources necessary to maintain a 501(c)(3) entity. ■

## Meet the Alumnae Alliance Council

**Michelle Badger '06** has worked with the Annual Giving Program at Sweet Briar, is President of the Boston Area Alumnae Club, is co-chair of her class in the Young Alumnae Giving Program/Reunion Giving Program, and is an AAR. She works at Massachusetts maritime Academy as the Director of Advancement.

**Amy Leigh Campbell '97** is an adjunct professor of Government at Sweet Briar, is faculty advisor for Shop Sweet (the merchandising program run by business majors), was communications co-chair of the Alumnae Association Board, and runs HTMelle, a creative agency that designs digital solutions for businesses.

*The Briar Wire* is produced by the Alumnae Alliance and the staff of the Alumnae House.

Do you have an email address you want to share with us? Do we need to update your information in our database? If so, please give us a call toll-free at (800) 381-6131 or send an email to [alumnae@sbc.edu](mailto:alumnae@sbc.edu).



**“ALUMNAE ALLIANCE COUNCIL” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

**Sarah Clement ’75** was the Chair of Saving Sweet Briar, Inc. and is one of three generations of women in her family to graduate from Sweet Briar. Sarah has been an administrative judge at a federal agency in Arlington, Va., for more than 20 years.

**Margaretta Colangelo ’87** is the founder of Sweet Briar Women in STEM, a group of more than 200 Sweet Briar alumnae who support the STEM program at Sweet Briar through mentoring, internships and networking. Margaretta is President of U1 Technologies and President of her own investment company (Margaretta Colangelo Investments) that makes seed investments in technology startup companies.

**Deirdre “DeDe” Conley ’72** was a coordinating committee member of SBC2.0, where she compiled a rich list of ideas building on Sweet Briar’s strengths from supporters worldwide. DeDe recently retired from the wine business where she worked in sales, management and marketing. She now travels extensively supporting Sweet Briar and projects in the developing world.

**Debra Elkins ’93** brings a background in risk management and strategic planning to the Council, skills that she used to help the organization’s structure and governance. She is now Director of Enterprise Risk Management for the Office of Finance at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Meg Guegan ’92** coordinated the efforts of the Sweet Briar 2.0 News & Media Working Group by harnessing the power of social media and strategic communications during “the recent unpleasantness.” For over 20 years she has worked in the Washington D.C. area in senior level communications roles, most recently at the Cato Institute.

**Phyllis Jordan ’80** served as communications co-chair for the Alumnae Association Board and as class secretary for the class of 1980. She now heads the Alumnae Alliance’s working group responsible for coordinating class notes, class giving and reunion planning. Following a stellar career in journalism, Phyllis now works as a communications consultant for nonprofit organizations focused on breaking the cycle of poverty for low-income children.

**Lisa Longino ’78** served on the Major Donor Task Force working to save Sweet Briar College. She has led her class’s Annual Fund campaign and participated in the AAR program. She is an active member of the Crystal Charity Ball and the Church of the Incarnation Capital Campaign committee in Dallas and is also Vice-Chair of the Board of

Visitors and Capital Campaign co-chair for Camp Sea Gull and Seafarer in North Carolina.

**Beth Ann Newton ’86** started her career in fundraising by working in the Sweet Briar Development Office as a student. Since then she has been a continuous volunteer for Sweet Briar, acting as her reunion giving chair for her class’ 25th, her class president, and most recently using her many years of experience in development on the Major Donor Task Force for Saving Sweet Briar.

**Katie Schellhammer ’95** is one of the founding members of Sweet Briar 2.0 where she tracked the news, helped create and coordinate the working groups, and managed the Facebook page. She is a former grassroots lobbyist who brings collaboration, organization and communication skills to the Alumnae Alliance.

**Julia Schmitz ’03** served a three-year term on the Board of Directors, led her class’s Annual Fund campaign, and served as the Region III chair on the Alumnae Association Board before becoming Admissions Chair, supervising the AAR program. Julia is an assistant professor of Biology at Piedmont College in Athens, Ga.

**Cady Thomas ’98** served as the club chair for the Alumnae Association Board before taking on a similar position in the Alumnae Alliance. She has continued to support the college after graduation, including serving as her class president for the past seven years. Cady is a lawyer who runs her own lobbying and consulting business in Raleigh, N.C.

**Sarah vonRosenberg ’72** is a policy analyst who was a member of the Sweet Briar 2.0 coordinating committee. She currently works full-time with her husband in a forensic psychology practice.

**Kathryn Yunk ’91** has actively recruited for prospective students through AAR and chaired the Milwaukee Sweet Briar Day since 1999. Kathryn previously served as the chair of Region 4 (aka the Midwest) on the Alumnae Association Board. Kathryn is an award winning global marketing communications leader at the General Electric Company.

**Alice Dixon ’82, Board of Directors Liaison**

Alice chairs the Board of Directors Alumnae Committee and led the process of creating the Alumnae Alliance. She will continue as the Alliance’s liaison to the board. After working in the pharmaceutical industry in Richmond, she went into the residential mortgage-lending field, where she earned the Certified Professional Mortgage Specialist designation. She later decided that teaching is her true passion, and is now a chemistry teacher at the Collegiate School in Richmond.