

# The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 7

## My fellow alumnae and friends,

**Greetings to all of you in what is described by so many as a year like no other.** We hope you and your family are well and safe and that you have been able to navigate the impacts of COVID-19 without sorrow or economic hardship.

Here at the College we now have reopened with an extensive detailed plan (visit [sbc.edu/covid-19](http://sbc.edu/covid-19)-information) and are thrilled to have our Sweet Briar students back in this special environment. We are all doing our very best to deliver an unparalleled education while also extremely focused on the safety and health of our students and campus community.

Below, I wanted to share President Meredith Woo's remarks from Opening Convocation. Imagine yourself in the Dell on a bright summer day with blue skies above starting a new year filled with hope as you read her words.

With gratitude,

Mary Pope M. Hutson '83

Vice President for Alumnae Relations, Development and Communications

## President Meredith Woo's 2020 Convocation Remarks

*This is a brilliant day that displays without much modesty the stunning beauty of the Virginian Piedmont. I am glad we are holding the fall convocation for 2020 here on the dell. From here you will behold the campus created by the great American architect, Ralph Adams Cram, as it was supposed to be seen – your eyes will gaze upward to the majestic ridge upon which the College's initial buildings sit. It is meant to be awe-inspiring in its magnificence.*

*There is another kind of magnificence associated with this occasion. In eight days, we will be celebrating the centennial of the ratification of the*



*19th amendment to the United States Constitution that finally granted women the right to vote. This came at long last, after a century or more of agitation and protest, at local and national levels, at home and at work, dividing wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters against husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. But at long last it came.*

*It also came in the aftermath of the deadliest disease event in the history of humanity. We don't know where the 1918 pandemic influenza, also known as the Spanish flu, came from – maybe it was from a Kansas army base, maybe it was in the trenches in France during World War I, or maybe it was from southern China – but it came with a devastating force. The most recent revision of global mortality from the 1918 flu puts it at 50 million people – with most casualties occurring in the areas soon to be known as the Third World and therefore simply ignored. The deaths in India alone could have been 20 million.*

*After a century we have come a full circle. We have a pandemic reminiscent of the 1918 flu that is global in scope – and in its midst, a push for racial equality and inclusion that has been too long in coming. There is a profound simplicity in three words: Black lives matter.*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## Board of Directors of Sweet Briar College

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Dr. Meredith Woo,

President of the College

Andrew C. Benjamin, Vice Chair

Marianne "Mimi" C. Fahs '71,

Executive Committee Member at  
Large

Kelley Manderson Fitzpatrick '85,  
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Large

Carol McMurtry Fowler '57

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Fred "Buzzy" Griffin, Secretary

Martha Holland '72

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Michelle O'Neill '85

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Mason Bennett Rummel '83, Chair of  
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## Alumnae Relations and Development Staff

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

Lea Sparks Bennett '83, Alumnae  
Relations and Development  
Assistant

Lee Anne MacKenzie Chaskes '83,  
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Debbie Cochran, Executive Assistant

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Relations and Development  
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Margaret McClellan Driscoll '92,  
Major Gifts Officer

Paula Eanes, Office Manager

Heather Colson Ewing '90,  
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Claire Dennison Griffith '80,  
Senior Director of Alumnae Relations  
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Lea Harvey '90, Director of  
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Sarah Lewis, Associate Director of  
Stewardship

Lisa Wray Longino '78, Director of  
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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

*By virtue of who you are – Sweet Briar women at this time and in this place – you have a responsibility like no other, like no students in other colleges.*

*Sweet Briar College is a college created with the sole purpose to educate women, so that you can realize your full potential as human beings in an environment without misogyny or intimidation. Gender equity is your birth right, then; it is also your responsibility. Just as for a century, women agitated to acquire voting rights, I hope you will continue to agitate, agitate, and agitate for your rights and rights of others who are marginalized, as women have been.*

*As a Sweet Briar woman, in a college with 2,840 acres of spectacular beauty and ecological wonder, you also have responsibility to steward this land. It is a complex responsibility. The pandemics*

*we experience today, moving between the species, are the by-products of wildlife trade and habitat destruction, connected with logging and deforestation, that threaten human health as well as regional diversity. Combine that with a corporate "livestock revolution" and Third World urbanization, and the extraordinary Darwinian mutability is turned into dangerous biological forces.*

*These are big responsibilities you have. They come with the privilege of being Sweet Briar women – women who will inherit and own the twenty first century. When you lift your sight to the Ralph Adams Cram buildings, you realize that this college was meant, from its inception, to be a magnificent college – and like you, with a magnificent responsibility.*

*I wish you Godspeed, and a great academic year. ■*

## Announcing the 2020-2021 Sweet Briar Fund!

Unrestricted goal: \$5,000,000

Restricted goal: \$500,000

Alumnae participation goal: 30%

The Sweet Briar Fund supports the College's greatest needs, including:

- students, through scholarships;
- faculty, through professional development and support of academic innovations;
- the stewardship and maintenance of Sweet Briar's historic campus; and
- costs associated with the impact of COVID-19.

Gifts from alumnae count toward class giving and participation. For a gift to count in the 2020 calendar year, it must be received no later than December 31, 2020. For a gift to count in the 2021 fiscal year, it must be received no later than June 30, 2021.

Gifts can be made by credit card online at [sbc.edu/give](https://sbc.edu/give). Please mail checks to P. O. Box 1057, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. For other types of gifts, please call the Alumnae Relations and Development Office at 434-381-6131.



## Enhancements to Sweet Briar's On-Campus Health Services



In June, as Sweet Briar's administration, faculty and staff began planning for a return to campus, it was clear that one of the most important things the College had to do was to add a new health clinic.

Within weeks, Athletics Director Jodi Canfield, who is heading up the College's COVID-19 Task Force, and Vice President for Finance, Operations and Auxiliary Enterprises Luther Griffith had reviewed possible on-campus locations and interviewed three architectural and construction firms. Ultimately, the lower level of Memorial Chapel was selected as the best location because it has plenty of space with easy access for emergency vehicles. Given the necessity to complete the \$500,000 renovation quickly, this choice gave the College the best opportunity to provide comprehensive health services in a central location.

For the first few weeks of school, a temporary space was set up in Reid Pit while the contractors put the finishing touches on the center, but now, it's open and serving Sweet Briar students.

Upon entering the new center, students are greeted by a large, open waiting area. Also near the front door: a 24/7 tele-health room that students can access using their Sweet Briar ID card. In addition to three exam rooms, there is a separate entrance and additional exam room for people who may have been exposed to COVID-19. The new center has enough space to support the health and well-being of up to 700 students.

The center will provide health care only for students, except in the case of a need for COVID-19 testing. Any member of the campus community may be tested for COVID-19 at the health center. Individuals who are symptomatic or who have known exposure to the novel coronavirus will be tested at no charge.



*Almost ready!*

Quest Diagnostics is providing the test kits and HealthWorks does the test administration. Asymptomatic testing may be provided for a fee.

The health center will be staffed by a nurse practitioner or registered nurse as part of a partnership between Sweet Briar and Healthworks, Central Virginia's only comprehensive occupational health and workplace wellness provider. As part of Centra Health, the partnership with Health Works ensures that Sweet Briar has access to the best medical expertise available in the area.

All student health needs can be met by the new center, not simply those related to COVID-19. Horizon Behavioral Health, which has been supporting student mental health at Sweet Briar for several years, will also operate out of the center. The center accepts student insurance for care. ■



## Additional updates on the renovation of the Bailey Room and Howell Lykes Colton '38 Stables

As you travel down Stable Road and approach the Harriet Howell Rogers Riding Center, the excitement in the air is as thick as the grass is green in the fields. The first improvements that catch your eye are the brand-new sliding barn doors that cap the ends of the West and East Wings.

Over the past four months, construction crews have taken over and worked tirelessly to make an equestrian dream come true. The extensive renovations to the West and East Wings, the Cronin Yard and the Bailey Room are well underway, and horses already have moved back in to the new West Wing.

"By updating our facilities, the riding center can continue to match the caliber of our students and quality of our program," says Merrilee "Mimi" Wroten, director of the riding program. "We've always recruited students that are successful scholars, riders and athletes. Now, the newly renovated stables mirror who we, and they, truly are."



slip, cushioned pavers to the gorgeous new stalls with sliding doors to the abundance of bright overhead lighting. A great amount of thought went into creating such an excellent environment for our horses, students and staff.

Each of the 49 stalls in both wings are purposefully designed with the horse's and human's comfort, convenience and safety in mind. Each horse has an overhead fan and feeding stations and automatic waterers are precisely laid out. Covered groom boxes were custom-made for each stall that has, on the front, a place to include information and notes on that particular horse. The tack rooms also are being updated with beautiful wood paneling, climate control, and a sink and cleaning station on an island in the center of the room with plenty of recessed lighting.

But none of these renovations to the West and East Wings would be possible without the generosity of philanthropist, Richard C. Colton, Jr., and his gift of \$1 million. The stables will be named the Howell Lykes Colton '38 Stables in honor of his mother.



Since the College moved to online learning last semester, construction was able to start ahead of schedule in April. Beginning with stall and floor demolition in the West Wing of the stables, followed shortly by the East Wing, the scale of the project was evident as you stood in the open, cleaned out shell space. Sweet Briar staff involved in the project—being highly tuned in to the benefits of repurposing and sustainability—kept a sharp eye out for any wood or other materials that could be salvaged for future use.

For those of us that spent time at the stables over the past 49 years, the original facilities will always hold a special place in our hearts, filled with memories of opening the wire mesh stall doors for early morning grooming, hearing the sound of hooves on the concrete aisleway, organizing the grooming shelves near the cross-ties, sharing the small sink in the tack rooms to clean all that leather and, of course, naps on the Bailey Room couch—if you know, you know!

Now, as you walk through the state-of-the-art West Wing, you can't help but pause to take it all in. Your eye jumps from the multi-surface aisleway with non-





"The new stalls, tack rooms and aisleways will make a huge impact for many years to come, enabling students to pursue their equestrian goals in the best environment possible," says Mimi.

Between the two stable wings is the Cronin Yard, the central courtyard which serves as a gathering and mounting area plus leads people to the main entrance through the Bailey Room. The courtyard is undergoing its own beautification project, which will make it even more of a favorite location for a photo opp.

The Bailey Room has always served as the main lounge, teaching space, indoor arena viewing area and staff offices. It's a favorite place to relax and recuperate as well as learn about riding theory and connect with friends. Now, because of a lead gift through the generosity of William Passano in memory of his wife, Honey '55 and an anonymous donor, the Bailey Room will meet all the contemporary needs of our growing program. Numerous large windows will open up the view of the indoor arena, a better-equipped kitchen and lounge area for staff and a dedicated teaching space will boost the experience of learning about theory, management, training and equine health.

While Mimi is eagerly looking towards what the future has in store once renovations are complete, she



is quick to comment how grateful the riding program and entire College are to be the recipient of such generous gifts. "To have received such a significant boost to the riding program is remarkable. They have opened the door to elevating the quality of our facilities to be among the top in the nation—a status that we claimed when the Harriet Howell Rogers Riding Center was first built in 1971." ■

## First virtual summer session offers new learning experiences

This summer was truly unusual to say the least. Many changes and decisions were implemented in order to reopen campus as safely as possible and allow for our students to experience college in-person.

Some of these changes brought new meaning to summer experiences for Sweet Briar students, alumnae and friends. This year was the first time online summer sessions were ever offered. Not only was this the first time students could take classes online during the summer, but it was a new opportunity allowing the Sweet Briar community and alumnae to continue life-long learning. The courses were offered to students for credit and as an option to audit them for others that were interested. There was a total of six courses that students and alumnae participated in, which started June 15 and ran through July 27.

Assistant engineering professor Michelle Gervasio taught CORE 160: STEM in Society. When asked about sessions being virtual, she said, "I really enjoyed working through the challenges of how to design experiments that everyone could do with things they had around the house, but were still up to the usual standards of rigor expected during more typical in-person terms. I also really enjoyed that the very small class size helped to facilitate conversation whenever a subjective question of ethics or philosophy inevitably came up."

The summer sessions were clearly enjoyed by those participating. Associate professor of art history,

Kimberly Morse Jones taught CORE 130 Women and Gender in the World. She said, "I hope the college offers summer courses again in the future. I've been teaching for 15 years, and this summer session was by far one of my most memorable experiences as a professor."

The full list of courses initially offered this summer included:

CORE 120: The Mindful Writer

CORE 130: Women and Gender in the World

CORE 160: STEM in Society

CORE 180: Dollars and Sense

BUSN 127: Accounting I

BUSN 155: Computer Applications for Business

MUSC 143: "Ok, Boomer: Three Generations of Rock Music"

POLS 159: Introduction to American Government

ARAS 216: Magic and Witchcraft in the Ancient World

POLS 214: Modern Middle East

EDUC 313: Adapting for Diverse Learners in General Education K-12



## Call to Action for Admissions: Book Award Program

We need your help to promote Sweet Briar and support the admissions effort by offering your time and talents to expand the Sweet Briar College Book Award program! The process of rewarding a deserving high school student for her distinguished accomplishments will affirm Sweet Briar's academic prominence and permanence.

Held at the conclusion of the academic year, high school awards ceremonies provide the opportunity to celebrate the academic, athletic and personal achievements of students from all grades. These special occasions are usually attended by students and families as well as the faculty and staff of the high school. Sponsors of awards are varied including local and national organizations as well as institutions of higher learning. Criteria for the awards are decided by the awarding organization and the school administration selects the recipient.

For several years, the Sweet Briar College Book Award has been presented to exceptional juniors who are independently minded, community driven, intellectually curious and fiercely determined to set and achieve goals. Awards were given to students from high schools in Alabama, Illinois, Massachusetts and Virginia. This year, 11 alumnae had identified high schools where they planned to present the award but, sadly, most awards ceremonies were cancelled or postponed. We are fiercely determined to provide the opportunity for awards to be given in the spring of 2021 whether the ceremonies are held virtually or in person.

Guidelines and a timeline will be available to anyone

who would like to participate. Here are the basic requirements for this volunteer opportunity:

- Identify the school and obtain the name of the school staff member you will contact regarding an awards program.
- E-mail Book Award Chair Ellen H. Saunders and Admissions Ambassador Manager Heather C. Ewing to provide the name of the high school where you would like to present an award. We will review the request to ensure there are no duplications.
- Communicate with the high school regarding the date of the awards program and the selection of the recipient.
- Select and purchase the book from the recommended list provided by the College.

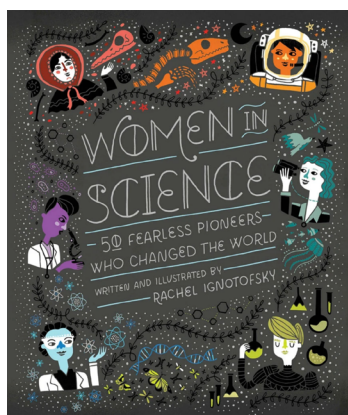
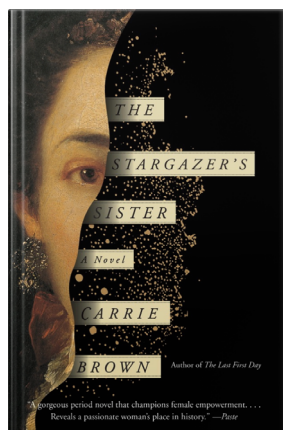
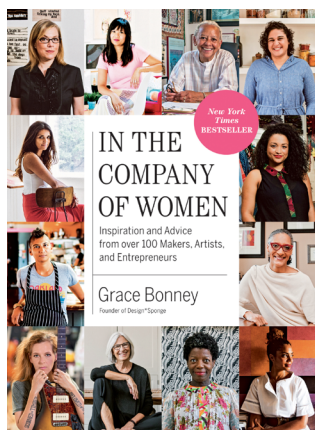
We would like for an alumna to present the book award to the recipient; however, we recognize that this year we cannot predict how awards ceremonies will occur.

If you have any questions and/or if you would like to register, please contact Ellen and Heather at the e-mail addresses below. Please remember that a comprehensive list of guidelines and dates by which they need to be accomplished will be provided with most of the deadlines occurring after January 2021.

We can think of no better way to honor the great work accomplished by so many before us than by volunteering to help improve and expand this important outreach by our beloved College. ■

Ellen H. Saunders  
[wgsehs@aol.com](mailto:wgsehs@aol.com)  
757-650-8214

Heather C. Ewing  
[hewing@sbc.edu](mailto:hewing@sbc.edu)  
404-213-3516



**Books  
awarded  
to 2020  
Book Award  
recipients**

### Refer a Student to Sweet Briar!

Sweet Briar is asking alumnae and friends of the College to personally refer prospective students to the Admissions Office through a new referral form that can be found on both the Admissions and Alumnae pages of our website as part of a referral initiative. There is no time commitment or follow-up required, so please keep it in mind as a simple but significant way to help Sweet Briar's growth and renaissance. Visit [sbc.edu/admissions/refer-a-student](https://sbc.edu/admissions/refer-a-student) to make your first referral today!



## Sweet Briar adds two new members to its Board of Directors

Martha Holland graduated from Sweet Briar College, with a BA in Physics, in 1972. She began her career working in the federal government for the Federal Energy Administration (now the Department of Energy) and then the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.



Martha then turned to a legal career, graduating from Georgetown University School of Law in 1980. She worked in the legal department of the Detroit Edison Company and served as a lawyer for ANR Pipeline Company in Detroit during that decade. Since then, Martha has served as a volunteer and fundraiser.

For the last thirty years, Martha Holland has been a key supporter of Sweet Briar College. In addition to supporting the College with significant gifts, Martha serves as a member of the Class of '72's prolific fundraising team. She served as Co-chair of the Class of '72's 30th reunion, and as the Treasurer of the Sweet Briar Club of Washington, D.C. She, also, volunteered and raised funds for her children's elementary and high schools: National Presbyterian School, National Cathedral School and Saint Andrew's Episcopal School. She served as PTA President of National Presbyterian School and as an ex officio member of its Board of Directors.

Richard Myers serves as Deputy Provost for Resource Planning at Princeton University, advising the Provost and other senior leaders on the alignment of Princeton's operating and capital budgets with the University's longer term priorities and strategy, assists in the implementation of strategic initiatives, and promotes a robust analytical environment to support decision-making and planning.



Prior to Princeton, Richard was Senior Associate Dean in the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at the University of Virginia, where he served as the chief operating officer for the school and coordinated academic and administrative planning. He has also served as the chief planning and budget officer at Smith College and as associate provost at Williams College. Richard was born and grew up in the Shenandoah Valley and holds three degrees, including a Ph.D., from the University of Virginia. He has been active in community and professional service, including contributions as a church school teacher and vestry member in the Episcopal Church, service as an elected school board member, and numerous roles on accrediting and consulting teams for colleges and universities.

## Update on 2020 fall sports at Sweet Briar

After extensive deliberations, the Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) Presidents Council voted to postpone conference competition and championships for fall and winter sports through the end of the 2020 calendar year (December 31). The ODAC remains focused on providing meaningful competition for all student-athletes in 2020-21, which includes an intention to sponsor conference competition for fall and winter sports in the spring semester.

Sweet Briar College student-athletes began regularly scheduled team activities, including practices, skill instruction and strength and conditioning on August 10, with the intent to provide the most complete experience possible for student-athletes. The scheduling change will allow more time for individual and team skill instruction, leadership development and team bonding.

With a priority to help ensure the safe reopening of the Sweet Briar College campus for classes and other on-campus activities, Sweet Briar athletics will continue to evaluate the possibility for intercollegiate competition during the 2020 calendar year outside of the traditional ODAC schedule, with an emphasis



on the safe progression through the three-week on-campus term.

"Our coaches will keep our student-athletes engaged with emphasis on skill development, strength and conditioning, leadership and team-building activities," said Sweet Briar College Athletics Director Jodi Canfield. "We need to see this as an opportunity to have very focused, intentional conversations about

**"SPORTS," CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**





Alumnae Relations and  
Development  
P.O. Box 1057  
Sweet Briar, VA 24595

### RECRUIT A STUDENT

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

### "SPORTS," CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

sport, health, wellness, and teamwork. The campus of Sweet Briar is the most beautiful place to have these conversations."

With a campus of 2,840 acres suitable for safe and spacious wellness and recreational activities, Sweet Briar athletics intends to make full use of outdoor resources on campus.

To help the ODAC and its member schools provide their student-athletes with the most complete athletic experience possible, NCAA Division III is considering a blanket waiver that would provide unprecedented scheduling flexibility.

Sweet Briar and the ODAC will continue to explore all options for a safe return to intercollegiate athletics. The ODAC leadership will communicate further developments regarding competition in 2020-21 as solutions are finalized and implemented.

"The conference's leadership worked extremely hard to explore ways we might have conducted conference championships and competition in the fall," explained ODAC Commissioner Brad Bankston. "Those conversations involved a number of options, but none of them could change the current impact of the virus and its prevalence in our society. A safe return for students and the sustainability of campus life is a priority for all our members." ■

