

The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2019 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 10

My fellow alumnae and friends,

The pace of this season and all of the messaging, emails, billboards and banners drive each of us into a frenetic pace. As consumers, we are prone to feeling the marketing nudge to buy quickly, rather than thinking about that “one special” gift. The pace of this season also diverts our attention away from certain institutions and their impact.

Sweet Briar College is poised to enter another calendar year – one that marks a century of women’s suffrage in the United States. However, in many other parts of the world, women still do not have that basic right and opportunity. Women’s leadership and the education of women has never been more important than it is today. At Sweet Briar College, that is our singular focus and because it is, we offer our students an experience that is innovative, interdisciplinary and unparalleled.

During this season of giving, take a few moments to think about the one special gift that you might give to 352 young women at Sweet Briar. You can give them an opportunity to learn how to be leaders, to find solutions to intricate problems, and to build communities and lift each other up. Your gift can also ensure that we are able to care for our spectacular campus and the dedicated faculty and staff who prepare these young women for the next century of service to their communities and society.

Your gift to Sweet Briar is the best gift this year for our students, faculty, and academic programs; it is enduring and priceless. **Thank you** for being committed to the important work we do here and for making a difference to the current generation of Sweet Briar women who we know will have a real impact on the world for the next 100 years.

With gratitude,

Mary Pope M. Hutson, '83

Vice President of Alumnae Relations, Development and Communications



The Sweet Briar campus community gathered for its annual Holiday Pops and Vespers concert on December 1, which included an appearance by the Sweet Tones!



Isabel Joyner '20 was one of several of our riders who rode some of our horses to the Quad for the 2019 Tree Lighting. Isabel is pictured here riding Nova.

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\$5 million gift to Sweet Briar College will expand its Presidential Scholars program



President Meredith Woo and guests at a Presidential Scholars Weekend in the Mary Helen Cochran Library.

A \$5 million gift from an anonymous donor will enable Sweet Briar College to significantly expand its prestigious Presidential Scholars Program, the College's highest scholarship award.

This award, one of a number of significant recent investments in Sweet Briar, demonstrates the commitment of Sweet Briar's alumnae and friends to President Meredith Woo's vision for the College, which focuses on Presidential Scholarships, academic innovation and the stewardship of the College's built and natural environment.

Presidential Scholarships offer full and partial tuition scholarships to Sweet Briar's top student candidates based on quantifiable academic achievements and a rigorous on-campus, invitation-only interview process. The average high school GPA of the College's Presidential Scholars is 3.96. Currently, the College offers scholarships to 30 students; the gift allows the College to expand the number of participants by 40 percent.

"These scholarships will help make Sweet Briar the college of choice for some of the nation's brightest young women," said Sweet Briar President Meredith Woo. "I am deeply grateful to our donor and I look forward to meeting the amazing students who will, thanks to

her help, become Sweet Briar women."

Woo anticipates that within 15 years, Presidential Scholars will make up 10-12% of the student body.

In addition to increasing the number of students awarded the scholarships, the program's expansion will allow for the enhancement of the scholars' experiences through the addition of on- and off-campus academic and professional enrichment activities.

Sweet Briar, known for having one of the country's most beautiful campuses, with its historic Georgian Revival architecture by Ralph Adams Cram and its 3,250 acres of rolling hills, forests, and fields, was named as one of the nation's most innovative colleges by U.S. News and World Report for 2019 and is increasingly recognized for its curricular emphasis on women's leadership.

"We are so grateful to the generous alumnae of this College," Woo says. "Sweet Briar is a place where every gift can make a huge difference in the lives of future women leaders." ■

Originally posted on sbc.edu/news on November 19, 2019.

John Nau joins two alumnae in \$3 million gift for Sweet Briar College's leadership core curriculum



Philanthropist John Nau, along with two Sweet Briar alumnae, Virginia “Ginger” Cates Mitchell ’63 and an anonymous donor, have pledged a total of \$3 million to support Sweet Briar College’s innovative leadership core curriculum.

This combined award, one of a number of significant recent investments in Sweet Briar, demonstrates the commitment of its alumnae and friends to President Meredith Woo’s vision for the College, which focuses on academic innovation, an expansion of the Presidential Scholarship program and stewardship of its built and natural environment.

The core consists of ten courses designed to inculcate the habits of mind and skills needed for democratic and collaborative leadership, such as problem solving, creative expression, persuasive communication, ethical thinking, scientific literacy and financial competence. Six core courses were launched in the 2018-2019 academic year; the remaining four are being taught for the first time this year, including the capstone course, The Consequential Citizen, which focuses on teaching the founding principles of America. The phased rollout allows the College’s faculty and administration to assess what is working, what needs refining and what additional resources are required to support the core.

This \$3 million gift for the leadership core will fund faculty development to refresh and update course content within the context of a changing world; support learning activities that take place beyond the classroom, such as domestic and international field trips; and enhance core courses with guest speakers, visiting professorships, symposia and other special events.

“Gifts to the academic program,” said President Woo, “allow Sweet Briar to offer a superlative education that is relevant to the needs of our time, preparing women to take ownership of solutions to global challenges and opportunities. I am profoundly grateful to these three

donors.”

John Nau, a graduate of the University of Virginia and former member of its board of visitors, is a life-long student of American history, particularly of the Civil War era, and is committed to the preservation of national parks and significant historic sites. He cares deeply about America’s place in the world and, as the father of two daughters and two granddaughters, wants to help ensure that women are integral to the nation’s global leadership.

The two alumnae donors exemplify the tradition of strong women leaders produced by Sweet Briar College. Ginger Mitchell, who has contributed to the College for decades and is a passionate advocate for homeless women and their children, has been closely involved with the Atlanta Children’s Shelter, the Atlanta Day Shelter for Women and Children and continues to volunteer as a tutor for young children in her local community. The anonymous donor, a business and community leader, is also a long-term supporter of her alma mater.

Sweet Briar, known for having one of the country’s most beautiful campuses, with its historic Georgian Revival architecture by Ralph Adams Cram and its 3,250 acres of rolling hills, forests, and fields, was named as one of the nation’s most innovative colleges by U.S. News and World Report for 2019 and is increasingly recognized for its curricular emphasis on women’s leadership.

“When I look at Sweet Briar’s alumnae, I see women who carry all before them in their families, communities, and places of business, women who work together to get things done,” said President Woo. “At Sweet Briar, we believe we can mindfully teach an ideal type of leadership. Our leadership core formalizes the traits that have always been the hallmarks of good leadership and intentionally cultivates them. Women who want to be leaders are welcome at Sweet Briar.” ■

Originally posted on sbc.edu/news on December 2, 2019.

Sweet Briar College names Aaron Basko as vice president for enrollment management

Sweet Briar College has announced that Aaron Basko will be its next vice president for enrollment management. Basko is an experienced admissions professional who comes to Sweet Briar from Salisbury University in Maryland, where he served as assistant vice president of enrollment management and career services. He will begin his tenure at Sweet Briar on Jan. 15, 2020. In this role, Basko will have oversight of a range of activities and initiatives related to enrollment management at Sweet Briar, including the Offices of Admissions and Financial Aid.

"This is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to join in the vision of Sweet Briar College as it re-invents higher education for young women," says Basko. "Sweet Briar's entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to a personalized educational experience for each of its students make it the perfect place for smart, bold women who are ready to make an impact. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead Sweet Briar's enrollment team and to help students across the country discover this amazing place."

Basko has already demonstrated the ability to implement strategic initiatives, build successful teams, cultivate strategic relationships and manage staff and financial resources effectively. While at Salisbury, Basko led a team of professionals in admissions, financial aid, career services and the volunteer center. He spearheaded the creation of two campus-wide enrollment master plans, one of which garnered a commendation in the university's Middle States reaccreditation process. He and his team delivered the largest and most diverse incoming classes in university history, including a 14% increase in first-time students and a 20% increase in diversity in the fall 2019 incoming class. Beyond his work in admissions, Basko also launched a multi-divisional "Retention Think Tank" to create and implement initiatives that helped to significantly improve the university's retention rate.

In addition, Basko has considerable experience in international enrollment. While at Salisbury, he designed an updated international student recruitment strategy and traveled in China, Japan, and India to network for new recruitment opportunities. His work tripled the university's international enrollment in five years.

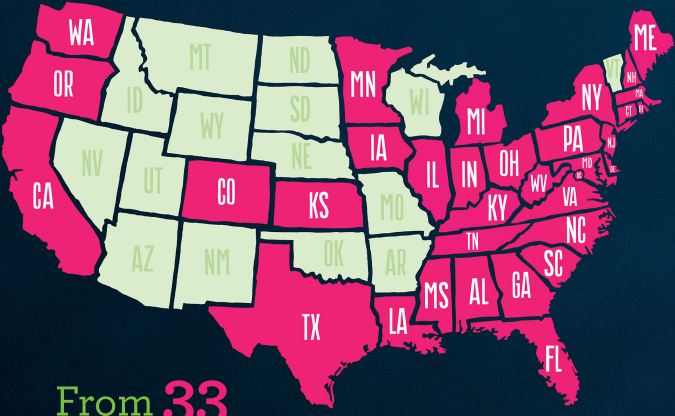
Prior to his work at Salisbury University, Basko also worked at Franklin & Marshall College in Pennsylvania and Rivier College in New Hampshire. He is the author of three books, "The Homeschool College Planner," "What's Your Function?" and "Help Wanted: Devotions for Job Seekers." He has also written a number of articles and white papers on recruitment and retention as well as career services issues.

Basko received his bachelor of arts degree in international studies from West Virginia Wesleyan University, where he was a Wesleyan Scholar, a finalist for the Truman Scholarship and graduated summa cum laude. He earned his master of arts in history, with a focus

on Latin America from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While at the university, he was a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow (FLAS). In 2015, he received the U.S. Fulbright International Education Administrator Award.

In announcing his appointment, Sweet Briar President Meredith Woo noted, "In the highly competitive college admissions market, where enrollment professionals often move quickly from job to job, Aaron truly stood out—not only for his wide-ranging experience and his impressive record in recruiting and retaining great students—but for putting down roots at the institutions he served. I know he looks forward to being part of the Sweet Briar community for years to come and that he shares our commitment to educating women who will be responsible, ethical, leaders. I welcome him to our team and to the College." ■

MEET OUR STUDENTS



From **33** states and **9** countries.

Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Hungary, India, Mongolia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia

SWEET BRIAR
COLLEGE



Vixens ranked ninth in fences top-10

Following a fall half to the season that saw Sweet Briar earn three team wins over fences, the Vixens were announced as the ninth-ranked team over fences in the initial National Collegiate Equestrian Association Event Rankings, as announced on Nov. 26.

Sweet Briar opened the season with a 3-2 advantage over fences against Fresno State. Later in the fall, the Vixens drew even on points with TCU over fences, but the Horned Frogs held the advantage on the raw score.

The final two meets of the fall season saw Sweet Briar hold the raw score advantages over both SUNY New Paltz and Delaware State.

Individually, first-year Sophia Kane (Carbondale, Colo.) earned Most Outstanding Performer honors over fences against SUNY New Paltz, while junior Katie Balding (Williamsburg, Va.) picked up the same honor against Delaware State.

Balding and fellow junior Lily Peterson (Ashland, Va.) both have been recognized this season by the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference as Fences Rider of the Week.

The NCEA Event Rankings are determined by the NCEA Selection Committee based on head-to-head



Sophia Kane '23

competition and a variety of data points.

Event rankings will be used to seed teams for the event title competitions at the NCEA National Championships in Waco, Texas in April.

Sweet Briar will return to competition on January 31 with meets in Bythewood, SC against University of South Carolina and South Dakota State. ■

Sweet Briar student wins award at NFFTY, world's top film festival for emerging directors

Sweet Briar College student Catherine McCord '23 capped an "incredible weekend" at the National Film Festival for Talented Youth in Seattle, Wash., on Oct. 24-27 with the Kathy Reichgerdt Inspiration Award for her documentary "You're Gonna Be Okay."

"I feel so honored," McCord wrote in an email after returning to campus. And she should be. NFFTY is the world's largest and most influential film festival for emerging directors, showcasing work by filmmakers 24 and younger from across the globe. The inspiration award is named after NFFTY's silent co-founder, who died last year from cancer.

McCord's documentary, which was screened on opening night, deals with a similarly life-threatening event. After undergoing open-heart surgery earlier this year to repair a damaged valve due to endocarditis, a rare heart disease, the 18-year-old filmmaker recalls intimate moments in her life, blending vintage home movies and voicemails with the present, recounting her recovery.

"People have asked me why I chose to make the film when I did," McCord says. "I truly believe that in any art form, who you are when you make a film reflects your thoughts, feelings and perspective of that moment in time. Had I made it later, one or two years after my surgery, the story would be so different. I'm glad I made it when I was still in the early stages of recovery because I know that years down the road, I will be grateful to look back and remember how I felt and the people in my story who made such a difference."

Thousands of other young filmmakers attended the 2019 festival, which featured more than 287 films from 24 states and 24 countries. The awards ceremony took place on Sunday night, after McCord had spent the weekend



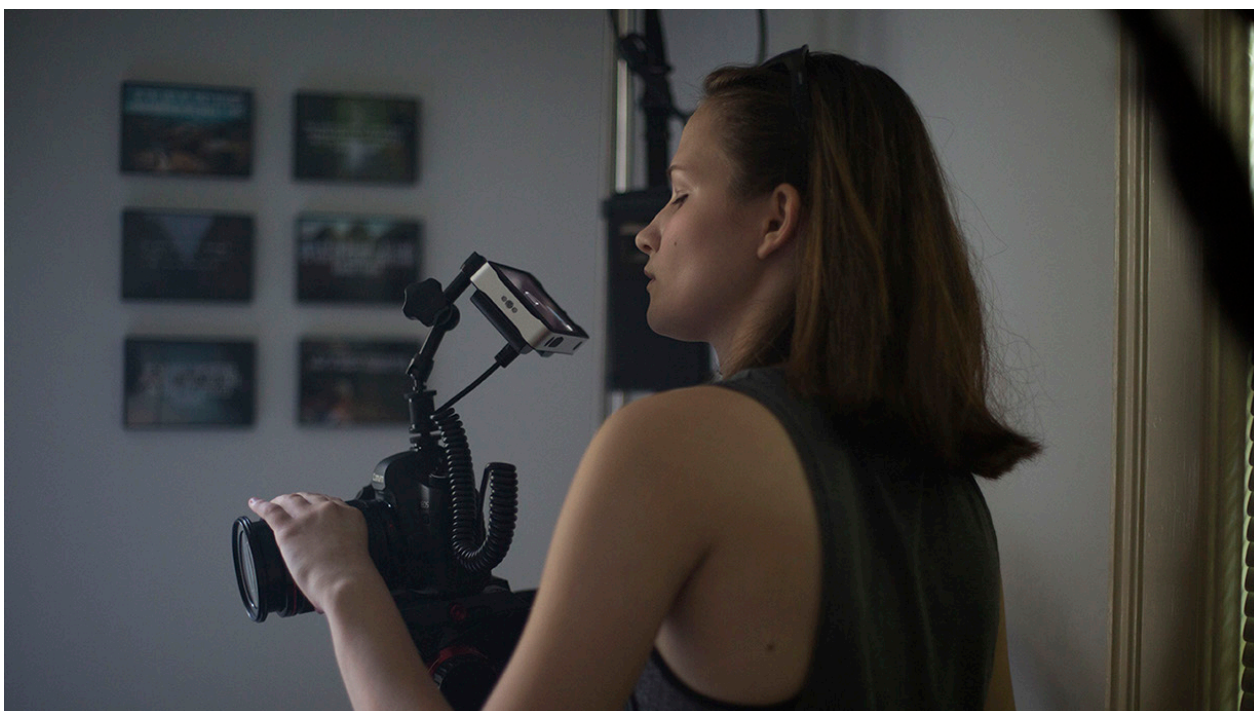
watching nearly 100 short films at 40 separate screenings. The festival also featured a number of panels, workshops, parties and networking opportunities.

It was McCord's second time at NFFTY and her second award — in 2018, she was crowned Best High School Filmmaker and given a \$40,000 scholarship. A graduate of E.C. Glass High School in Lynchburg, McCord caught *The News & Advance's* attention several years ago when her film "A Dad's Letter" was screened at The White House Film Festival and South by South Lawn (SXSL) in 2015. The paper's Emma Schkloven interviewed McCord for another feature article last year when "Come Back to Me," a narrative short film about gun control, won the Best Young Filmmaker category in Australia's My Røde Reel competition before it was screened at NFFTY 2018.

"I've realized that the stories I feel most fulfilled in are ones that promote empathy and ones that can show someone's experiences in a way where a viewer can relate to them and see themselves up on the screen or get a new perspective about something," McCord told Schkloven then — just months before she was

diagnosed with a heart condition that nearly ended her young life and career.

McCord had been making films since she was 12 years old and graduated from high school two years early — to focus more fully on her passion, she says. Her illness forced her to take a step back last year. She had wanted to go to film school, she says, but for



McCord behind the scenes

now, she is staying close to home and her medical team. Enrolling at Sweet Briar this year made a lot of sense because her mother, Rebecca McCord, is a professor emerita, retiring in 2013 after nearly 30 years. Room 127 in the Babcock Fine Arts Center was renovated in her honor in 2012 by alumnae and friends.

"I grew up on the Sweet Briar campus," McCord says. "[My mother] encouraged my attendance at musical, theatrical, dance and studio arts events on campus, and I know the faculty well."

While Sweet Briar doesn't have a film production major, McCord is concentrating on the leadership core curriculum, a modern version of general education requirements. She is a Presidential Scholar, an honors student, a Live Más Scholar through the Taco Bell Foundation and a Leopold Schepp Foundation Scholar. She also serves on Sweet Briar's Student Advisory Board for the Center for Creativity, Design and the Arts and the Lectures and Events Committee.

"I love the College and have so many wonderful memories here," she says.

In between classes, McCord continues to focus on her career — and chances are we will hear a lot more from her in the coming years.

Even before NFFTY, "You're Gonna Be Okay" was selected by Mended Little Hearts as a public relations piece and was a prize winner in the iFootage International Creative Competition in Beijing.

"I made the film as a way to help myself through the recovery process and to thank my incredible medical team and family for being there for me," McCord explains. "The idea that it could go beyond that and reach others, too, is so fulfilling." ■

Nominations open for Outstanding and Distinguished Alumna Awards

Nominations for the 2019 recipients of the Outstanding and Distinguished Alumnae Awards are now open. To submit your nomination or view past recipients of these awards, please visit sweetbriar.imodules.com/awards or call 800-381-6131. Nominations for both awards are reviewed and recipients are selected by the Alumnae Alliance Council and the President's Council of the College. Nominations are invited from any member of the Sweet Briar family: alumnae, faculty, staff, students and the Sweet Briar College Board of Directors.

Distinguished Alumna Award

The Distinguished Alumna Award was created to honor alumnae who have brought distinction to themselves and to Sweet Briar College through outstanding accomplishment in a volunteer or professional capacity.

Outstanding Alumna Award

This award may be given to graduate alumnae who have been out of college for at least 15 years in recognition of their outstanding service to Sweet Briar in a volunteer capacity.

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YOU'RE INVITED TO SWEET BRIAR DAY



Date	Location
Jan. 4	Asheville, NC Boston, MA Charlottesville, VA Orlando, FL Philadelphia, PA San Francisco, CA Houston, TX
Jan. 5	Charlotte, NC Detroit, MI Hampton Roads, VA Miami, FL Milwaukee, WI Philadelphia, PA Triangle Club of North Carolina
Jan. 9	Richmond, VA

Date	Location
Jan. 10	Amherst/Nelson, VA
Jan. 11	Arizona Atlanta, GA Cleveland, OH Fredericksburg, VA Hunt Country, VA Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN Washington
Jan. 12	New Jersey
Jan. 15	Vero Beach, FL
Jan. 18	Charleston, SC Oregon
Jan. 25	Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
Jan. 26	Broward/South Palm Beach County, FL

Celebrations are open to all alumnae. Please RSVP by emailing
Rachel Pietsch at rpietsch@sbc.edu or calling 434-381-6163.