



# The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 | FEBRUARY 2023

## My dear fellow alumnae and friends,

During February, one of the coldest months of winter, I am reminded that many of you cannot easily escape from your homes to see family and friends due to the treacherous weather conditions such as bitter cold, snow, wind and ice. For the rest of us who may be in warmer areas, it is also a time when we are indoors much of the time due to the weather. These conditions often glue us to the news and offer time for reflection. We may be reflecting on our lives and the past wonderful memories that are fun and inspiring. I know that Sweet Briar has given me many memories and so many blessings, including an excellent education, treasured friendships and the courage to take on any challenge. Alumnae and friends may have been surprised by the recent news that President Meredith Woo will be passing the baton to her successor in 18 months. We are all so thankful to President Woo for taking on the challenge to transform Sweet Briar College over the last 5 and a half years — and now, she says, she will continue that momentum (see page 3 of this issue to read a letter from President Woo to all alumnae and friends).

Perseverance during uncertain times is our hallmark, and we see it over and over again at Sweet Briar. President Meredith Woo has persevered to set Sweet Briar apart. She has ensured that it will continue to be relevant through the new dynamic Strategic Plan outlined in the recent Alumnae Magazine (read it online at [sbc.edu/strategic-plan](http://sbc.edu/strategic-plan)). Today, the women at Sweet Briar benefit by engaging in the innovative women's core leadership curriculum offered only at Sweet Briar. Our programs in sustainability, the arts and engineering, including our 20 majors, challenge students every day.

Several years ago, I had the good fortune of meeting an incredible alumna, Lucy Kiker Jones '44 in Virginia Beach. I asked her to tell me about her favorite memory of Sweet Briar. She told me that during "the War" (World War II), she and her

**Reunion registration is live!**

**June 2-4, 2023**

Registration launched on Feb. 1.

Visit [sbc.edu/reunion](http://sbc.edu/reunion) to register, view the tentative schedule, see who else is planning to attend, and pricing.

roommate could not make their usual drive with the campus station wagon to bring school supplies to the local mission school. She was distraught that she could not complete her duty since the College was rationing gasoline and rubber. However, she did not allow that to deter her since the Bum Chums always gave back to their community and she knew how important their obligations were; she told me that she and her roommate saddled up their horses, loaded up the supplies into saddle bags and delivered the supplies to the school. This story is emblematic of Sweet Briar women determined to do the right thing, support their local community, and persevere, no matter how difficult the conditions — something our students still value today.

At the heart of it all, Sweet Briar College has never been more well positioned for the future than she is in 2023. We all may endure cold winters — but as we reflect, know that your confidence in and support of Sweet Briar College is making a difference and for generations to come.

With gratitude,

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

PS: We invite you to share your memories with us by sending an email to [classnotes@sbcc.edu](mailto:classnotes@sbcc.edu). Whether it's a story of perseverance, a memory of a classmate or professor, or silly shenanigans, we would love to hear anything you have to share!

## Board of Directors of Sweet Briar College

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Emily Dodson Sadler '18, *Assistant Director of the Sweet Briar Fund*  
Clélie D. D. Steckel, *Director of Data Analytics and Development Communications*  
Megan Sunwall, *Alumnae Relations and Development Assistant*  
Wanda Vest, *Data Entry Manager*

# NEWS FROM SWEET BRIAR

## S&P Global Affirms Sweet Briar's Bond Rating and Raises its Outlook



Sweet Briar College starts the new year with its strong financial profile recognized by S&P Global, which has affirmed the school's long-term bond rating of BB and revised its outlook from stable to positive. Only four percent of the U.S. higher education institutions reviewed by S&P received a positive outlook, so Sweet Briar's upwardly revised outlook is significant.

S&P stated that the positive outlook and affirmed rating reflect Sweet Briar's enrollment growth and a healthy balance sheet with low debt, rapid debt amortization, and more-than-adequate liquidity.

Other factors cited by S&P in its rating include the College's positive operational changes and more disciplined financial management

under the leadership of President Meredith Woo, as well as its 10-year reaccreditation in December 2021 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), a concrete sign of Sweet Briar's resurgence.

"Over the last five years," said President Woo, "Sweet Briar has worked hard to recruit students, energize its programs, launch its women's leadership core curriculum and make noteworthy facilities improvements. At a time when colleges and universities across the country are facing serious challenges, I'm particularly gratified that our efforts have been validated by S&P Global."

# NEWS FROM SWEET BRIAR

## A Letter from President Meredith Woo: Preparing the Future

### Dear Alumnae and Friends,

For the last five and a half years, I have had the truly unique privilege of leading Sweet Briar. Those were challenging years to be sure, but also most rewarding and exhilarating. Our college is like no other place, and for me it will always be home.

In eighteen more months, I will have completed my seventh year as president. I am writing to let you know that by that time, I will have passed the baton to my successor.

Working so hard and so closely together, we have accomplished much—more than any of us could have imagined possible when I accepted the challenge of leading the College. In the years since then, we have been able to articulate and reshape education at Sweet Briar, preparing the next generation of women leaders.

Our beloved college has come a long way since it was threatened with closure. Thanks to your unshakable belief in Sweet Briar's future, your can-do spirit, your magnificent generosity, and your staunch support, the fundamentals of the College are incomparably better than they were in 2015 and when I arrived in May of 2017.

The academic program is known for its new "core" that has garnered us plaudits as one of the country's "most innovative liberal arts colleges" from U.S. News and World Report. Our tuition rate was reset to make the College more competitive as well as more accessible to talented students. The budget is balanced and we have had continued success in fundraising. In addition, we have invested in our academic programs, buildings, and grounds; successfully completed the College's decennial reaccreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; and produced an ambitious five-year strategic plan, based on Sweet Briar's unique attributes and its distinctive edge in higher education.

Enrollment has increased steadily, from a small base of 280 in Fall 2017 to 450 in Fall 2022. This growth occurred against the backdrop of breathtaking campus transformations that saw the addition of a health center; a new students' commons in the lower quad; makeovers in our dorms, other student life spaces, and Daisy's Café; the building of turf and soccer fields; major renovations to the equestrian center; and the launch of our agricultural enterprises through the establishment of large vineyard tracks, an apiary, and a 26,000 square foot greenhouse.

I am profoundly grateful for all you do for Sweet Briar. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without you. And we haven't stopped yet! We have momentum on our side.



It is time for a new leader who can take the College to the next level and "scale up" the trajectory we laid out. The foundations we have built and the opportunities we created are substantial, positioning the new leader in an excellent place.

In the next eighteen months I will be continuing the fundraising campaign that has been underway since 2019. Despite the pandemic, you have continued to give generously and we have made significant progress, as we are still in the quiet phase of this campaign.

I will leave the College in as good a shape as possible for my successor. I intend to work hard to drive enrollment and our five-year plan, support and manage my team, continue to improve infrastructure, and stay on the fundraising drive. I will also do my best to support the recruitment of the next president – Sweet Briar deserves the very best. As you know, I have rolled up my sleeves during Sweet Work Weeks in the flower beds, painting residence halls and parlors, and power washing. Together, there is nothing that we cannot do!

Even after May of 2024, I hope to stay available to serve in any capacity that the Board and my successor see fit or desirable. I love Sweet Briar College, its unique vision, and the people associated with it.

With gratitude,

Meredith Woo  
President

***Please note: Updates from the Board of Directors will be forthcoming as the search for Sweet Briar's next president progresses.***

# ALUMNAE GIVING AND PARTICIPATION

Class Year	Giving Jan. 15, 2023	Participation Jan. 15, 2023
1940	\$0	0%
1941	\$0	0%
1942	\$0	0%
1943	\$0	0%
1944	\$275,450	27.3%
1945	\$3,000	10%
1946	\$3,821	7.1%
1947	\$25	5.3%
1948	\$1,100	11.1%
1949	\$45,200	17.6%
1950	\$22,358	25.8%
1951	\$105,300	20%
1952	\$3,725	10.7%
1953	\$288,163	17.2%
1954	\$35,875	16.4%
1955	\$3,479	11.3%
1956	\$6,540	14.9%
1957	\$16,848	13.8%
1958	\$147,981	15.4%
1959	\$233,133	15.2%
1960	\$767,522	22%

Class Year	Giving Jan. 15, 2023	Participation Jan. 15, 2023
1961	\$10,700	10.8%
1962	\$264,016	18.5%
1963	\$19,217	14.3%
1964	\$31,626	16.7%
1965	\$71,281	18.1%
1966	\$128,503	13.1%
1967	\$25,075	12.4%
1968	\$9,500	12%
1969	\$22,075	8.9%
1970	\$39,014	10.7%
1971	\$72,508	16.3%
1972	\$261,713	12.1%
1973	\$40,276	13.4%
1974	\$129,298	9.8%
1975	\$94,958	15%
1976	\$119,745	9.3%
1977	\$14,452	9.9%
1978	\$158,390	16.5%
1979	\$115,953	7.2%
1980	\$8,640	10%
1981	\$212,827	8.2%

## Reunion Giving and Participation Awards for Classes ending in 3 and 8

### The Nancy Dowd Burton '46 Award

Given to the class celebrating an anniversary Reunion year with the highest total unrestricted giving to Sweet Briar in the current fiscal year.

### The Centennial Award

Given to the class celebrating an anniversary Reunion year with the highest total giving to all funds to Sweet Briar over the last five years since their last anniversary Reunion year.

### Participation Award: 25<sup>th</sup> through 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Classes

Given to the class celebrating an anniversary Reunion year between their 25th and 50th years with the highest participation in giving to Sweet Briar.

### Participation Award: 5<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> Reunion Classes

Given to the class celebrating an anniversary Reunion year between their 5th and 20th years with the highest participation in giving to Sweet Briar.

# ALUMNAE GIVING AND PARTICIPATION

Class Year	Giving Jan. 15, 2023	Participation Jan. 15, 2023
1982	\$362,256	6.9%
1983	\$17,325	7.9%
1984	\$28,606	9%
1985	\$27,162	9%
1986	\$25,217	11.8%
1987	\$4,782	4.9%
1988	\$7,815	7.5%
1989	\$9,750	6.4%
1990	\$7,182	10.2%
1991	\$1,095	8.3%
1992	\$10,475	10.7%
1993	\$12,271	7.3%
1994	\$1,755	9.5%
1995	\$25,448	13.6%
1996	\$6,059	7.6%
1997	\$3,773	8.4%
1998	\$27,298	8.5%
1999	\$12,610	4.5%
2000	\$3,012	4.7%
2001	\$2,565	7.4%
2002	\$2,337	10.3%

Class Year	Giving Jan. 15, 2023	Participation Jan. 15, 2023
2003	\$4,013	5.1%
2004	\$1,105	4.9%
2005	\$650	1.6%
2006	\$7,474	6.4%
2007	\$1,500	5.6%
2008	\$563	3.4%
2009	\$795	2.9%
2010	\$1,921	5%
2011	\$1,150	3.2%
2012	\$3,742	5%
2013	\$392	1.8%
2014	\$930	3.3%
2015	\$1,880	9.5%
2016	\$325	3.5%
2017	\$80	0.5%
2018	\$435	4.7%
2019	\$0	0%
2020	\$70	2.3%
2021	\$12	2.1%

## Awards, continued

### The Nancy Godwin Baldwin '57 Award

Given to the class celebrating an anniversary Reunion year with the highest percentage of its members attending Reunion.

### Visionary Class Award

Given to any class that contributes \$1 million or more to any funds at Sweet Briar within one fiscal year.

## Current Participation Rates

**Internal Participation Rate: 8.7%**  
(degreed and non-degreed alumnae, which is also the rate used in charts above)

**External Participation Rate: 11.5%**  
(degreed alumnae only)

**We have a goal to reach 30% participation in both our internal and external rates!**

*All data on this page reported on Jan. 13, 2023.*

# Sweet Briar Forever Month

## March Days of Giving

Wednesday, March 1 – Friday, March 10, 2023

### Sweet Briar Fund Goals

March 1: Raise **\$500,000**

March 2–10: Raise an additional **\$500,000** in honor of Indiana Fletcher Williams for her birthday.

### Participation Goal

March 1–10: Increase participation in Reunion classes (those classes ending in 3 or 8) to **30 percent**.

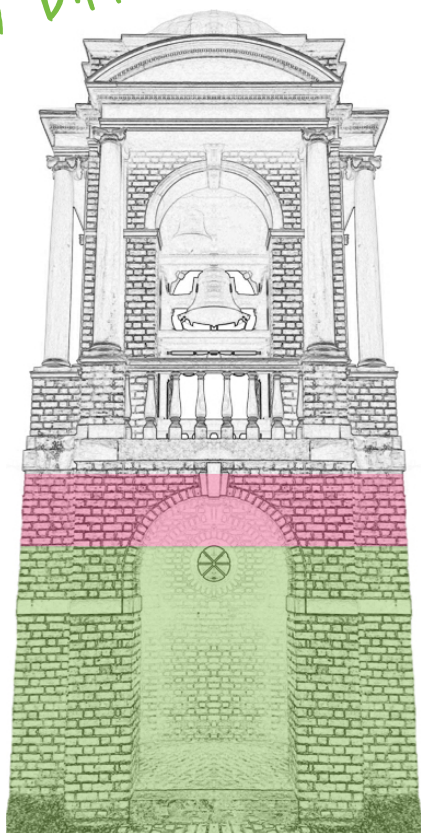
### How you can participate:

Make your gift on March 1 or during March 2–10.

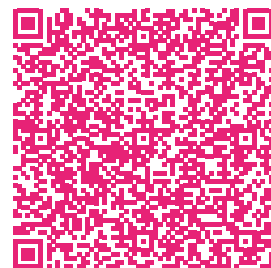
*Gifts can be made online at [sbc.edu/give](https://sbc.edu/give) or you can mail a check to PO Box 1057, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.*

Encourage your classmates and friends to join you in making a gift to the Sweet Briar Fund.

HELP US RING THE BELLS!  
EVERY GIFT MAKES  
A DIFFERENCE!



Save this page and scan the QR code to the right with the camera on your smartphone or tablet to access our online giving form.



**FY 2023 SWEET BRIAR FUND GOAL:**  
**\$5.25 MILLION**

**Total Pledges: \$458,833**

**Total Gifts Received: \$1,813,723**

*As of January 17, 2023*

# SAVE THE DATE FOR SWEET WORK WEEKS

July 8-22, 2023

Come back to Sweet Briar this summer for our annual Sweet Work Weeks, when alumnae and friends volunteer to care for the College's buildings and grounds. Sweet Work Weeks projects have included:

- painting, indoors and outdoors (including dorms!)
- weeding
- trimming shrubs
- planting
- pressure washing
- cleaning outdoor furniture
- trail maintenance
- and much more!

When you come to volunteer for Sweet Work Weeks, Sweet Briar provides you with housing and meals during your stay. You'll work alongside alumnae and friends during the day, and in the evenings, you'll have time to get to know each other and learn what brought you back to Sweet Briar as a volunteer!

Registration will become available later this spring, so be sure to keep an eye on your email for that announcement.

If you have any questions about accommodations for Sweet Work Weeks, please contact Rachel Pietsch, Assistant Director of Alumnae Relations, at [rpietsch@sbcb.edu](mailto:rpietsch@sbcb.edu) or 434-381-6163.



**Make your gift to the Sweet  
Briar Fund today at  
[sbc.edu/give](https://sbc.edu/give)!**

## Sweet Briar welcomes new athletic director Jason Vittone

On November 29, Jason Vittone joined the Sweet Briar campus community as the College's new athletic director. He brings a wealth of experience to Sweet Briar, having worked in higher education for more than 25 years in various positions at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I and II and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) institutions.

Jason came to Sweet Briar from William Woods University in Fulton, Missouri, where he was the director of athletics since 2011, overseeing 16 NAIA teams, and where he earlier served as sports information director. In addition, since 2018, Jason was an advancement officer at William Woods.

Prior to his time at William Woods University, Jason also gained extensive experience as a baseball coach. He was hired to start the baseball program at Brescia University and was its head coach for nine years, and he previously served as assistant baseball coach at Emporia State University and at Illinois State University. He earned a Master of Science in Education from Emporia State University and a Bachelor of Science in Education from Illinois State University.

Since committing to his position at Sweet Briar, Jason has been keenly focused on students' academic success, retention, and graduation as key hallmarks of a vital athletics program. He's most excited to

be a part of Sweet Briar's athletic success, exploring how the college can build an even stronger network of athletic support, and meeting and getting to know the College's alumnae.

Jason and his wife, Kirstie, have two sons, one of whom is now in Lexington, KY working as a veterinary technician after graduating from William Woods University with a degree in equine science. His younger son is a junior at Columbia College and will be attending the University of Missouri to become a pharmacist.

Jason commented how welcoming the Sweet Briar community has been so far and how willing everyone is to help him get to know the campus and its people.

Visit [vixenathletics.com](https://vixenathletics.com) to see the spring 2023 athletic schedule.



*Remember to send us your  
memories, recollections, and  
favorite stories to  
[classnotes@sbcc.edu](mailto:classnotes@sbcc.edu)!  
(Please see page 1 for details.)*

### **Alumnae Alliance Council nominations opening in April!**

Keep an eye on your email at that time to learn how to get involved with the Council. In the meantime, learn more about this volunteer network at [alumnae.sbc.edu/alumnae-alliance-council](https://alumnae.sbc.edu/alumnae-alliance-council).