

The logo for Sweet Briar College, featuring the words "SWEET BRIAR" in a large, white, serif font above the word "COLLEGE" in a smaller, white, serif font, all set against a solid magenta rectangular background.

SWEET
BRIAR
COLLEGE

A group of seven graduates in black gowns and caps are jumping joyfully in the air. They are wearing face masks and have their arms raised. In the background, a large brick building with a central dome and arched windows is visible under a clear blue sky.

The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 5 | JUNE 2021

A Year of Amazing Outcomes



Each class of Sweet Briar students leaves an indelible mark on our community for years to come. Whether they reached unprecedented heights in their academic, athletic or extracurricular pursuits, or whether they established a new tradition, each class makes a difference to the Sweet Briar family. This year, our students not only reached those new heights, but they did it in the middle of a pandemic. From their creativity in developing ways to keep our community safe, to reaching national championships in two sports, the Class of 2021 has left their mark

on Sweet Briar. What better way to demonstrate a successful year than our amazing graduates in the Class of 2021! With sixty-five graduates in this class, we've chosen just a few to spotlight in this issue. Keep an eye on the College's social media accounts for other great stories about members of the Class of 2021. Read on for more about a few of their plans for life after Sweet Briar.

Watch the video from this year's Commencement at sbc.edu/commencement.

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Clélie D. D. Steckel, *Director of the
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The Briar Wire*

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CLASS OF 2021

Natalie Carroll

Natalie Carrol '21 completed her bachelor's in history and is planning to pursue a master's in history at George Mason. Natalie looks back on one of her biggest takeaways from College: friendship.

"Since I came to Sweet Briar, I have realized what true friendship looks like, and I wouldn't have been able to complete my journey here without Abigail De Leon and Lauren Phillips.

"Other future plans — besides graduate school — include traveling to Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy next year, assuming COVID doesn't interfere."



Sarah Kelley

Congratulations to Sarah Kelley '21, a political science major and philosophy minor, who graduated early this past December and is currently in Duke University's paralegal program! Sarah shares how Sweet Briar has shaped her into the woman she is now.

"Not only was I able to receive a valuable education, I learned to be confident as an individual. Sweet Briar challenged me to work hard for all of my achievements and taught me to never take the easy way out.

"My best memories are morning dairy loop runs and paddleboarding at the Boathouse. I was also very lucky to have a number of great professors who helped me reach my full potential."



Asha Stewart

Asha is a psychology major and visual arts minor and is also a Presidential Scholar.

"I plan on moving to Blacksburg, Va., with my cat in the beginning of June to embark on my journey into adulthood. I am applying to jobs that deal with community mental health, and I hope to get some experience so I can work towards earning my counseling certifications and go on to pursue a master's degree."



CLASS OF 2021

Mary Lizzie Hodges

A psychology major from Kenbridge, VA, Mary Lizzie is on her way to graduate school at Vanderbilt. "Sweet Briar has made me a much stronger person and for that, I am extremely grateful. I have learned to face and overcome challenges, to accept myself as I am — flaws, mistakes, strengths and everything in between —and how important it is to love myself in order to love others, to replace judgment with curiosity and to view problems as opportunities. Since coming to Sweet Briar, my eyes have been opened to the world outside of the small town where I grew up. I have been exposed to and come to appreciate many other cultures, ideas and diversity.

"After graduating, I will move to Nashville, where I will attend Peabody College of Education at Vanderbilt University to pursue a master's degree in elementary education. My lifelong passions are children and education. Although I have always dreamed of becoming a kindergarten teacher, I also plan to bring about change in the field of education for the better. I hope to use my education to promote a love of learning in others, to create new opportunities, to help students reach their full potential, to promote equity and to encourage diversity.

"Education is a light, a way out, a way for people to use their background as an advantage for something greater, a way for people to make their past a strength and their future a success."



Sammy Runyon

During her time at Sweet Briar, Sammy was a psychology major who was involved in all sorts of student life activities. Sammy stayed busy by being the chairwoman of the student admissions ambassadors, chairwoman of the Sweet PEAs, Class of 2021 president, QV member, Ear Phones member, COVID captain, Senior Legacy Project committee member, and a psychology tutor. She is also a recipient of many awards and honors including the Nancy Godwin Baldwin '57 award, Mary MacKintosh Sherer award, and a member of Alpha Lambda Delta and Phi Beta Kappa. Sammy shared her future plans with us during a scroll game the week of graduation.

"My time at Sweet Briar has really solidified my passion for counseling and helping others, leading me to pursue my master's in marriage and family therapy at Pfeiffer University. I am so excited to begin this journey and learn more about how I can best help others!"



Emma Hines

Emma Hines '21 is a psychology major who has participated in numerous clubs and leadership roles during her time here, including the QVs, BAM and many elected class positions. She plans to work as a remote transcriber as well as an intern with Insight Physicians, eventually going to grad school for counseling. Here, Emma shares her personal story of how Sweet Briar changed her life.

"All throughout middle and high school, I was the smart girl. Outside of my friend group, people only talked to me when they needed help with their homework or they wanted me to proofread their essays. But here at Sweet Briar, I was the nice girl. People liked me not because I helped them get As but because they thought I was a kind person who represented some of the best qualities Sweet Briar had to offer. That revolutionized how I saw myself in ways I'll never be able to fully express. From all of this, I've learned to accept what comes to me and to take rejection as the world's way of saying that there is something even better than I can imagine waiting for me. That's what Sweet Briar has been for me — something even better than I could imagine."



STUDENTS

Sweet Briar students embark on Honors Summer Research projects

Each year, the Honors Program awards fellowships to a select group of students to support them in conducting independent research projects under the supervision of a faculty member. The eight-week Honors Summer Research Program brings together students and faculty from all disciplines to create a unique academic experience. The students are able to dedicate time to intensely focused research and one-on-one work with their faculty mentor. Throughout the summer, both faculty and students present highlights from their ongoing research.

This summer, 10 honors students and their mentors are taking advantage of the program. Read on for more about their projects.

Emma Leaseburg '22

Major: Environmental science

Mentor: Professor Lili Lei

"One of the most important principles to live sustainably is recycling, especially food waste. Composting recycles organic matter lost in food waste and creates green composts that show advantages over traditional fertilizers. My research studies the **agronomic and environmental effects of various composts from different sources**, including cow manure, food waste and yard waste, by comparing them to traditional synthesized inorganic fertilizer."

Mary Katherine Baker '22

Major: English and creative writing

Mentor: Professor Susannah

Nevison

"I'm researching the **historical accuracy of the presentation of Christian-Jewish relations in Renaissance Venice and exploring the sympathetic representation of Shylock, the main Jewish character, in Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice.'** I will delve deeper into the play's legal and economic history to understand the context because it seems to me that subverting an anti-Semitic stereotype would be groundbreaking during the Renaissance."



Veronica Nelson '22

Major: Chemistry

Mentor: Professor Abraham Yousef

"I plan to **find the amount of time needed to extract the most betulin from birch bark and to find a way to enhance its antimicrobial properties.** The long-term goal of this research is to develop a medication that can be used to fight bacterial infections in humans. In particular, I

will be synthesizing betulin to fight *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, which is a bacteria naturally found in the environment that can make immunocompromised people sick, especially cystic fibrosis. This research is important because of the evermore increasing antibiotic resistance."

Ruth De Souza '23

Major: Engineering

Mentor: Professor Michelle Gervasio

"The long term goal of my research is to further **analyze how different synthesis methods influence the photoluminescence response of zinc oxide (ZnO) nanoparticles.** There are a lot of methods used to create ZnO particles, and during my research I'll work with three of them: sol-gel, chemical precipitation and solution combustion. Through the three synthesis processes I will try to control for the size, density, pH and other variables that are already known to alter the photoluminescence of the ZnO so I can analyze each process and compare them knowing the other variables are identical."

Allison Wandling '23

Major: Engineering

Mentor: Professor Michelle

Gervasio

"My research is focused on microplastic behavior. I will specifically be focused on **creating a simulation of microplastics when submerged in water.** This simulation will help remove microplastics in water during wastewater treatment. This is important because the health risks of microplastics consumption for humans is unknown."



Sarah Mihelic '22

Major: Archaeology

Mentor: Professor Erin Pitt

"The goal for my project is to **complete the new archiving system that I started for the Sweet Briar Museum.** I'm digitizing the collection and providing some light preservation work for many of the artifacts, while finding professional preservation services for the objects in more dire need. Ideally, I would like to complete a video tour of the museum and provide the College with a 'grand re-opening' type of event sometime next year."



Honors Summer Research, cont.

Annika Kuleba '22

Major: Environmental science and economics
Mentor: Professor Lisa Powell

"Climate change is a key issue that is currently impacting humans and agriculture at the same time as anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are its primary cause. My study **examines the potential for mitigating climate change through agricultural landscape management**, specifically looking at the capacity of bioenergy plantations (pine forests and switchgrass fields) to sequester carbon."

Victoria Kaciuba '22

Major: Biology and chemistry
Mentor: Professor John Herlihy

"I am passionate about creating a sustainable future, which is why I'm excited to find microorganisms that could be used to pretreat biomass for biofuel. Throughout the year, I've worked with Professor Herlihy to find bacteria and fungi capable of degrading wood, and I even found some candidate microorganisms in the switchgrass field. The goal for my summer research is to **identify our bacterial and fungal candidates through DNA sequencing technology.**"

Ciara Kocik '23

Major: Education

Mentor: Professor Meredith McCool

"In one of my honor's classes, I researched and wrote a paper on the pipeline for women in STEM. Through this I found that there was a lack of in-school support, especially at the elementary level, which is where it is most crucial. I plan to **research programs in K-12 that exist to support the pipeline of women in STEM.** Drawing on the research, I will create a unit plan or resource for elementary teachers to use and infuse these supports into their curriculum."

Elisa Garcia '22

Major: Engineering and music

Mentor: Professor Bryan Kuhr

From Professor Kuhr: "Elisa will be **researching and designing electronic musical instruments.** Music professor Joshua Harris conceived the idea when he saw an Instagram post by engineering professor Michelle Gervasio showing an arduino controlled flex sensor input device. Elisa will start by developing prototypes with several types of sensor and input devices. She will then work with musicians to find out which sensors and input devices they like the best and what mode of performance they can envision with such a device. If time allows she will then use this research to design and build a new musical instrument for Sweet Briar's music program."

Help us finish the year strong!

Every gift makes a difference!

With our fiscal year ending on June 30, 2021, now is the time to make a gift to Sweet Briar if you haven't already. Gifts to the Sweet Briar Fund support our students, through scholarships; our faculty and academic programs; the stewardship and maintenance of our historic campus and natural environment; and they help us offset additional expenses and lost revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have already made your gift this year, thank you! Also, please ask two others to join you, making YOU + 2!

Sweet Briar Fund and COVID Impact*

Goal 2020-2021:

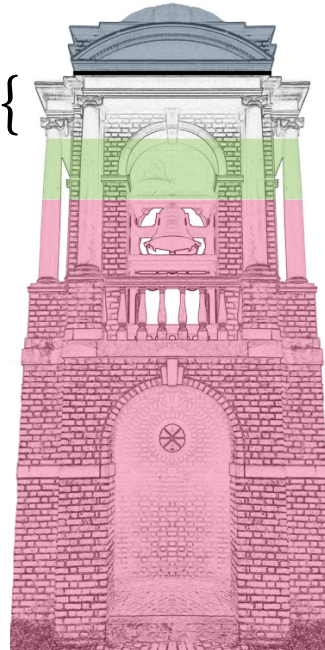
\$8,270,000

Left to raise: {
\$941,126

COVID Relief Funds
(Restricted):
\$799,200

Pledges to Convert:
\$770,139

Total Raised
(Unrestricted):
\$5,675,838



As of May 19, 2021.

*This year, we added the additional expenses and lost revenue resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic to our overall fundraising goals. Funds received to support COVID relief have come from individuals (and are included in the total amount raised for the Sweet Briar Fund) as well as restricted grants.

Make your gift online at sbc.edu/give.

Reunion registration goes live on June 1!

Special celebrations for classes ending in 0, 1, 5 and 6.

Early bird registration: Tuesday, June 1

Regular registration: Tuesday, June 15

Registration closes Tuesday, July 13

Visit sbc.edu/reunion for more details.

All classes are welcome!

ATHLETICS

Vixens win the first-ever NCEA Single Discipline National Championship

The Sweet Briar College Vixens continue to make history by riding to victory in the first-ever National Collegiate Equestrian Association Single Discipline National Championship in Waco, Tx., on Saturday. The members of Sweet Briar's NCEA team are Katie Balding '21, Kacie Freeburg '23, Britt Larson-Jackson '22, Emmy Longest '24, Rachel Perry '24 and Lily Peterson '21.

The Vixens left no doubt as the No. 1 seed team, sailed to a 6-2 victory over the No. 2 seed, University of Lynchburg Hornets. Having both top teams hail from central Virginia is an added bonus for our region, in a state well-known for developing equestrian talent.

The single discipline competition opened on the flat, with Sweet Briar taking the early lead as junior Britt Larson-Jackson (Washington, D.C.) rode to victory. Lily Peterson (Ashland, Va.) continued an impressive run at the end of her senior season by posting the Vixens' highest flat score ever at NCEA Championships. First-year Emmy Longest (Hanover, Va.) also secured a winning ride.

"Words cannot describe how blessed I am to be a part of this 'sweet' moment in national championship history," says Larson-Jackson. "Cheers to my team and coaches for all the hard work we put in this season!"

"Being able to go back to NCEA Nationals after it was canceled last year was a great experience. The excitement and competitive drive was alive, even through COVID restrictions, which was very special to us," says Peterson.

Senior Katie Balding (Williamsburg, Va.) kicked off the over fences section with a winning score, and the next Sweet Briar ride clinched the national championship as Peterson again posted the highest score by a Vixen at NCEA Nationals, this time over fences. First-year Rachel Perry (Rockville, Va.) added a final point to the score sheet for Sweet Briar. The Vixens not only topped the Hornets 6-2 on team points but 1710-1574 on raw score. Peterson was named



the Equo Most Outstanding Fences Performer (Single Discipline) and named to the McClennan County All-Championship Team Over Fences.

"I am so glad that we were able to compete as a team for the entire season and at a national championship," says Balding. "We had an amazing week filled with memories, rode amazing horses and brought home our first NCEA national title. The work that went into achieving this result has been years in the making, and I feel honored to be a part of it."

Sweet Briar's NCEA assistant coach Lizzie Fisch felt a great deal of pride for how the riders competed. "They worked hard to prepare, and it really paid off in the end. They are such an amazing team, and I am fortunate to be a part of it."

On the heels of coaching the Vixens to their fourth ODAC championship and again being named ODAC Coach of the Year, director of the riding program and NCEA coach Mimi Wroten is "thrilled with the success of our team and grateful for the opportunities that have lead to our first NCEA National Championship!" Wroten emphasizes how this was a team effort and each member did her part to reach the goal. "I couldn't ask for a better team," she says. "Our seniors have led us to this point, and the returning and new team members have a great path to follow. It's exciting to consider what the next 100 years of equestrian excellence at Sweet Briar has in store."

ATHLETICS

De Souza, Wandling book trip to NCAA Division III Women's Tennis Doubles Championship

For the first time in 31 years a Sweet Briar College doubles pair is headed to the NCAA Division III Women's Championships, as sophomore Ruth de Souza and Allison Wandling earned a spot in the doubles championships in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Wandling (Mechanicsville, Va.) and de Souza (Marilia, Brazil) posted a 21-1 overall doubles record in 2021, with a 19-1 mark against NCAA Division III opponents. Three of the Vixens' top doubles pairs victories came against teams ranked at the end of the season in the Atlantic South regional rankings, as the pair topped Amanda Yermal and Tessa Trate of Christopher Newport and twice defeated Taylor Garcia and Margaret Carlton of Washington and Lee.

The lone loss for de Souza and Wandling in 2021 came to Mary Washington's Abby Moghtader and Lauren Quinn. Moghtader and Quinn also qualified for the NCAA Division III Women's Tennis individual championships.

Sweet Briar last competed in the doubles championships in 1990, when Traci Allen and Hilary Larson fell 6-1, 6-3 to a doubles pair from UC San Diego. More recently, Sweet Briar's Ariel Taylor competed in the singles bracket dropping a 6-0, 6-3 match to Jordan Brewer of Amherst in 2011.

Wandling and de Souza are the lone ODAC pair



in the doubles bracket, while Garcia will represent Washington and Lee in the singles bracket.

The individual championships will be held May 28-30 at the Champions Tennis Club in Chattanooga, hosted by the University of the South and the Chattanooga Sports Commission.

The NCAA Division III Women's Tennis Committee selected a percentage of singles players and doubles teams from each of the four regions. The individual championships consist of 32 singles players and 16 doubles teams. The selection of teams and individuals for the championships is based on won-lost record, strength of schedule and eligibility and availability of student-athletes.

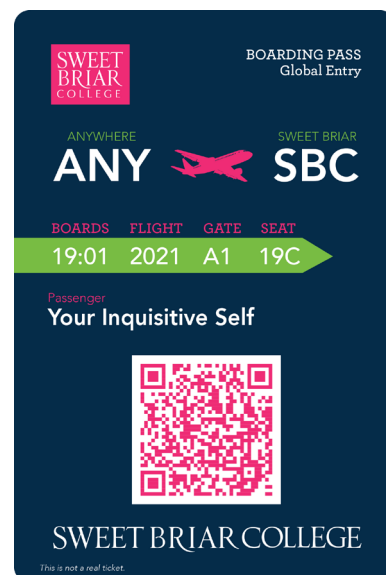
Brackets for the individual championships will be released at a later date.

Admissions Fly-In Program continues for 2021-2022

As our alumnae well know, there is no substitute for a visit to Sweet Briar College. It's what made many of us fall in love with Sweet Briar for the first time. Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Admissions Fly-In Program continues this coming year and will cover the cost of visiting Sweet Briar for a prospective student and one guest.

With this program, we will pay the travel expenses for one prospective student and one family member to visit Sweet Briar College for an in-person, personalized tour, regardless of what mode of travel they use to get here. It's just one of the ways that we're committed to making sure that women who seek the kind of education we provide, in the environment that we offer, are able to see for themselves what makes Sweet Briar College so special.

If you know a prospective student who would like to visit Sweet Briar and see for herself what we have to offer, please have her visit sbc.edu/admissions/visit-sweet-briar-with-our-visit-reimbursement-program (or forward her this issue of The Briar Wire). Refer a student to Sweet Briar by visiting sbc.edu/admissions/refer-a-student.



Refer a student today!

COMMUNITY

Inaugural class of Willits Food Systems Summer Fellows digs in at Sweet Briar

In 2018, Sweet Briar embarked on an ambitious plan to make agriculture and sustainability a cornerstone of the student experience. The work of Sweet Briar's Center for Human and Environmental Sustainability has built connections between campus agriculture and our curriculum, which will enable us to cultivate women leaders in agriculture, conservation and natural resource management.

Laura Evans Willits '79 and The Willits Foundation have been generous supporters of Sweet Briar and Laura, who owns a farm and vineyard in Umbria, Italy (poderecalzone.com), has been impressed with President Woo's vision for fully utilizing the campus and with Professor Lisa Powell's sustainability plans. Laura's desire to support student research led to a recent gift from the Willits Foundation that will support a summer fellows program for Sweet Briar students, giving them hands-on experience and opportunities to pursue endeavors related to agriculture, natural resources management and food systems.

"Each student will engage in an independent project which may take many forms, including community program development or assessing the feasibility of future agriculture and food systems endeavors on campus," says Lisa Powell, environmental science professor and director

of the program. "These projects will align with individual interests and allow students to explore areas they may want to pursue in longer-term projects or in their future careers."

In addition to their own research, the fellows also



will take part in other projects around campus, including working in the greenhouse, stewarding the apiary, driving the College's vegetable box subscription program and exploring other potential sales channels for Sweet Briar's produce.

The Willits Food Systems Summer Fellows program is open to students from all academic programs. To apply for the program, the student must be continuing in their studies at Sweet Briar and have taken the required coursework. This year's first-ever fellows are June Alomari '24, Bijou Barry '23, Kate Kotany '23, Ella Leichty '22, Danielle Saunders '23 and Lily Terwilliger '24.

"We are grateful for the support of Laura Evans Willits '79 and The Willits Foundation for making this opportunity possible for our students," says Lisa.

Making a gift through your IRA is easy and tax wise

Attention donors 70 1/2 or older, did you know there's a better way to support Sweet Briar College this coming year? If you have a traditional IRA, you are eligible to make a tax-free gift directly from your IRA to Sweet Briar College, regardless of whether or not you itemize deductions on your returns.

Benefits:

- If you are 70 1/2 or older, you can avoid taxes on transfers of up to \$100,000 from your IRA to Sweet Briar College.
- If you and your spouse both make a charitable IRA Rollover gift, you can avoid taxes on transfer of up to \$200,000.
- A Charitable IRA Rollover gift will satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.
- You can reduce your taxable income, even if you

do not itemize deductions.

- Such a gift is not subject to the 60% deduction limits on charitable gifts.
- Help further the work and mission of Sweet Briar College.

Certain restrictions and requirements must be followed when making this type of gift. You should also consult with your tax advisor to discuss your situation including any impact of your state's tax laws.

Get your IRA started by scanning the block to the right with the camera on your smartphone or tablet.

