

The Briar Wire

Volume 10, Issue 2 | June 2024

Dear alumnae and friends,

There is nothing as beautiful as the waves of spring and early summer flowers that arrive at Sweet Briar. As my first academic year as your president comes to a close, I am struck by our students' achievements, the dedication of our community, and the progress that Sweet Briar has made this year. You will read about these accolades in the pages that follow, and I think you will feel the same sense of pride that I do.

Each year, Sweet Briar becomes more relevant to educating future women leaders. Our excellent academic programs, delivered by our distinguished faculty, provide leadership instruction and hands-on experience. So, too, does our beautiful and vast campus, which we continue to steward and enhance, allowing us to provide a learning laboratory unlike any other and attract prospective students and their families from far and wide.

I have had many occasions this year to meet and talk with our amazing students. When I do, I make a point of telling them about the remarkable generosity of Sweet Briar's alumnae and friends — and in many cases, I show them examples of this generosity. For example, I tell them about the future rehabilitation of Gray Hall. I show them the updates made to the Riding Center through the renovation of the Howell Lykes Colton Stables. But their favorite subjects are the stories I share with them from the many alumnae I have had the gift of knowing over the years.

I take this approach with our students for a few reasons. First, I want them to know that our community is their family now and that we are all committed to their success. Next, when I share your stories with them, their eyes light up — they love being part of your legacy and our incredible sisterhood. Finally, and most importantly, I want them to know who has made Sweet Briar's success possible

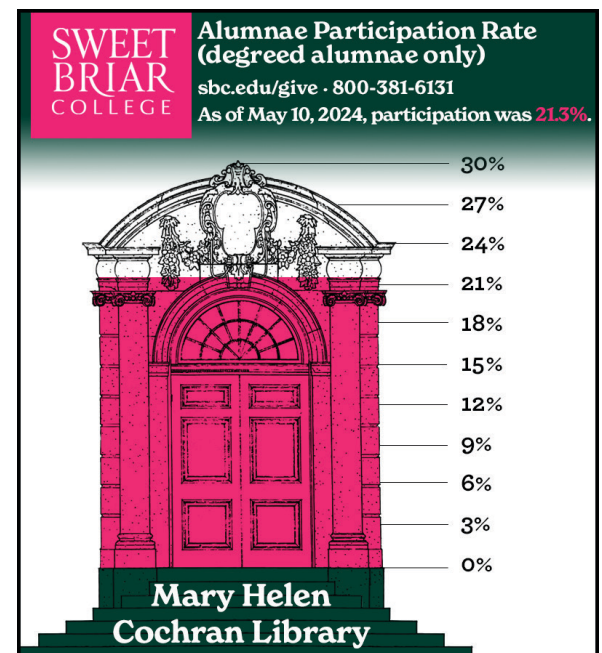
— and consequently, who they have in their corner. In short, I take the opportunity to teach them about the power of philanthropy and community, something you are intimately familiar with. As I'm sure you can imagine, our students are left with a lasting impression. I tell them that the Sweet Briar alumnae relationship is the longest relationship they will ever have.

From all of us on campus, thank you for your continued generosity and for staying committed to Sweet Briar.

Onward!

Mary Pope M. Hutson '83
President

PS: If you have not yet made your gift for the year, please do so at sbc.edu/give. Every gift matters!



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S&P Global increases Sweet Briar's bond rating

The financial health of Sweet Briar College continues to be recognized by S&P Global, which has raised the institution's long-term rating from "BB" to "BB+." S&P also noted that Sweet Briar's outlook is stable.

This is the seventh time in nine years that S&P has either raised or reaffirmed Sweet Briar's bond rating. Twice during that term, the agency has raised the College's outlook.

Sweet Briar's continued enrollment growth was an important factor in the rating. S&P noted, "Enrollment and selectivity have improved during the past two years with further improvement anticipated in the coming 2024-2025 school year and we view management and governance as providing sufficient oversight of school operations such that if unexpected developments occur the college can quickly pivot and stay on course."

"Fiscal responsibility is a top priority at Sweet Briar, and we appreciate that our efforts have been acknowledged once again by

S&P Global," stated President Mary Pope M. Hutson. "Financial health is critical to Sweet Briar's long-term success. It allows us to provide an innovative and supportive learning environment for our students that prepares them for leadership, and it enables us to protect and conserve our college's historic campus for future generations. We continue to work hard to increase the profile of Sweet Briar College and to enroll the best and brightest young women from across the country."

S&P is also encouraged by Sweet Briar's management, which "continues to make incremental progress in restoring the college's luster," its commitment to cyber security, its low debt with relatively short remaining amortization, and its overall financial operations. Sweet Briar continues to be grateful for the investments of time and resources from so many to strengthen our institution into our second century. ●

Abigail McAllister '24 Named Presidential Medalist

The Presidential Medal is awarded to a senior who has demonstrated exemplary intellectual achievement, in addition to distinction in some or all of the following areas: service to the community, contributions to the arts, enlargement of the College's global perspective, athletic fitness and achievement, and leadership and contributions to community discourse. The 2024 Presidential Medal recipient is Abigail McAllister '24 of Richmond, Va.

Abigail is a Presidential Scholar and a Legacy Scholar. She majored in engineering, with a minor in mathematics, and she served as an engineering subject tutor for mechatronics and electrical circuits. Her engineering interests led her to build a self-driving car, create a water level indicator, and design a desk that is ADA and wheelchair accessible that is currently used in our library. Upon graduation, she is starting a position as a mechanical engineer at HII's Newport News Shipbuilding in its nuclear division.

Abigail has made extensive contributions to the Sweet Briar College community in her four years on campus. She served as a Willits Food Systems Summer Fellow in 2022. She continued to work as an Agriculture & Greenhouse student assistant and has helped to train other students in growing, harvesting, and selling our produce through our Community Supported Agriculture subscription program and markets. She took a lead in helping maintain the apiary, monitoring for swarms and keeping an eye on hive health, and in June 2022, she passed the rigorous exams to earn Apprentice Beekeeper certification from the Virginia State Beekeepers Association Master Beekeeper Program. She was a multi-year officer in the Sustainability Club, taking a lead in organizing Earth Week and other events and helping to grow its membership to over 200 of her fellow students. She brought her passion for sustainability to a range of student activities, taking the lead in making other campus events zero-waste.



Abigail enlarged the arts on campus by performing as a singer in and serving as musical director for the Sweet Tones, our campus acapella group. She also accompanied other students in their recitals and has been the pianist for services in Mills Chapel. She loves to dance and is the president of the Sweet Dancers, the ballroom dancing club; in this role, she has developed strong partnerships with other regional colleges, like Hampden-Sydney and VMI. Abigail has made many additional contributions to our community, including serving on the Founders' Day Planning Committee, being the president of Delight Christian Faith Community, representing the Multicultural Community Council on the Student Events Committee, and more. She also volunteered for off-campus organizations such as Neighbors Helping Neighbors, and she is a QV.

Abigail is a model for positive, goal-oriented leadership; she is innovative and can take the lead, while also being extraordinarily supportive of her fellow students. Abigail has demonstrated incredible tenacity and resilience; as stated by one of her nominators, Abigail "does not see failure as an option, solving problems and working through challenges." In her life beyond Sweet Briar, Abigail will undoubtedly continue to contribute to any community she is a part of and be a shining example of what Sweet Briar women can do to make a difference in our world. ●

RIGHT

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Sweet Briar Launches Accelerated Path to UVA's Master of Engineering

Sweet Briar College (SBC) and the University of Virginia (UVA) School of Engineering and Applied Science have signed an agreement establishing a collaborative program called UVAccelerate, which facilitates early entry for SBC students into Master of Engineering degree programs at UVA. Through this partnership, qualified Sweet Briar students can apply for graduate admission to UVA during their junior year and begin taking graduate-level courses during their senior year, thereby accelerating the completion of their Master of Engineering degree.

Sweet Briar students who have been accepted into the program are assigned a dedicated advisor at UVA's School of Engineering and Applied Science who will collaborate with the student and their SBC advisor to recommend suitable UVA Engineering graduate-level courses for their senior year. These UVA Engineering courses are taken in tandem with undergraduate courses at SBC and may be taken in person in Charlottesville or online through the Virginia Engineering Online program. In the fifth year of the 4+1 program, students who have earned

their undergraduate degree from Sweet Briar will matriculate directly into their designated UVA Master of Engineering program.

"This private-public collaboration is an exciting opportunity for the benefit of talented undergraduate women in the field of engineering," said the College's president, Mary Pope M. Hutson. "For many years, Sweet Briar's ABET-accredited engineering program has prepared our graduates for success in the industry. We are overjoyed to have established this pathway for the College's students to continue their education at the University of Virginia and proud to announce that three Sweet Briar students have already been accepted into the program."

UVA President James Ryan added, "I'm grateful to President Hutson and Sweet Briar for working with us on this new partnership, and I'm delighted to welcome Sweet Briar students to our excellent Engineering School. I look forward to seeing the many ways they will contribute to the UVA community and to their chosen field."

"UVAccelerate is a high-quality and cost-effective option for Sweet Briar students who want a head start on a graduate degree in engineering, a field in which women are historically underrepresented. This partnership is a testament to both institutions' commitment to expanding access and equity in STEM and we look forward to welcoming Sweet Briar students to the University," said Jennifer L. West, dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Virginia.

Faculty from Sweet Briar and the University of Virginia worked together to establish the parameters of the partnership, reviewing curriculum requirements and admission protocols to ensure that students meet the required learning outcomes of both institutions. Sweet Briar and UVA will promote the program to the College's engineering students during the fall of their junior year, prior to the application deadline in March. Applicants will typically receive admission decisions by the first of April, in time for students to plan their senior-year course selections.

The partnership agreement, effective immediately, will remain in effect for three years, after which it may be amended or extended. ●

Sweet Briar and Virginia Tech Form Grad School Partnership

Sweet Briar College and Virginia Tech have signed an articulation agreement that will make them partners in the Direct to Tech (D2T) program. The partnership will enable qualified Sweet Briar students to secure an offer of admission to Virginia Tech's Master of Engineering graduate programs in computer science or computer engineering before completing their undergraduate degrees, effectively reducing the timeline of the admissions process and facilitating an early transition into graduate school.

Virginia Tech's Master of Engineering programs are offered in Northern Virginia—where the university is growing student capacity leading up to the spring 2025 opening of the graduate-focused Innovation Campus in Alexandria, Va.—and in Blacksburg.

Currently enrolled Sweet Briar students majoring in any field—not just in engineering—can apply to the Direct to Tech programs in their senior year. To be eligible for admission,

the students must complete certain prerequisite courses by the second semester of their junior year and maintain an overall minimum GPA of 3.0. Applicants will apply online and submit official transcripts but will not have to pay an application fee or submit GRE scores.

"We're excited that Sweet Briar is partnering with us in the Direct to Tech program. This will help our institutions provide additional pathways for women to pursue graduate degrees in fields where they are traditionally underrepresented," said Julie Ross, Paul and Dorothea Torgersen Dean of Engineering at Virginia Tech.

"Sweet Briar is well known for empowering women, from our leadership core curriculum to our ABET-accredited engineering program," said the College's president, Mary Pope M. Hutson. "We're thrilled to join with Virginia Tech in the Direct to Tech program. It will enhance our students' opportunities by putting women on track to take leadership roles in computer engineering and computer science, technological fields that are of critical importance to Virginia and to the nation."

Faculty at Sweet Briar and Virginia Tech were involved with the formation of the partnership, reviewing degree program learning outcomes to ensure that degree requirements would be met, and they will review the program annually, making changes as necessary to keep courses timely and relevant. Sweet Briar will take the lead in marketing the Direct to Tech program to current and prospective students, with Virginia Tech participating in some recruiting events.

The partnership agreement, effective immediately, will continue for a five-year term, after which it will automatically renew for five-year terms. ●



Featured Class of 2024 Outcomes



DEVIN MONTGOMERY

Engineering major, math minor, Chung Mung
University of Texas at San Antonio, electrical engineering



SHANNON CARTER

Biology major, chemistry minor, Riding Council, Head of
Testing and Trail Guide Coordinator, IHSA Team
Johns Hopkins University, biotechnology



EMILY TRUNK

Engineering major, math minor, Falls on Nose, BAM,
Society of Women Engineers (co-president), Crafty Vixens,
Audubon Campus Conservation Chapter
Newport News Shipyard, mechanical engineer



SKYLAR TORRES

Psychology and philosophy double major, student worker
in Offices of Career Services and Student Success &
Belonging
University of St. Thomas, Leadership and Student Affairs

NOT PICTURED

AVERY JONES

Engineering and math double major, QV, Earphones,
BAM, Field Hockey, Tennis, engineering student tutor
Newport News Shipyard, mechanical engineer
(Nuclear Propulsion Division)

MEGHAN SCHNEIDER

Psychology major, QV, student worker at Fitness and
Athletics Center
Western Carolina University, Speech-Language
Pathology

MADDIE SWARTZ

Archaeology and history major, Red Clay Editor, Chair
of Academic Affairs, BAM President, CEO CO-Chair of
"Sweet Briar After Dark" events
Kings College London, Master's in Medieval Studies

AUGUST APPLEWHITE

Performing Arts: Theatre major, musical theatre minor,
Paint and Patches, Alpha Psi Omega (vice president), BAM
(social chair), Sweet Tones, Taps N Toes
University of Virginia, Theatre Technician

VICKY HARDER

Environmental science major, political science minor,
Leadership in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
Certificate, Sweet Peas (president), Falls on Nose, Tau
Phi (treasurer), Sustainability Club (secretary), Student
Admissions Ambassador, Greenhouse student worker
University of Wyoming's Haub School, Master's in
Environment, Natural Resources, and Society



Common Read author Chloé Cooper Jones encourages vulnerability and curiosity

"Take as many classes as you can with this faculty," was among the advice author Chloé Cooper Jones gave Sweet Briar College students during her recent visit to campus.

Cooper Jones is a professor, journalist and author of the memoir "Easy Beauty," Sweet Briar's 2024 Common Read selection. The book was named a best book of 2022 by The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, TIME Magazine, and was a finalist for the 2023 Pulitzer Prize in Memoir. She was also a Pulitzer Prize finalist in Feature Writing in 2020.

She is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine and is an Associate Professor of Writing at Columbia University.

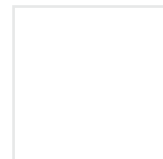
During her visit to campus, Cooper Jones joined Assistant Professor Anne Elise Thomas' section of Core 130, Women and Gender in the World, visited with Associate Professor Chris Penfield's Philosophy of Body/Consciousness course, answered questions about her creative process and the industry during a lively Q&A session moderated by Assistant Professor Susannah Nevison, toured the campus, and presented an evening talk in the Mills Chapel, which was packed full, to the Sweet Briar community and the general public on her work and the value of art in culture and for ourselves.

It was that campus tour with Admissions Ambassador Olivia Heffernan '25, followed by an insider's view of the greenhouse and other agricultural sites with Associate Professor Lisa Powell, though, that seemed to have a special impact on her. "I got on a golf cart with Olivia and she took me to the beautiful corners of this campus and I forgot everything I was stressed about. I was just with the land; it was as simple as that. I was just with the lettuce. I was so excited to be with the things that other people are making and growing in this space."

She encouraged the students to be vulnerable in their academic and personal journey and to build a broad foundation of knowledge.

"If I were an undergrad here I would definitely use the kiln; I'm taking ceramics. I'm learning all that I can about lettuce. I'm taking Chris' [Penfield] philosophy classes. And I'm learning everything I can about the ecology of this place; 'The Land Is Art' from Tracy [Chapman Hamilton]. And then I would leave this place and say, 'I think I have something to say and I have this base of knowledge to speak in a way that is particular.'"

The annual Common Read provides the students, faculty, and staff of Sweet Briar with a shared experience, fosters discussion on a wide range of issues, and introduces us all to new perspectives through literature. Recent Common Read selections include Jocelyn Nicole Johnson's "My Monticello," Emily Wilson's translation of "The Odyssey" by Homer, Madeline Miller's "Circe," Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Braiding Sweetgrass," and Elizabeth Kolbert's Pulitzer Prize-winning work "The Sixth Extinction." ●



Make your annual gift before June 30!



↓
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ABOVE

Students enjoy the opening reception for *Under Land Over Sky*, the exhibition currently on display in Pannell Gallery.

With the end of the 2024 fiscal year fast approaching on **June 30**, time is running out to make a tax-deductible gift to help Sweet Briar reach its fundraising goals. Even if you're not interested in tax deductions, now is a wonderful time to support our college.

WAYS TO GIVE

Make a gift **online** at sbc.edu/give. It takes less than five minutes and a receipt will be emailed to you. If you prefer to make credit card gifts over the phone, please call the Office of Alumnae Relations and Development at **434-381-6131**.

Please send **checks** to the Office of Alumnae Relations and Development at PO Box 1057, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.

For **IRA Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** or Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) gifts, please contact the Alumnae Relations and Development Office by phone or email at alumnae@sbcc.edu.

For gifts by **wire transfer**, please call the Office of Alumnae Relations and Development to obtain the instructions for the transfer.

If you plan to make a **gift of stock** to Sweet Briar, please contact the AR&D office for stock transfer instructions for your broker. We will need to know the name of the stock and the estimated value.