

The Briar Wire

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Four Professors Named Faculty Fellows

Four Sweet Briar faculty members were recently recognized for their academic contributions to the College: Dr. August Hardy and Dr. Christopher Penfield were named Dana Faculty Fellows and Laura Pharis and Dr. John Morrissey were named Cameron Fellows.

"Sweet Briar's faculty are its most valuable asset. Awards such as these show appreciation and recognition for their efforts in support of the College's academic program," said Dr. Jeffrey Key, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the College.

The Dana Faculty Fellowship was instituted in 1972 to provide a means of rewarding faculty who have demonstrated excellence in pedagogy, scholarship, and service to the College. The Dana award includes a salary supplement and research funding for a period of three years, during which faculty hold the title of Dana Professor.

Dr. August Hardy, named as Dana Professor of Economics, has been at Sweet Briar since 2019. After earning his undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia, Dr. Hardy received a master's degree and Ph.D. from George Mason University. His dissertation focused on "Rationality on the Fringes," and his research and teaching have centered around applied microeconomics and political economy, with a secondary interest in industrial organization.

Dr. Christopher Penfield came to Sweet Briar in 2017 and has been named a Dana Professor of Philosophy. He studied philosophy at Haverford College as an undergrad, earned a master's from the New

School for Social Research, and completed his Ph.D. at Purdue University. Dr. Penfield's teaching interests include social and political philosophy, ethics, philosophy of art and literature, philosophical psychology, environmental philosophy, philosophy of religion, history of philosophy, and logic.

Endowed by Flora Cameron Crichton '46, the Cameron Fellows program was established in 2004 to recognize tenured faculty who have demonstrated excellence in one or more of these areas: teaching, scholarship, or service to the College. Cameron Fellows receive a salary increase and will hold the title of "Cameron Fellow" for the remainder of their time at Sweet Briar.

A member of the Sweet Briar community since 1990, Professor of Studio Art Laura Pharis was recently named a Cameron Fellow. She was previously recognized as Virginia Artist of the Year by the Richmond Women's Caucus for the Arts. Pharis is the first woman to be named a Cameron Fellow.

Dr. John Morrissey was also named a Cameron Fellow. A marine biologist and textbook author who studies the biology of sharks and rays, he has been teaching at Sweet Briar since 2007 and currently also serves as the pre-vet advisor. A graduate of Hofstra University and the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, Dr. Morrissey is a lifetime member of the American Elasmobranch Society. Dr. Morrissey has brought approximately 1,000 students to the Caribbean for a course in the biology of coral reefs and has helped many Vixens on their journeys to becoming vets.



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Dear alumnae and friends,

I send my best wishes to all of you for a joyous season of giving and gratitude. With the arrival of colder temperatures, Thanksgiving break, and the approach of their final exams, our students are eagerly anticipating winter break.

For those of us on campus, this time is an opportunity to reflect on the past year. When I think of our college in 2024, a few milestones come to mind:

- We graduated 91 members of the Class of 2024, the majority of whom have secured jobs and graduate school opportunities.
- We built the academic excellence of the institution by signing 4+1 partnerships. In engineering, Sweet Briar has partnered with UVA and Virginia Tech, and the partnership with the Institute for World Politics is focused on international affairs, national security and intelligence education.
- We increased our bond rating to BB+ for the seventh time in nine years and had a clean audit.
- We celebrated Reunion with more than 400 classmates and friends on campus, including recognizing 6 alumnae for their volunteerism and professional achievements through the Outstanding and Distinguished Alumnae Awards.
- We celebrated the tenth summer we held Sweet Work Weeks, which marked astounding contributions of time and talent to Sweet Briar's land and buildings.

- We invited Bethany Pace to speak at Founders' Day and welcomed other descendants of the Fletcher family to campus to honor all of Sweet Briar's founders during the weekend.
- We held multiple events with the Amherst County community with more to come in 2025.
- We worked with our campus community to recognize and lift up our employees.

These milestones are hallmarks of our community—events and traditions that brought us together in common spirit: a love of Sweet Briar, its land, its history, and its people.

None of these events or the milestones they honor are possible without the students, faculty, staff, alumnae, families, and friends who support Sweet Briar through engagement and participation in the life of our college. I am grateful to all of our community, including those at home here on campus, around the country, and abroad.

My dearest wish for all members of this community is time with loved ones, space to reflect on your personal milestones in 2024, and to look forward to the hope, challenges, and opportunities that 2025 will bring. Here's to a joyous holiday season and celebration of the new year!

With gratitude,

Mary Pope M. Hutson '83
President





Families Weekend

During Families Weekend, parents, siblings, friends, and other members of the Sweet Briar College extended community joined us on campus for a variety of fun activities and educational programming.



Making a Splash: Pool upgrades

The Prothro Natatorium recently received a series of transformational renovations and upgrades to better serve the swimming program and all pool users. Projects completed over the summer included replacing the metal halide lights with LED fixtures, which led to replacing the ceiling and metal grid supporting the new lights while also updating existing electrical panels. These necessary upgrades not only improved the facility's electrical wiring, but also offered an opportunity for cosmetic updates that have changed the look and feel of the space.

The extensive upgrades were made possible by the generous support of the Perkins-Prothro Foundation, the Prothro Natatorium's original benefactor in 1976, Lynne Pottharst McMillan '69, and many other dedicated donors. The pool renovations were completed in early September in time for the swimming team to start their season, which kicked off at an away meet on Sept. 28 before hosting a tri-meet on Oct. 25. Their season will continue into early 2025.

"We are extremely grateful for the generosity of our alumnae. The renovations to the Prothro Natatorium have made an incredible difference. Between the upgrades and head coach Monica Soliz's impact, our swimming program is heading in a positive direction," Director of Athletics Jason Vittone said.

If you'd like to support the swimming program, please visit sbc.edu/friends-groups and designate swimming. If you have questions or need more information contact alumnae@sb.edu.



Robin Behm '79 & Bonnie Kestner Inducted into Sweet Briar Hall of Fame

On Oct. 18, the Sweet Briar College Department of Athletics inducted former three-sport student-athlete and Vixen mascot founder Robin E. Behm '79 and former head swim coach Bonnie Kestner into the Athletics & Riding Hall of Fame.

The ceremony was held in the Upchurch Field House and included each honoree sharing details about their athletic careers with the friends, family, alumnae, current Sweet Briar student-athletes, coaches, faculty, and staff in attendance.

Robin, who competed on the basketball, field hockey, and lacrosse teams, helped lead all three sports to multiple regional tournaments during her time at the College. She represented Sweet Briar at the 1978 National Field Hockey Tournament and was named co-captain of several teams during her collegiate career. As a multi-year member of the Athletic Association, Robin was elected president during her senior year and was awarded the Chrysler Award in 1979, the most prestigious award handed out by the Athletics Department. She also nominated the "Vixen" into the school-wide mascot contest that took place in spring 1978, leading to a lasting identity for the College's athletics programs. During her remarks, Robin gave a nod to the artist of the "Crispen Vixen," the late Jennifer Crispen, associate professor in physical

education and field hockey coach at Sweet Briar from 1977-2008.

As a swim coach for nearly 30 cumulative years, Bonnie was instrumental in helping the team earn numerous accolades, including a Virginia Small College Championship title in spring 1978 and four Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) titles. While head coach of the program, she was named ODAC Coach of the Year four times, while five swimmers were named ODAC Swimmer of the Year. Bonnie also helped produce an AIAW National finalist, five NCAA Division III All-Americans, and 18 All-Conference swimmers. She previously served on the NCAA Division III Swimming and Diving Committee, and in 2007 was ranked by FINA as one of the top 10 master swimmers in the world in her age group. Currently, the ODAC keeps her legacy alive through the Bonnie Kestner Sportsmanship Award, which is presented every year at the conference championships to a swimmer who demonstrates dedication and true sportsmanship.

"We often talk to our student-athletes about leaving behind a legacy for others to follow, and these two have certainly accomplished that. It is an honor to recognize two women who made such an impact on our programs and campus community," said Director of Athletics Jason Vittone.

Sweet Briar Fund

The Sweet Briar Fund offers NEW ways to support our students:

- **Greatest Needs:** This unrestricted area of support provides critical and flexible funds that address urgent needs and enable the College to seize unique opportunities to support our young scholars today.
- **Student Scholarships:** This unrestricted area of support provides need and merit-based scholarships for talented students and allows the Financial Aid Office the flexibility to meet the needs of prospective students and recruit the best and brightest.
- **Academic Support:** These unrestricted funds support faculty salaries and academic development, the Student Academic Success Center, Honors Summer Research Program, Career Services, Grants for Engaged Learning (GEL), lectures and events, curatorial support for museums and galleries, and other institutional resources.
- **Stewardship of the Natural and Built Environment:** These unrestricted funds support the maintenance, preservation, and improvement of our 22 historic properties and 2,847 acres.

A gift of any size makes a difference—
together, we can provide today's students
with the resources and opportunities that
make a Sweet Briar education unique.

**Make your gift at
[sbc.edu/give!](https://sbc.edu/give)**

Make a Gift to Support Our Students

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, call the Alumnae Relations and Development Office at 434-381-6131.

Send a check to the Office of Alumnae Relations and Development at P.O. Box 1057, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.

For **IRA Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** or **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)** gifts, please visit sbc.edu/ways-to-give.

For gifts by **wire transfer**, please call the Alumnae Relations and Development Office to obtain the instructions for the transfer. If you plan to make a **gift of stock** to Sweet Briar, please contact the Alumnae Relations and Development Office for stock transfer instructions for your broker. We will need to know the name of the stock and the estimated value.

If you are interested in setting up a **legacy gift** to Sweet Briar, please visit sbclegacy.org.



SAVE THE DATE

SBCommitment Program

A Homegrown Opportunity for Virginia Students

The SBCommitment Scholarship program is a powerful opportunity that opens the gates to the future for Virginia students. This program provides full tuition coverage to full Pell Grant-eligible students across the Commonwealth, underscoring Sweet Briar's commitment to making higher education accessible and impactful.

SBCommitment supports Virginia's most promising students by covering their tuition costs. This scholarship is designed to help talented individuals pursue their educational aspirations without financial constraints. Virginia applicants to Sweet Briar College will have the chance to be automatically considered for this scholarship, which aims to attract and support the next generation of leaders and innovators.



Domestic, first-year, first-time students with a 3.6 GPA or higher who reside in Virginia and apply at sbc.edu/apply will receive automatic consideration and expedited decisions for the SBCommitment Scholarship.

Reunion 2025

May 30* – June 1, 2025

The party starts when you arrive!

Key Dates for Reunion

- Feb. 3: Early Bird Registration
- April 22: Early Bird Registration Ends
- May 20: Registration Closes
- May 30: Reunion Begins!

*We will welcome the Class of 1975 back to campus on May 29 for their 50th Reunion!

Dr. Christopher Smith Joins Sweet Briar College as Vice President of Enrollment Management

Following a national search, Christopher Smith, Ph.D. has been appointed as vice president of enrollment management at Sweet Briar College. Dr. Smith brings a wealth of experience, an innovative approach, and an inspiring commitment to advancing Sweet Briar's mission of empowering the next generation of women leaders.

With over two decades of leading teams in high-impact sales and higher education, Dr. Smith has an impressive track record of increasing enrollment through data-driven strategies, fostering diversity, and building programs aligned with institutional values. His visionary leadership has resulted in significant growth in enrollment and increased support for first-generation and underrepresented students. His creative, student-centered approach perfectly fits Sweet Briar's commitment to providing women with an inclusive, empowering environment.

In his most recent role as executive director of enrollment management and new student engagement at Kansas State University Salina Aerospace and Technology Campus (KSU), Dr. Smith oversaw admissions, marketing and communications, financial aid and scholarships, and auxiliary services, including dining and the bookstore. He was critical in developing comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies emphasizing student engagement and support from the first point of contact through graduation.

"Sweet Briar's commitment to shaping women of consequence is truly inspiring, and I am honored to join a college with such a rich legacy and forward-thinking vision," said Dr. Smith. "I am excited to work with the alumnae, faculty, staff, and students to enhance enrollment initiatives that reflect Sweet Briar's strengths in STEM, equestrian studies, and leadership. Together, we will continue building a vibrant and supportive community that empowers young women to lead with impact."

President Mary Pope M. Hutson '83 said, "I am delighted Christopher Smith will join us at Sweet Briar as vice president for enrollment management. His background and expertise complement the College's admissions goals and our strategic plan to increase student enrollment and retention. With his leadership, we will continue our efforts to bring excellent students to Sweet Briar to develop the skills and vision to become women leaders."

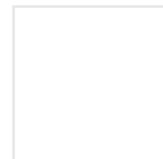


Progress
continues
on the
Colton Arena!

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

Sweet Briar College

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sbc.edu/bookshop

