

## BOARD REPORT on AUGUST 18-20, 2016 MEETINGS

During three days of meetings on campus last week the Sweet Briar Board of Directors reviewed multiple reports, received the president's action plan for the year and took action on a number of important matters. The following items were included in the Board's activities:

- **FY16 Operating Results** – The administration reviewed the 2015–2016 operating results. Highlights included:
  - A confirmation that expenses last year were \$2 million under budget, a budget that had already been cut 20% when the new administration started last summer.
  - Perhaps for the first time in history, and clearly for the first time in modern history, no endowment funds were expended during the year. (Because some endowment funds require income to be used for designated purposes, such as scholarships, some adjustments might still need to be made to honor those requirements.)
  - The college met the requirements of its financial ratio requirements related to its bond debt.
- **Administrative Plan for 2016-2017** – The Board received the administration's Administrative Plan for 2016-2017. Based on the current mission statement of the college and the Board's Five Core Principles (previously posted), the plan addressed the following major topics:
  - Enrollment
  - Fiscal Responsibility
  - Academic Excellence and Leadership for a New Era
  - Sweet Briar's Brand and Ideals
  - Stakeholder EngagementAs to each of the areas, specific targets and goals were spelled out. Work plans are currently being prepared to execute the Administrative Plan. More details will be distributed as they are completed.
- **FY 2017 Budget** – Having approved the tentative FY 2017 budget at its June meeting, the Board reviewed adjustments to that draft and approved the revised budget as the FY 2017 budget. More information about the approved budget will be provided to the community soon. Particular features include:
  - Total expenses are projected to rise approximately 10% as several open positions have now been filled and the student body has grown larger.
  - The board and the administration continue the commitment not to spend more than 5% of its endowment next year. This past year was the first time in at least twenty years the college reached the long-standing target of 5%.
  - The budget calls for \$20 million in gift revenue.
  - Included in the budget is a 2% contribution to the faculty/staff pension plan, the first step in the restoration of a more adequate contribution level.
- **Business Plan and Discount Rate** – The Board heard a presentation from the administration on its Business Plan and an explanation of the tuition Discount Rate. The Business Plan projects revenue and expenses for several years to assist the board in highlighting the most important and strategic areas for attention.
- **Brand Identification** – The Board heard a presentation from the administration on plans for reviewing the "brand identification" of the college to make sure that it is current, effective and coherent.
- **Fundraising** – A presentation was made on the strategy for raising \$20 million in gift revenue this year.
- **Online Education Information** – Dr. William Drake, a member of the Board, a former college president and now a consultant in higher education, presented an informational

report on online graduate level education. Because of his significant experience in the area, he was able to highlight the necessary ingredients of a successful program and the pitfalls to avoid.

- **New Board member** – Suny Monk of Amherst, Va., recently elected to the board, attended her first meeting.
- **Board Officers and Members** – The board elected the following board officers and directors for the current year:
  - Teresa Pike Tomlinson – Board Chair
  - Georgene Vairo – Vice Chair
  - Elinor “El” Warner – Secretary
  - The Board elected two directors to serve with the officers as members of the Executive Committee: Dr. Mimi Fahs and Rocky Query.
- **Bond Indebtedness** – The Board authorized the administration, with the approval of the Finance Committee, to look into possible options for reducing or refinancing current bond indebtedness of the college.
- **Guest Speaker** – Dr. Richard “Rich” Morrill, Chancellor and past president at the University of Richmond and past president of Salem College and Centre College, spoke to the board on the importance of creating a strategic vision for decision-making. He strongly confirmed the Board’s intention to move immediately from a rescue mode to an envisioning process, starting to design the Sweet Briar of the future. Everyone especially appreciated Dr. Morrill’s testimonial about the effect on his life of having participated in the Sweet Briar College Junior Year Abroad and his stated confidence in the success of the college.
- **Daisy Ceremony** – Because the board meeting coincided with the arrival and orientation of the college’s new students, members of the Board participated in the first-ever “Daisy Ceremony.” In front of Pannell and Gray Halls, the first year students were physically and symbolically separated from parents and others until each, in turn, crossed over a quaint bridge constructed for the occasion, to receive their first daisy from the Board Chair and the president, along with an enthusiastic welcome from the community. Sustained applause lasted during the entire presentation, making us even more conscious that a full first-year class is again part of the college pattern! The young women were told that the location for the ceremony was also symbolic since they would eventually graduate just a few feet away and would receive their rose on that occasion. As you might imagine, there were a good number of tears of joy. Parents seem to appreciate this additional confirmation that we were ready to receive their daughters in a nurturing and supportive community. I predict that we have inaugurated a new ceremony that will be continued for many years.
- **Faculty / Board Panel** – The board participated with the faculty in a panel discussion on two new or renewed curriculum initiatives: Computer Science and Environmental Science. The president moderated a panel of three faculty members and the Academic Dean, which included participation from board members and faculty in the audience. This was an additional way for the Board to facilitate engagement with the faculty on substantive matters.
- **Presidential Search**–The board chair, who is also chair of the Presidential Search Committee, briefed the board on the search now underway for the next president of Sweet Briar. She confirmed that the search is on course. She indicated that a typical time for naming a new president is the spring.