



Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer
Sweet Briar College
Amherst County, Virginia

Sweet Briar College challenges and inspires women, forging ethical leaders with the skill, compassion, and vision to create a more just and sustainable world.

THE SEARCH

Sweet Briar College (“Sweet Briar” or “the College”), an exceptional national liberal arts college for women, seeks a tested financial leader with deep and comprehensive expertise in strategic, innovative, and sound management within the higher education context to be its next vice president of finance and chief financial officer (CFO). The CFO will join Sweet Briar as it approaches its 125th anniversary—a historic moment where the institution will celebrate its storied tradition and launch a new capital campaign in the next year for its future. The College is known for forging female leaders and seeks to continue that mission by modernizing and strengthening its business strategies and operations. Sweet Briar will look to the next CFO to be a key and strategic partner with the President as well as a pragmatic and innovative steward of the College’s diverse budget portfolio to further stabilize and thoughtfully grow the institution into its next chapter.

Sweet Briar has a strong community of faculty, staff, coaches, and students. Its formidable alumna base has contributed \$160 million in the past decade and banded together in 2015 to triumphantly see the College through a potential closure. [The College is now in a stable financial situation](#), with an operating budget of approximately \$31 million and an endowment valued at roughly \$73.9 million. Sweet Briar’s leadership team remains focused on preparing for a constantly evolving external environment and changing market conditions and demands. Its S&P long-term bond rating is BB+, the seventh time in nine years that S&P has raised or reaffirmed the College’s rating, citing enrollment growth and effective management. Since 2015, in addition to strategic planning, the College has enhanced its curriculum, embraced its agricultural heritage, developed public-private partnerships in higher ed, reset tuition for increased opportunities for students, and invested in the campus and athletic facilities.

[Opening its doors in 1906](#), Sweet Briar today serves 437 students, is home to 74 faculty, and sits on a 2,840-acre campus in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains with twenty miles of trails and over twenty-one buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. It is approximately 12 miles north of Lynchburg and 54 miles south of Charlottesville. The College boasts a [modern core curriculum](#) focused on women's leadership in the 21st century and undergraduate programs in the arts, sciences, and humanities, as well as a Master of Arts in Teaching. It is one of only two women's colleges in the United States with an ABET-accredited engineering degree. Its average class size is eight to one. Sweet Briar is repeatedly named by US News and World Report as one of the most innovative liberal arts colleges in the nation where students conduct their own research and have experiential learning opportunities. Students are drawn to Sweet Briar for its liberal arts program, coupled with distinctive programs in women's leadership, engineering, sustainability, arts, and its legendary equestrian program.

The Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) provides leadership and oversight of all financial matters. The CFO has oversight of finance, budget and planning, treasury services and risk management, accounts payable, business intelligence, HR, payroll, contracting and procurement services. The CFO reports to the President of Sweet Briar College, [Mary Pope Maybank Hutson](#), is a member of the senior leadership team, and works with staff relevant board committees pertaining to business and financial matters. In its next CFO, Sweet Briar seeks an experienced expert and leader who can bring creative and strategic direction to how the institution manages its finances; improve and innovate internal finance practices and operations; partner with the President, other college leadership, and the board of directors; effectively manage the finance team; and communicate proactively about financial matters with the President and the College community.

Sweet Briar College has retained the search firm [Isaacson, Miller](#) to assist with this recruitment. To apply, nominate, and/or inquire about the position, please refer to the instructions at the end of this document.

ABOUT SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

[Sweet Briar College](#) was established in 1901 as a college for women and remains dedicated to providing an exceptional education for future generations of women. Since the first 51 students arrived in 1906, Sweet Briar has been empowering women to become strong leaders, professionals, and citizens.

Today, faculty and staff focus on guiding students to become active learners in a customized educational program that emphasizes the liberal arts and sciences and prepares them for dynamic and creative lives of consequence. Sweet Briar's academic programs seek to cultivate an inclusive and vibrant community of learning among students, faculty and staff that prizes ethical and innovative thinking.

The curriculum focuses first on the core curriculum for women's leadership through ten courses uniquely curated to build the whole person and foster personal and professional development through a broad liberal arts education. The faculty and staff guide students to solve real-world problems across an array of disciplines confidently and creatively; develop critical analytic and communication skills; understand

how justice and sustainability are connected; and promote inclusivity, diversity, equity, and access. Students pursue these goals in the classroom, across the campus community, and around the world.

In 2017, the College launched a bold academic program that integrates the liberal arts with a women's leadership core curriculum to prepare graduates as problem solvers for today's world. The College also overhauled its cost structure and reset the tuition-pricing model to make the true cost transparent and predictable.

Sweet Briar is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Master of Arts in Teaching.

Visit the [Appendix](#) at the end of this document for more on academic and student life, leadership and governance, and the strategic plan.

Current Financial Position

For 2024/25, tuition is \$24,740—with fees, \$41,390—and the current discount rate is 60 percent. The College has low debt and annual audits of the College's financials continue to be "clean" with no weaknesses or findings. Primary revenue sources are tuition, auxiliaries, and contributions. For fiscal year 2021-2022, total giving is over \$25 million, with over \$7 million in unrestricted annual funds. Through April 2023, contributions were over \$15 million, with \$5 million for unrestricted annual giving, \$1 million for restricted giving, and the remainder for campaign giving. There is an intentional reduction of reliance on unrestricted annual giving as the net student revenue (tuition, room and board) grows.

Sweet Briar's enrollment is 437 (fall 2024 census). The College has a goal of 525 enrolled students, achievable with no new buildings by fall 2026. The College is fully residential with over 95% of students residing in residence halls and campus apartments.

In 2021, the college received a glowing accreditation report from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) with no significant findings or recommendations. This represents the truly hard work over the previous five years to bring financial stability to the College.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Priorities Campaign.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) reports to the President and is the chief financial officer of the College—responsible for the administration and oversight of strategic financial management, including finance and budget, business office operations, purchasing, human resources, and financial aid. As a member of the [President's Cabinet](#), the CFO is a strategic partner to the President. The CFO collaborates and networks internally across administrative and academic departments and externally with other colleges, governance bodies, and the College, with three direct reports—the

controller, the director of human resources & Title IX coordinator, and the director of financial aid.

The CFO provides leadership, oversight, and stewardship for all aspects of the College's financial resources, assuring integrity and fiduciary compliance. As a strategic thinker and creative problem solver, the CFO engages with the President's Cabinet to:

- Increase system efficiencies through continuous innovation and transformation of effective customer-focused business and financial services;
- Maximize limited budgets;
- Manage funding sources to respond to changing funding formulas and to maximize College impact; and
- Maintain the College's responsibility as a good steward of the public's trust while at the same time serving students, staff, and faculty with excellent customer service, focused on finding viable solutions to meet or exceed customer needs within all applicable local, state, and national rules and regulations.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The success of the next CFO will be determined by how well they address the following leadership opportunities and challenges:

Strategic Planning, Vision Setting, and Financial Leadership

As part of the President's Cabinet, the CFO is expected to bring deep experience in strategic thinking, vision, and creativity to Sweet Briar's financial management. The CFO plays a significant role in the budgeting process and must work with the Sweet Briar community to transparently and collaboratively set parameters and priorities that align with the strategic direction of the College. Leveraging a data-driven approach, the CFO will provide information and analyses required for decision-making, laying out alternatives, options, and comparisons. The CFO will be well-informed about best and contemporary financial practices and identify innovative opportunities for cost savings and revenue growth within the higher education context.

Assess and Improve Business Processes

Sweet Briar strives for continual process improvement in service to the academic mission. The CFO will lead, champion, and lay the groundwork for the best business process efforts across the College, identifying opportunities to improve services and provide the highest-quality learning, teaching, and working environment possible. The CFO will serve as a strategic partner to the President—implementing process improvements, proactively collaborating, collecting feedback, and facilitating consensus solutions that increase efficiency and effectiveness. There is great potential for the CFO to strategically improve systems and workflows based on data-driven analysis.

Partner with the President and Board of Directors

Sweet Briar has a board of successful entrepreneurs, financial professionals, artists, media leaders, and philanthropists who greatly contribute to the mission of the College. The CFO will have the opportunity to partner with experienced allies and experts on innovative business initiatives and will be the chief financial advisor to the President and the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Finance Committee communicates regularly with the College President and CFO and will look to them for guidance and discussion on strategic initiatives and decisions. The CFO will be responsible for preparing and presenting financial information to the Finance Committee and full Board as appropriate in close collaboration with the President. The CFO will need to foster generative working relationships with board members and possess clear communication and active listening skills, taking the time to engage in constructive and open dialogue.

Lead and Manage a Strong Team

The CFO will inherit talented and dedicated staff and will be expected to support their team by providing vision and innovative leadership for business office activities, accounting, payroll, purchasing, and equipment and inventory control. The CFO will utilize the institutional knowledge and expertise of seasoned members while also championing best practices, providing mentorship, and facilitating professional development and growth—with goal setting and performance evaluations. Additionally, the CFO will cultivate a culture of creativity, autonomy, mutual respect, and shared purpose and accountability, motivating teams to continue to provide a high level of service to the College.

Collaborate, Engage, and Communicate within the Sweet Briar Community

The CFO must create strong, collaborative working relationships with students, faculty, staff, and administrators to ensure that stakeholders and campus leaders are appropriately informed and knowledgeable of current and future fiscal budgets and business initiatives. The CFO will promote literacy on budget-related processes, provide straightforward access to financial data, explain methodology, and provide guidance for strategic budget-related decisions.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will possess most, if not all, of the following qualifications or experience:

- Bachelor's degree is required, preferably in Finance, Accounting, Economics or Business or other related fields; a master's degree in business, administration, or another relevant field is preferred.
- Minimum five years' related experience in finance administration and a record of progressively responsible strategic leadership experience overseeing financial and business functions, preferably within higher education and/or in a comparably complex organizational setting.

- Outstanding financial expertise coupled with strong technical knowledge, deep understanding of financial operations, and proven talent for the development and execution of long-term financial strategy.
- Proven ability to bring about complex change in a thoughtful manner, drive initiatives across an organization, and establish best practices that are tailored to the unique needs of the institution.
- Experience as a fair, respectful leader and a skilled administrator with proven ability to effectively manage resources to maximize institutional effectiveness.
- Knowledge of current and emerging issues, trends, and strategies in finance and a proven track record of success with revenue enhancement.
- Commitment to the highest ethical and professional standards; personal and professional integrity above reproach.
- An entrepreneurial orientation and a willingness to take considered risks and seize opportunities.
- A commitment to transparency and consensus building; a collegial, collaborative leadership style.
- Superb interpersonal and communication skills; an ability to communicate complex information in layman terms.
- Demonstrated capacity to develop the talents and expertise of staff so that they can assume expanded responsibilities; proven ability to recruit and retain a diverse and talented team of professionals.
- Ability to operate within the board vote to honor the two-gender identification classification that was in place when the charitable estate gift was given in 1901 to found the College by Indiana Fletcher Williams in memory of her daughter, Daisy Williams.
- Proven experience relating to external constituencies such as governing and coordinating boards, legislative bodies, public and other funding agencies, alumni, and donors.
- An ability and desire to work in a system that values shared governance.

Preferred skills and qualifications:

- Master's degree (or equivalent experience) in accounting, business accounting, or finance.
- Experience in college administration, with working experience with various college applications. Previous Banner and other College data management experience are desirable.
- Professional certification (ex: Certified Public Accountant).

LOCATION AND COMPENSATION

Sweet Briar College is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in central Virginia, within easy driving distance of national forests, historic sites, Washington, D.C., Richmond, and Charlottesville. The College is right outside of Amherst, a small town of 2,300 people, and is only 13 miles away from Lynchburg, which has a population of nearly 80,000 people, making it a location that has the charm of a

small town with the advantages of a small city. The area is part of the ancestral homeland of the Native American People of the Monacan Nation as well as other indigenous nations.

Lynchburg itself is a growing college town: it is home to Randolph College, University of Lynchburg, Liberty University, Central Virginia Community College, and the Virginia University of Lynchburg. It boasts a thriving downtown, museums, shopping, restaurants, and a vibrant visual and performing arts scene. The surrounding airports in Charlottesville, Roanoke and Richmond are easily accessible.

The compensation range is \$180,000 - \$200,000 with excellent benefits, and options may exist for on-campus housing.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent electronically via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/sweet-briar-college/chief-financial-officer>.

Dan Rodas, Partner

Steph Simon, Senior Associate

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[Isaacson, Miller](#)

As an Equal Opportunity Employer, Sweet Briar College is committed to enhancing our community and encourages applications from qualified individuals with varied backgrounds, experiences and ideas who would increase the diversity of the College.

APPENDIX

Academics and Student Life

Sweet Briar has created a [holistic student experience](#) centered on its mission to create women leaders. By focusing on a solidly liberal arts experience, the women who graduate from Sweet Briar are prepared to lead impactful lives in whatever field they choose.

The general education program, the Leadership Core, serves as the foundation. The ten core courses teach students to think critically and creatively, write effectively and persuasively, work in teams, and understand areas and fields where they will be asked to lead. Courses such as Decisions in a Data-driven World, Design Thinking, Women and Gender in the World, and Sustainable Systems prepare students to think about some of the most pressing problems facing society. Contemporary Ethical Questions and The Consequential Citizen ask students to apply what they have learned to take action and be leaders. Faculty incorporate concepts from the Leadership Core throughout their teaching, which integrate with the leadership opportunities students have through participation in athletics, clubs and organizations, and residence life.

The College offers 17 majors, 21 minors, and four certificate programs, as well as teacher licensure programs at the elementary and secondary levels. Eighty-eight percent of the full-time faculty hold terminal degrees. Across the disciplines of the arts, humanities, and the sciences, Sweet Briar's faculty distinguish themselves as notable researchers, published authors, and engaging teachers whose classroom interactions with students prioritize engagement through discussion and hands-on learning opportunities.

Sweet Briar is one of only two women's colleges to offer an ABET-accredited (renewed 2023) engineering sciences degree. The Margaret Jones Wyllie '45 Engineering Program has sent students off to successful careers at JPL, NAVAIR, Amtrak, and NASA.

Students participate in over 35 clubs and organizations that provide opportunities for leadership roles and to put into practice what they're learning in the classroom as part of the College's leadership core curriculum. Multiple offices and programs provide entertainment and cultural and social events throughout the year to enhance the on-campus learning experience.

Sweet Briar is NCAA Division III and a member of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) with eight varsity sports teams. The College has a long legacy as a world-class equestrian program. In 2017, it was the first Division III school to join the National Collegiate Equestrian Association (NCEA), where they competed against Division I, II & III schools. The Sweet Briar NCEA team won the 2021 NCEA Single Discipline National Championships. It also maintains an Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) team, which is a champion for its regional zone for the fifth year and was the third-place team in the Nation in 2022.

Leadership and Governance

[Mary Pope Maybank Hutson](#) was named the 14th President of Sweet Briar College in November 2023. President Hutson was a member of the Class of 1983 and is the first alumna to hold the position.

Hutson served as Sweet Briar's senior vice president for alumnae relations and development for the previous eight years, increasing alumnae engagement and financial support for the College, having brought extensive experience from her long career in both the public and private sectors. Under her guidance, the College raised more than \$140 million from 2015 through 2023.

Prior to her position at Sweet Briar, President Hutson served as the executive vice president of the Land Trust Alliance (2002-2015), a national conservation organization that works to save and strengthen land conservation across America. President Hutson also has a background in public service and policymaking, having worked in the office of a U.S. Senator, and for the Department of the Interior as a liaison for the Office of Territorial and International Affairs to St. Thomas, as Guam Desk Officer, and in the Office of the Assistant Secretary (1985-1989). In 1990, Hutson was appointed by the White House as special assistant to the Ambassador of Kenya.

[Sweet Briar College's Board of Directors](#) is the governing body of the College, with all necessary powers to preside over its business and affairs. The primary function of the Board is to review and approve the strategic direction for the College and to steward the sound utilization of its resources. The board currently consists of 21 members.

Strategic Planning

The College refreshed its [strategic plan](#) for the next three years in September of 2024 and identified three strategic goals:

- Advance Academic and Organizational Excellence and Enhance the Student Experience,
- Increase Financial Prosperity, and
- Steward the Natural and Built Environment.

The first goal, Advance Academic and Organizational Excellence and Enhance the Student Experience, is organized into three categories. The first is to Strengthen Academic Excellence. The College aims to increase student competency; grow the leadership core curriculum, academic programs, and the honors program; and enhance the liberal arts through partnerships and collaboration. The second category is to Build Organizational Excellence with objectives to increase employee retention, and the College has charged its AI Task Force to identify ways to strategically use AI to create more work efficiencies. The third category is to Enhance the Student Experience with hopes to increase the emphasis on co-curricular learning, cultivate external partnerships, further efforts to create an inclusive campus environment, and hold more on-campus events.

The second strategic goal to Increase Financial Prosperity includes increasing student revenue with an objective to grow student enrollment to 525 by the fall of 2026, match net tuition to a level commensurate to peer institutions and increase student retention from 70 percent to 75 percent. The College aims to maintain an operating reserve fund, revise the business model to address any levels of vulnerability, and strengthen its brand for external and internal audiences.

The College's third strategic goal, Steward the Natural and Built Environment, aims to address deferred maintenance projects and create a deferred maintenance fund, initiate the implementation of energy infrastructure upgrades, prioritize the order of capital improvements and rehabilitation—which includes the reinitiation of the Campus Space Planning Committee—complete the cultural landscape study and the additions to the Riding Center Complex, and identify partnerships and funding to support a Preservation Crafts Training Program that ties into the College's academic plan and promotes regional workforce development.