

**President Phillip C. Stone**  
**Remarks for Opening Convocation, Aug. 24, 2016**

We just completed a remarkable year. Last year at Opening Convocation we celebrated the miracle produced by the Sweet Briar women who organized themselves into an effective army and produced a change in governance of the College. They literally saved their college.

But last August, it was our turn. Another miracle was required. We needed to keep the school open. In just six weeks after the change in governance when all our students had already transferred to other schools, and the faculty and most staff had received termination notices, we opened school on time with all programs restored. An experienced, dedicated faculty and staff stayed in place to make that happen.

At the Opening Convocation last year we celebrated in the midst of tears of joy but also with painful memories. We proceeded to have a terrific year with everyone working together to get us back on good footing. Along the way, one of our faculty members, Dr. Jim Kirkwood, was designated [Outstanding Faculty] by the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia, Makayla Benjamin ['18] won an international riding event in Germany and Emily Schlosberg ['19] won Rider of the Year and Rookie of the Year in our [athletic] conference, Mimi Wroten won the Coach of the Year award, the riding team repeated as conference champions, we celebrated other successes.

We finished the year with a record \$10.2 million in gifts from alumnae; we saved about \$2 million from an expense budget that had already been cut; we restored our accreditation and membership in all the necessary educational and athletic groups. Many of the faculty, staff and students affirmed that the morale of the campus was the best in many years. We had no time to wring our hands over our problems; we had work to do, and, together, we performed the needed new miracles. Thanks to all the faculty, staff and students who achieved such incredible results last year.

It is now a pleasure for us to welcome home several of our outstanding faculty and staff who were not able to remain with us last year along with new faculty, staff and students. It was such a pleasure for me to address the new students and their families in this auditorium last Friday and see almost a full house just from new students and families. That was evidence that we are getting back to normal patterns of recruitment and enrollment. Our student body has grown by more than one hundred this fall and we will continue to grow until we reach full enrollment.

The Daisy Ceremony last Friday was a wonderful introduction of our new students to this community. Symbolically and literally, new students crossed the transition bridge to join this new community, which welcomed them with open arms. The symbolism of the Daisy to be followed at commencement with the presentation of the Rose reminds of the heritage and special culture of this institution. It is a place of warmth, acceptance, civility, creativity and serious study.

To all the faculty, staff and students who weathered the storms of the months following the announcement of closing and showed such commitment to this college by remaining in place, to those who returned as quickly as you could arrange to do so, to those who joined us for the first time in recent months or days, thank you for your obvious commitment to Sweet Briar College and its destiny. I told you last year and, because of what we are all doing together, I say it again today: "Sweet Briar College is alive and well!" Let us continue to produce miracles.