

Experiential Learning Connects Sweet Briar Students With Real-World Opportunities

Sweet Briar students gain career-ready skills through internships, research, travel, and experiential learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

SWEET BRIAR, VA, UNITED STATES, May 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From April 10-12, five Sweet Briar students had the opportunity to experience the [5th Annual LAVAGEM African Brazilian Celebration in Charlotte, N.C.](#)

Organized by Tamara Williams and Luciano Xavier in partnership with Bloco Afro Ayédùn, the festival hosts four days of African Brazilian dance, music, and procession featuring classes with internationally-renowned

guest teachers from Brazil, including Rosangela Silvestre, Vania Oliveira, Danda da Hora, Zé Ricardo, and Nildinha Fonseca, as well as Capoeira Masters Mestre Alegria and Mestre Jelon. Workshops were accompanied by live music by Batalá New York, a premier all-women, Black-led samba reggae percussion group.

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Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance Mika Lior



Five Sweet Briar students explore culture and history at dance festival.

As Williams shared, the “LAVAGEM Celebration started in Charlotte in 2022 after the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspired by the annual LAVAGEM in Salvador, Bahia, every January, Luciano Xavier and I had the idea of bringing our community together after so much sickness and death to cleanse, celebrate life, and honor those who passed away during the pandemic. This four-day festival is also a means of reclaiming spaces in our region. This festival was created to uplift the voices of Indigenous peoples, African Brazilians, and the broader African diasporic communities

through fellowship. We provide platforms for these voices to be honored and their histories to

be told from the source.”

The trip was coordinated by [Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance Mika Lior](#) to provide an immersive experience for the students of the [Afro-Brazilian Contemporary Technique class](#) this spring. Student attendees included Ceili Alder '26, Atty Bestwick '26, Liza Dareing '26, Andro Hayward '27, and Ella Cate Johnson '29.

“This festival represented an absolutely incredible opportunity to study Afro-Brazilian dance in an immersive way with guest teachers all the way from Brazil, New York, and California. The size of our dance program allows for abundant and unique performance and choreographic opportunities. However, in order to expose students to a diversity of dance forms and practices, we are able to pursue special trips or experiential activities off campus,” noted Lior.

Throughout the festival, the students' learning was enriched with culture, history, and direct knowledge transmission from master teachers in the traditions that inform the dances. The students also benefited from the environment of a dance intensive, as well as from dancing alongside students from other institutions, advancing their technical and expressive skills and inspiring them towards further study.

“Opportunities like this support the dance program by enriching students' experiences, exposing them to non-Western philosophies and their embodiment in aesthetic principles and movement styles,



Students attend the 2026 LAVAGEM African Brazilian Celebration.



Mika Lior Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance

allowing them to approach dance study within a more contextualized musical, social, political, and cultural framework,” said Lior.

“It was very informative to learn from those closely connected to the practice and culture of Afro-Brazilian dance and festivals, and to be able to connect with other dancers at the events, and see a range of skills in those participating,” said Atty. “I also enjoyed the strong community aspect of the festival, as the public was invited to attend the events or join the classes to learn new dances and their history.”

At Sweet Briar College, experiential learning is more than a buzzword; it’s part of everyday student life. Whether through internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, leadership opportunities, or hands-on projects, students graduate with the confidence

and experience needed to succeed in competitive careers and graduate programs. Sweet Briar’s personalized approach ensures every student is supported as she explores her passions and builds a bold future. Learn more at sbc.edu/admissions or contact admissions@sbc.edu.

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