

She Who Earns the Rose May Bear It: Sweet Briar Graduates 104 Seniors During 116th Commencement Ceremony

Sweet Briar celebrates the Class of 2025 and their achievements during the College's 116th Commencement, honoring 104 graduates from 22 states and 13 countries.

SWEET BRIAR, VA, UNITED STATES, May 31, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- There's never a happier time on campus than when the community celebrates the culmination of a class's time at Sweet Briar.

Following a week of rain that saturated the grounds on campus, the Class of 2025 walked across the stage in the

Fitness & Athletics Center's Upchurch Field House on May 17, closing out years of hard work, scholarship, and tradition. Roses were earned, and the graduates received their diplomas in front of hundreds of students, faculty, staff, family, and friends who gathered to celebrate this inspiring class of 104 scholars hailing from 22 states and 13 countries.

“

You owe it to yourself, and to your fellow humans, to continue to learn, to study, to experience, to travel, to listen, to hear, to empathize, and to accept that there are many ways to view life.”

Dr. John Morrissey, Professor of Biology



The College community gathered on May 17 to celebrate the Class of 2025's Commencement

The College's 116th Commencement ceremony, the program also included remarks by several community members, including Melody Rosalie Cooper '25, this year's Presidential Medalist; Safiya Crutchfield, president of the senior class; Lara Jost '25, vice president of academic affairs of the Student Government Association (SGA); and Isabella Paul '25, president of SGA.

“We as a collective are who we are today because of the people sitting around us right now. As we walk across the stage and drive through the gates for

the last time as students, I want us all to remember that. Remember that it will be impossible to forget our time here because our time here has embedded itself within us, forever changed," Melody said.

"When I first moved into my room in Meta Glass, I never expected my time here to be so formative. Now, I am walking away as a leader with a diploma in my hand and lifelong friends by my side," said Safiya. "And while I know we are all terribly sad to say goodbye to our underclassman friends, our mentors, and this beautiful campus, just know Sweet Briar is, and will always be, a place that we can call home."

Dr. John Morrissey, professor of biology and pre-vet advisor at Sweet Briar College, delivered the Commencement address, drawing on his extensive career in biology to offer advice to the seniors while reflecting on how their liberal arts education will benefit them beyond the campus.

"All of you will walk out of our door today less ignorant and more worldly than when you entered four years ago. You have been exposed to other cultures, other languages, other religions ... and atheism, other ways of thought, and other ways of doing things. And I hope you agree that this exposure has made you a better global citizen," Dr. Morrissey said to the class. "But your responsibility hasn't ended this week. You owe it to yourself and your fellow humans to continue to learn, to study, to experience, to travel, to listen, to hear, to empathize, and to accept that there are many ways to view life."

In continuation of the celebration, numerous awards and honors were also presented during the ceremony, including the Award for Excellence in Teaching given to Dr. August Hardy, the Award for Excellence in Service given to Barbara Watts, the presentation of a Doctorate of Humane Letters to Norma Patteson Mills '60, and a variety of awards to members of the graduating class.



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President Mary Pope M. Hutson '83 closed out the ceremony with a charge to the Class of 2025 as they spent their last moments as undergraduate students.

"As Sweet Briar students, you've shown your mettle; you've shown us that you can face challenges, that you can speak out in support of what you believe in," she said. "Now, it's time for you to take your talents to the wider world and work to make it a better place. You can do this. You are a Sweet Briar woman. The world is waiting for you, and we are eager to see what you will accomplish next!"

Prior to Saturday's Commencement ceremony, seniors and their loved ones also attended the Awards and Baccalaureate ceremonies on May 16, providing opportunities to reflect and celebrate all they have accomplished during their time at Sweet Briar. The Class of 2025 already boasts a 70% job or graduate school placement rate, with 43 starting a job and 31 continuing their education. Seven of the graduating seniors earned Honors degrees, while 14% were recognized as Cum Laude, 23% as Summa Cum Laude, and 30% as Magna Cum Laude.

Commencement Awards

The Alpha Lambda Delta Award: Sarah Elizabeth Katz

The Loren Oliver Award for Studio Art: Kalin Theresa Ross

The Excellence in Studio Art Award: Giselle Yasmin Vega

The Penelope Lane Czarra Award: Natalie Elizabeth Cockey

The Juliet Halliburton Davis Environmental Science Award: Audrey Elizabeth Flattich

The Economics Department Outstanding Senior Award: Audrey Elizabeth Flattich

The Judith Molinar Elkins Prize: Ana Isabel Patiño Rojas

The Excellence in Engineering Award: Sanjita Pokhrel

The Engineering Outreach Award: Ana Isabel Patiño Rojas

The Connie M. Guion Award: Valen Marie Foster

The James Lewis Howe Award in Chemistry: Lara Katharina Jost

The Magruder Excellence in Dance Award: Maria McCoy Lerdo de Tejada



Sweet Briar College: Where Bold Women Thrive, nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is more than just a campus—it's a launchpad for fearless leaders, innovators, and changemakers.

The Emily Watts McVea Scholar: Meredith Brooks Farmer

The Presidential Medalist: Melody Rosalie Cooper

Shakespeare Prize: Melody Rosalie Cooper

The Poetry Prize: Sarah Elizabeth Katz

The Sprague-Belcher Award in Biology: Ariel Marie Hullender, Julianna Margaret Miranda McIntyre

The Anne Gary Pannell Taylor Award in History: Ava Justice Rockefeller Campbell

The Anne Gary Pannell Taylor Graduate Fellowship in History: Kailey Ann McCarthy, Emerson Meade McMillin

The Mathematical Sciences Award: Acadia Rose ElzHowe

The Class of 2025's achievements are a testament to Sweet Briar's bold approach to women's education—one rooted in leadership, community, and academic excellence. With small class sizes, hands-on learning, and personalized mentorship, Sweet Briar students graduate ready to lead and serve. To learn more about becoming a Sweet Briar woman, contact Admissions at admissions@sbcb.edu or 434-381-6142.

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