

Emma Staton '26 Wins 2026 ASME Old Guard Oral Presentation Competition

Emma Staton '26 wins the 2026 ASME Old Guard Oral Presentation Competition with her robotics systems engineering project.

SWEET BRIAR, VA, UNITED STATES, May 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Emma Staton '26 recently took first place in the ASME Virginia Section's 2026 Old Guard Oral Presentation Competition.

On April 1, Emma traveled to Virginia Western Community College to present "Establishing Competitive Robotics at [Sweet Briar College](#): Systems Integration and Engineering of a BeetleWeight Combat Robot," a project that she worked on with several other Sweet Briar engineering students as part of her senior capstone. Emma shared their work at the ASME Old Guard individually after winning the Sweet Briar presentation rounds.

"One of the benefits of a small liberal arts college is the application of theory through hands-on experiences. This project is the culmination of Sweet Briar's ABET-accredited engineering curriculum, which emphasizes multidisciplinary solutions," Emma said. "It allowed us to apply theoretical knowledge and equations to a real-world, 'high-stakes' environment where components are expected to fail. It specifically tested our proficiency in material science, electrical circuits, control theory, and project management."

A "BeetleWeight," or 3-lb, combat robot serves as the foundation for the up-and-coming [Sweet Briar College Robotics Team](#) that Emma and others hope to establish. During the creation of the robot, they utilized a systems engineering approach to balance extreme constraints: temporal, monetary, and NRC-specific. The robot features a beater-bar weapon system—a high-kinetic-energy bar that exhibits rotational motion for a destructive impact.



Sweet Briar student takes first place in ASME Virginia presentation competition.

During the presentation, Emma competed against representatives from Virginia Tech and Virginia Military Institute for cash prizes. According to ASME, the competition is designed to emphasize the value of the ability to deliver clear, concise, and effective oral presentations, particularly in a sphere in which an engineer is or should be involved.

The team, which also includes Mohima Anushi '26, Allison Kent '26, and Karlie Lester '27, will compete in the National Robotics Challenge in Marion, Ohio, from April 16-18.

Outside of the competition, the students are recruiting members for next year and are partnering with the College's Society of Women Engineers chapter to host Lunch and Learns to introduce students to the team. They are also working to secure sponsorships from companies and a faculty sponsor.

"We want to see Sweet Briar students from across all STEM fields putting their theoretical knowledge into practice," said Emma. "By documenting every design choice in our engineering file book, we are not just leaving behind a robot; we are leaving behind a permanent, repeatable program that will hopefully allow future students to represent Sweet Briar in robotics for years to come."

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Emma Staton '26, Engineering Science

At Sweet Briar College, engineering students gain the confidence to innovate, compete, and lead. From robotics and systems integration to national presentation competitions, students apply classroom learning to real-world challenges through hands-on experiences and close faculty mentorship. As one of only two ABET-accredited engineering programs at a women's college in the United States, Sweet Briar empowers women to excel in STEM fields and beyond. If you're ready to turn ideas into impact, visit sbc.edu/admissions or contact admissions@sbc.edu to learn more.



Sweet Briar faculty and students join Emma Staton '26 at the presentation competition.

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