

Sweet Briar College Welcomes 132 New Students, Up 20% Year Over Year

Sweet Briar welcomes 132 new students, a 20% year-over-year increase, as the College builds enrollment following two large graduating classes.

SWEET BRIAR, VA, UNITED STATES, September 14, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Sweet Briar College welcomed 132 new students this fall, a 20% increase from 110 a year ago, following a recruitment cycle that showed stronger results across the admissions process.

The incoming class is also one of the College's most diverse in the past three years.



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The growth comes at an important time for Sweet Briar. The College graduated two of its largest classes in 2025 and 2026, making continued growth in new student enrollment especially important as Sweet Briar builds overall enrollment.

“

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President Mary Pope M. Hutson '83

“This is a strong result for Sweet Briar, and it took a lot of people working together to get here,” said President Mary Pope M. Hutson '83. “Our Enrollment Management team led that work, but faculty, staff, coaches, students and alumnae all played a role. Ultimately, 132 students chose

Sweet Briar. We are grateful for that outcome, and now our responsibility is to give them the one-of-a-kind experience they came here for.”

A More Focused, More Personal Approach

Sweet Briar entered the [fall 2026 recruitment cycle](#) with a more focused approach to enrollment, combining better use of data with the kind of personal outreach that has long defined the

College.

The work included broader outreach to prospective students and families, stronger engagement throughout the college search process, and a more intentional approach to recruitment. But the heart of the work remained personal.

"We followed the data, but we also picked up the phone," said Dr. Christopher Smith, vice president for enrollment management. "We talked to students. We listened to parents. We traveled. We followed up. And when something wasn't working, we were willing to change it. Technology can make us smarter and faster, but it cannot replace the relationship."

Smith said the results were built over the course of the year, one student and one family at a time.

"I'm proud of this team because they worked for every one of these students," Smith said. "There were long days, a lot of miles, a lot of calls and plenty of things that didn't go exactly as planned. But they kept showing up. When a student needed something, somebody responded. That consistency mattered."

For Smith, the final number is important, but only part of the story.

"We are responsible for growing enrollment, so the numbers matter," he said. "But 132 is not just a number on a report. 132 outstanding students are leaders, and they have made a very personal decision about where they want to spend the next four years. They chose us. Now we have to deliver."

Growth at an Important Moment

The fall 2026 increase takes on added significance after Sweet Briar graduated two of its largest classes in 2025 and 2026.

Large graduating classes pose a challenge to overall enrollment because the College must bring in increasingly strong incoming classes to replace students completing their degrees.

"That is an important part of this story," Smith said. "We have just graduated two very large classes. You do not replace that overnight. A 20% increase in new students is meaningful, but one year does not achieve the goals to grow our enrollment to 600. We have to build on it one year at a time."



Dr. Christopher Smith Vice
President of Enrollment at Sweet
Briar College

The College's focus is now on sustaining that progress over multiple recruitment cycles.

Building on the Momentum

With the fall 2026 class enrolled, Sweet Briar has already turned its attention to fall 2027.

Early indicators are very encouraging. Student inquiries are currently up approximately 182% compared with the same point last year, while deposits are up 1,200%. Smith cautioned that both figures come very early in the recruitment cycle.

"I like where we are, but I'm not interested in declaring victory in September," Smith said. "It is a long cycle. A lot can happen between someone first showing interest in Sweet Briar and actually moving into a residence hall."

Sweet Briar will continue to build on what worked this year while remaining focused on [sustainable enrollment growth](#) and on the students most likely to thrive at the College.

"One good year gives us something to build on. That's all," Smith said. "We learned what worked. We learned what didn't. Now we have to do it again, and we have to do it better every year."

For prospective students and families, [Sweet Briar's growth](#) reflects something deeply personal: more students are discovering the value of a college intentionally designed for women to thrive. With individualized faculty mentorship, hands-on learning, leadership development, and a community where students are known from the moment they arrive, Sweet Briar offers an experience increasingly difficult to find in higher education. As the College builds on this momentum, it remains focused on attracting students who want more than a degree they want a place that will challenge them, know them, and prepare them to lead. Learn more at sbc.edu/admissions.

Communications and Marketing
Sweet Briar College



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.

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