

# Who Gets Into Sweet Briar?

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## **What does it take to get into Sweet Briar today and how should you go about the business of application?**

Another June, another exam period over, another graduation and alumnae reunion, another freshman class chosen... and another telephone call to the Admission Office:

“Why didn’t you take my daughter? She wants to come to Sweet Briar. It’s her first choice. Why don’t you take people who honestly want Sweet Briar as first choice? Can’t you take her now? One more on the list won’t mean anything to you and it means so much to her.”

The admission person talks to the parent, thinking of all other girls who chose Sweet Briar first, those who are coming and those who will not come. She explains that the college over-accepted freshmen, that the college is over-enrolled, that there is a waiting list, that there is simply no room... and that she is sorry. The response she gets is “why?”

After the conversation, the admission person also wonders “why?” Why this girl, who wanted so much to come to Sweet Briar, refused? She imagines people on the accepted list who will transfer, who will leave in a year or two, never to finish their education, who will scrape by academically to graduate, who won’t try, who will be unhappy here. She wonders if this decision is a mistake.

Then she remembers the care with which the Committee reviewed each applicant, and the reasons this one didn’t make it. She thinks of all the accepted girls who wanted to come just as much and who will do as well. She knows that this girl was not ready yet, in comparison with others in the group; perhaps in a year or two she will re-apply as a transfer student.

This is the time when the greatest number of questions occur to everyone concerned in any way with college admission, as candidates, parents, alumnae representatives, or admission staff members. The following questions are among the most frequently asked the Admissions staff by alumnae and parents:

*What does the Committee consider in its selection of applicants?*

The Committee tries to consider the total picture of each applicant as an individual, and then to compare her with the group for that year. Because each girl is considered separately and on as much of an individual basis as possible, there are no quotas by geographic area, city, or by school. Generally, considerations include the four-year school record, rank in class, College Board scores, school's recommendation, applicant's letter, health, and alumnae connections.

The College Board scores, unless they are low (under 450) are considered more in the light of how they relate to the four-year school record than as separate scores. Both the secondary school record and the College Board scores are important; however, in difficult decisions, the school record carries more weight.

The school's recommendation of the applicant is important because it is the only recommendation that it required. School counselors evaluate personality, attitudes, seriousness of purpose, integrity, maturity, emotional stability, potential, motivation, and capacity for work.

In 1960, there were 904 applications, 708 of which were completed. Of this 708, 349 were accepted. 193 freshmen entered Sweet Briar in September.

*Does it help an applicant to have an alumna recommend her?*

The Admission Committee is always glad to have an alumna who knows an applicant personally send information and comments which may be added to her admission credentials to aid the Committee in its decision. The evaluations and opinions of someone who has been a student at Sweet Briar and therefore has a knowledge of both sides certainly are most helpful. Especially in the case of scholarship applicants, some personal work can be a great help. However, such letters are not a requirement and cannot be *the* deciding factor, since there are so many things in each acceptance or refusal.

*How does the scholarship applicant fit into the admission picture?*

In addition to scholarships offered by the general scholarship fund, students may be awarded area scholarships given by the various alumnae groups across the country; they may apply for grants-in-aid, which are for one-year terms, or they may choose to borrow part of their finances on a student loan program. Many self-help opportunities are available for upperclassmen.

All scholarships are awarded by the Scholarship Committee of the college on the basis of need, which is established by the material in the Confidential Statement which the applicant's parents fill out for the Princeton College Board Scholarship Service.

*How does the Early Decision Plan differ from regular admissions?*

Early Decision is for those candidates who have decided by October of their senior year in secondary school that Sweet Briar is their first and only choice. The school advisor must recommend them for Early Decision. Applying by October 1, they are judged on the basis of their school records through the junior year and their junior scores on the College Boards tests. They agree that they will not apply to another college before December 1, by which time they are accepted, refused, or placed on the Holdover List for Spring consideration. Students on the Holdover List may apply to other colleges. In the Spring, Holdover cases are considered on the basis of their total records compared with regular applicants.

*What good is an interview and tour of the campus?*

An interview, although not a requirement, is a good idea for two reasons. It gives the prospective applicant an opportunity to talk with someone on the admission staff about her aims and academic program. Perhaps more important, it gives the visitor time to look carefully at the college, to form an impression of campus life, to determine whether or not it might be the right place for her.

Arrangements should be made for an appointment before arrival on campus, if possible. Drop-in guests are welcome at any time, however, except during the Spring (April) Committee meetings, when interviewers are not readily available.

*What can parents do to help their daughter prepare for and gain admission to the college of her choice?*

The importance of stimulating an interest in reading cannot be overemphasized. Summer reading lists given out by the schools or reading done for regular English assignments should only be a beginning.

Interest in the student's academic program and work with the school counselor in planning her program of study for all four years in secondary school and knowledge of what courses she should have for particular college requirements are also important.

Parent and daughter should have a heart-to-heart conference, including in their discussion a frank approach to what the student *herself* wants from college, where *she* wishes to go, what type of college *she* wants, and a realistic evaluation of her abilities, interests, and achievements.

Adequate and early financial planning, realistic goals for college, and a sharing of real enjoyment in learning are all important ways in which parents can help their children in preparing for college.

*Are applicants smarter than they used to be?*

This is a good question, and one which comes up at nearly every alumnae gathering, usually prefaced by the remark, "I'm glad I'm not trying to get into Sweet Briar now." It is a question with a yes-and-no answer.

As a group, students are not basically endowed with more brain power than their predecessors of 20, 10, or 5 years ago; but every year applicants do have higher College Board scores and better school records because they are being prepared better by their secondary schools. They are being counseled more thoroughly and oriented more intelligently in how to choose a college.

*Has admission to Sweet Briar become more difficult and competitive because the college has deliberately changed its academic standards for acceptance?*

Sweet Briar has always been selective, with decisions based on evaluation of sound academic ability. Acceptance has become more difficult to achieve because of the greater numbers applying (applications have doubled in number since 1955) and the better preparation and records of those applying. Each year the competition for admission to Sweet Briar and other "preferred" colleges is greater because increasing numbers of applicants recognize the importance of well-planned academic programs, college goals, and steady, hard work.

*Is the Sweet Briar curriculum harder?*

In relation to preparation, the Sweet Briar work is not more difficult. However, as secondary school work improves, the course work at Sweet Briar and other colleges changes. College faculties are having to do less remedial work; they are less often forced to introduce their students to the habit of studying; and they do not have to retrace as much background material properly belonging in the high school program. Teachers are thus able to move classes along faster and to explore more subjects in greater depth.

*Is Sweet Briar turning down able students?*

Many able students are being rejected by Sweet Briar simply because there is not enough space to accommodate all the acceptable applicants. Capable students must sometimes be placed on the waiting list or turned away because others who are better equipped fill the available places. Even so Sweet Briar, like other colleges, over-accepts the number of students who can be housed because the college must gamble on how many freshmen will elect to come in September. This gamble is necessary because of the multiple applications each candidate usually makes.

*What are the chances of being accepted from the waiting list?*

This is difficult to predict until around the middle of June, when the Director of Admissions knows how many of the accepted students are taking their places. The waiting list itself is always a long one because some of the applicants on it will accept other colleges. Those who remain on the waiting list through June have a chance of being accepted as freshmen; how good this chance is depends on the number of old students (upperclassmen) who drop out of college during the summer as well as how many freshmen have accepted space.

*So alumnae daughters have more consideration than other applicants?*

An application from an alumna daughter or granddaughter is always of special interest to the Admission Committee. If the Committee feels that it is possible to accept her on the basis of her records, it does so and space is given her over another equally qualified person. However, the Committee feels that it is no kindness to any applicant, alumna daughter or not, to accept her if there is any indication that her preparation is not as complete as that of the rest of the class, or if it is judged that the competition she would face would be so great that it would be a frustrating experience for her. There are 33 alumnae daughters now enrolled for the entering class this September. Seven other daughters were accepted but did not choose Sweet Briar and much to the regret of the committee eight daughters were refused places and nine were placed on the waiting list.

*Are transfer students welcome?*

Good transfer students enter Sweet Briar every year as sophomores or juniors from junior colleges and four-year colleges. When the new dormitory is ready in 1962, additional transfer students, as well as a larger freshman enrollment, will be sought.

*What are we looking for in our applicants? Is there a Sweet Briar "type"?*

There is no one "type" of girl for Sweet Briar or for any other institution which as one of its aims the guidance of an individual in her own self-development. The Admission Committee looks among the applicants for girls who have motivation, intellectual curiosity, a sincere and alert interest in the world and people around them, and a desire for education and continual learning which will stay with them after their college years. This year Sweet Briar's students came from 38 states and 8 foreign countries.