



## **President Swarthmore College**

**Swarthmore, PA**

**For 162 years, Swarthmore College has believed in the power of rigorous intellectual inquiry to help shape a better, more just world. This commitment, combined with talented students, deeply engaged faculty, committed staff, exceptional institutional strength, and a belief in the transformative power of a liberal arts education, continues to guide the College today.**

**Now, Swarthmore seeks an equally extraordinary leader. The next president of Swarthmore College will have a singular opportunity: to help define the future of the liberal arts at a pivotal moment for higher education — and to demonstrate how critical thinking prepares students to flourish and lead in an era of technological, social, and economic transformation.**

### **THE SEARCH**

Swarthmore College, one of the world's premier liberal arts institutions, seeks a visionary leader with a deep commitment to rigorous intellectual engagement and a profound belief in the transformative power of the liberal arts to steer the College as the institution's 16<sup>th</sup> president and the Roy J. and Linda G. Shanker Presidential Chair.

Swarthmore was founded in 1864 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Though the College is now nonsectarian, Quaker values — including commitments to the pursuit of knowledge, respect for the natural world, peaceful resolution of differences, and a spirit of collaboration and equality — still resonate powerfully at Swarthmore. Notably, the College was coeducational from its outset; believed talent, not financial means, should open the door to learning; integrated science and the humanities early in its history; and embraced intellectual rigor in service of the common good long before such ideas became associated with modern concepts of social responsibility.

Located just outside Philadelphia on an idyllic 425-acre arboretum campus, Swarthmore enrolls approximately 1,700 students and benefits from an endowment of \$2.9 billion. The College is home to a distinguished community exceptional for its academic excellence and ethical scholarship, and is distinctive among liberal arts colleges for its accredited engineering program, robust undergraduate research opportunities, and signature Honors Program. The College's extraordinary faculty are both talented scholars *and* dedicated teachers, leading in their fields while also providing close engagement with students.

Swarthmore students, among the most talented, say they emerge from this close-knit, intellectually engaged community having learned how to think. This prepares them for lives of leadership and impact on the world's most pressing issues. Swarthmore alumni include six Nobel Prize winners, 14 MacArthur "Genius" Fellows, 28 Rhodes Scholars, and thousands more who have received the highest distinctions across the arts, business, government, and beyond. In fact, Swarthmore alumni have received doctoral degrees at the third-highest rate across all American institutions in the last decade, exceeding not only other liberal arts colleges but most of the world's top research institutions.

The College believes that this kind of excellence goes hand in hand with making education accessible, regardless of a student's economic circumstances. That is why Swarthmore is among only a few liberal arts institutions with a need-blind admissions policy, admitting domestic students without considering their ability to pay tuition and fees. The College also meets 100% of every student's demonstrated financial need — including international students — through loan-free aid. During the 2025-26 academic year, 56% of Swarthmore students received aid, and starting in 2027, the Swarthmore Tuition Guarantee will cover at least the full cost of tuition for any student whose family earns \$200,000 or less. The commitment to reducing barriers to participation also extends beyond financial aid; through initiatives such as a cash-free campus and textbook affordability program, Swarthmore seeks to ensure that all students can fully engage in the campus experience.



After more than a decade of thoughtful leadership under outgoing President Valerie Smith, Swarthmore enters this transition from a position of considerable strength. The College combines exceptional financial resources, a well-maintained physical campus, and a strong senior leadership team with world-class faculty and a deep commitment to academic excellence. Recent initiatives — including a new interdisciplinary technology and media center, the tuition guarantee program, and major sustainability initiatives that will enable the College to achieve campus carbon neutrality by 2035 — reflect a community that continues to invest confidently in its future.

But the next president will assume leadership at a consequential moment for higher education. Like its peers, the College faces a rapidly changing environment shaped by technological disruption, evolving student expectations, significant demographic shifts, rising costs, political polarization, and increasing public scrutiny of higher education.

Swarthmore therefore seeks a president to both nurture the qualities that make the College distinctive and chart a compelling, confident vision for its future. The next president must be an innovative, inspiring intellectual leader, an excellent manager, a trusted community builder, and a persuasive public advocate for Swarthmore and for the enduring importance of liberal arts education. This role presents a unique, once-in-a-career opportunity: to work with some of the world's most talented and dedicated scholars, at a moment of profound global change, and at an institution where one leader can make a transformative impact that endures for generations.

To conduct this search, the Swarthmore College Board of Managers has named a 15-person search committee that includes broad representation from the institution's faculty, staff, students, alumni, and Managers. The committee is assisted by the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller. All inquiries, nominations, and applications will remain confidential and should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document. Additional information on Swarthmore College may be found in the appendix to this document and at [swarthmore.edu](http://swarthmore.edu).

## THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

The president serves as the chief executive officer of the College, setting its institutional vision and strategy, and providing intellectual, operational, and community leadership. The president must develop and foster relationships with a diverse array of constituents within the College and in the greater community, and champion the institution publicly in support of its mission. Working in close partnership with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Board of Managers, the president provides both inspirational, imaginative leadership and effective management — both essential in ensuring that the College achieves its mission.

The president reports to Swarthmore's Board of Managers and works closely with Board leadership. The College is governed by a Board of 36 members and eight emeriti managers. Gustavo Schwed '84, a professor of management practice at NYU's Stern School of Business, will assume the role of chair of the Board of Managers in summer 2026.

The president is supported by a talented team of senior staff. Direct reports to the president include:

- Provost and Dean of the Faculty;
- Chief of Staff and Secretary of the College;
- Vice President and Dean, Admissions;
- Vice President, Advancement;
- Vice President, Communications and Marketing;
- Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion;
- Vice President, Finance and Administration;
- Vice President, Human Resources;
- Vice President, Student Affairs;
- Assistant Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment;
- Assistant Vice President, Sustainability and Strategic Initiatives;
- Special Assistant, Presidential Initiatives; and
- Executive Coordinator.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT

The next president will both confront the current challenges facing higher education and Swarthmore and identify key opportunities for the College to further strengthen its leadership position. The president's chief responsibilities include the following:

### *Develop and execute an ambitious, unifying vision for the future of Swarthmore*

The president must articulate a shared vision for Swarthmore's future and work collaboratively with faculty, students, and the broader campus community to realize it. Doing so successfully will require leading with both ambition and humility, ensuring that institutional decision-making remains grounded in the College's mission, and navigating the tensions inherent in guiding an institution of higher education at a time of significant change. The president will help Swarthmore address essential questions about how to deepen the College's commitment to academic rigor and critical thinking, further sharpen its distinctiveness in a rapidly transforming world, and model intellectual openness and listening in a community of diverse perspectives. These questions will shape the College's next chapter.

### *Foster trust, listening, and a sense of belonging across the Swarthmore community*

Members of the Swarthmore community care deeply about the institution and its values, yet there is also an opportunity to deepen trust and strengthen fraying connections across the community. The president will reaffirm the College's founding commitment to open, curious inquiry and constructive dialogue, fostering greater community within and across faculty, staff, students, administrators, and the Board. Success in this role requires being an engaged, present, accessible member of an intimate residential campus and building authentic, personal relationships across constituencies.

Equally important are stronger shared governance with faculty and clear, consistent communication across the institution. The president will model collaboration and transparency in decision-making and will communicate consistently and candidly, while also balancing institutional risk and operational demands. Working closely with faculty, staff, and the Board, the president must recognize and embrace the unique role faculty play in shaping the academic life of the College and ensure that governance structures are clearly understood, thoughtfully enacted, and grounded in mutual trust and respect.

Finally, the values of access and inclusion, together with a commitment to social responsibility, have long guided Swarthmore and remain central to the College even in the evolving national landscape. The College has a deep and ongoing dedication to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment in which individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives can thrive, and the next president will advance these values in service of the institution's mission.

### *Champion academic excellence and the liberal arts, and preserve Swarthmore's distinctive intellectual rigor*

Swarthmore's intellectual culture is among the institution's defining features, and its standing as one of the world's most respected institutions of higher learning is a source of pride across generations of "Swatties." The president must be an unapologetic and visible advocate for academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, and the enduring value of a liberal arts education. They must speak persuasively not only to academics, but also to alumni, parents, policymakers, donors, and the broader public.

On campus, the president will champion the College's longstanding commitment to excellence and innovation through investment in and support of the faculty, curriculum, and student success. In 1922, the College made history with its signature Honors Program, a student-centered seminar learning format. Today, the president will work collaboratively with faculty to reimagine the Honors Program and further advance other hallmarks of academic distinction, including the College's interdisciplinary curriculum, close faculty-student mentorship, student research opportunities, and a bedrock commitment to learning for learning's sake. Externally, the president will articulate the contemporary value of the liberal arts, connecting it to students' long-term personal, professional, and civic success, while serving as a powerful, passionate voice in conversations about the future of higher education.



### *Strengthen the Swarthmore student experience*

Swarthmore students are thoughtful, engaged, and highly ambitious, forming a close-knit, academically demanding, residential community characterized by vibrant intellectual inquiry and deep collaboration. With 95% of students living on campus, Swatties are encouraged to cross disciplinary boundaries, pursue diverse interests, and grow in unexpected ways across all areas of life. The next president will champion this whole student experience with enthusiasm and cultivate a campus culture that further blends scholarship with humanity; seriousness with joy; and intellectual zeal with genuine community.

At Swarthmore, intellectual inquiry is inseparable from personal growth and holistic well-being. To embrace all aspects of the student experience, the president will foster a deep sense of inclusion and belonging; advocate for student mental health and well-being; support athletics, recreation, and physical wellness; and continue to expand opportunities across the visual and performing arts. These actions reflect the College's broader commitment to access, empowering students to explore new passions regardless of prior experience.

*Ensure long-term financial strength, judiciously steward the College's resources, and cultivate a robust culture of engagement and philanthropy*

Swarthmore is among the strongest colleges financially, with a \$2.9 billion endowment that supports more than 60% of its annual operating budget. Nonetheless, Swarthmore faces many of the structural pressures affecting all of higher education, including rising costs, growing demands on financial aid, and changing philanthropic patterns. To ensure long-term sustainability and support for crucial mission-driven initiatives, the College must strategically grow and manage its endowment, maintain operational discipline, and strengthen alumni engagement and philanthropy. Swarthmore's alumni giving levels trail those of peer institutions, and the next president will be charged with raising funds commensurate with the College's ambitions by leading Swarthmore's first large-scale capital campaign of this decade.

The College has made meaningful progress in addressing deferred maintenance through strategic investments in its physical infrastructure and has also made significant investments in new facilities in recent years, including its Dining Center, STEM buildings, Film & Media Studies building, and an ambitious campus-wide geoexchange energy plant. Major additional projects, including a library renovation and new athletics facilities, remain central to Swarthmore's long-term priorities.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Swarthmore seeks a visionary president with a fierce commitment to the liberal arts and the curiosity, courage, and imagination to serve as an inspirational leader for the College. While no individual will embody every qualification, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualities and experiences:

- A compelling vision for the future of the liberal arts and its evolving and critical role in a rapidly changing world, and the intellectual and interpersonal skills to work with the faculty and overall community to realize that vision;
- An uncompromising commitment to academic excellence, sound academic judgment, and evidence of intellectual leadership and distinction;
- Demonstrated, successful strategic leadership of a complex, multifaceted organization;
- The ability to energize and inspire faculty, students, staff, alumni, Board members, and other constituencies around a shared mission;
- A sophisticated understanding of the specific needs of a residential liberal arts college campus, including shared governance, scholarship, and student development;
- A strong understanding of fiscal leadership, including strategic planning, resource allocation, and stewardship of institutional health;
- The ability to lead strong teams, delegate effectively, collaborate broadly, and act decisively;
- A demonstrated commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive community with cultural fluency, emotional intelligence, and compassion;
- Sound judgment in managing crises and the capacity to lead through uncertainty and change;
- The ability to inspire philanthropic support and deepen engagement with both current and prospective donors;
- A demonstrated respect for academic freedom and for diverse viewpoints on key social and political questions;
- A commitment to environmental sustainability;
- Exceptional communication skills and the ability to serve as a visible, compelling advocate for both Swarthmore and the enduring value of the liberal arts;
- A record of advancing an organization's profile and reputation regionally, nationally, and internationally;
- Demonstrated ability to work effectively with an engaged governing board collectively and individually;
- An appreciation for Swarthmore's distinctive culture informed by its Quaker heritage and values; and
- Unquestioned integrity, trustworthiness, sound judgment, and ethics.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent in confidence via the Isaacson, Miller website: [imsearch.com/open-searches/swarthmore-college/president](https://imsearch.com/open-searches/swarthmore-college/president).

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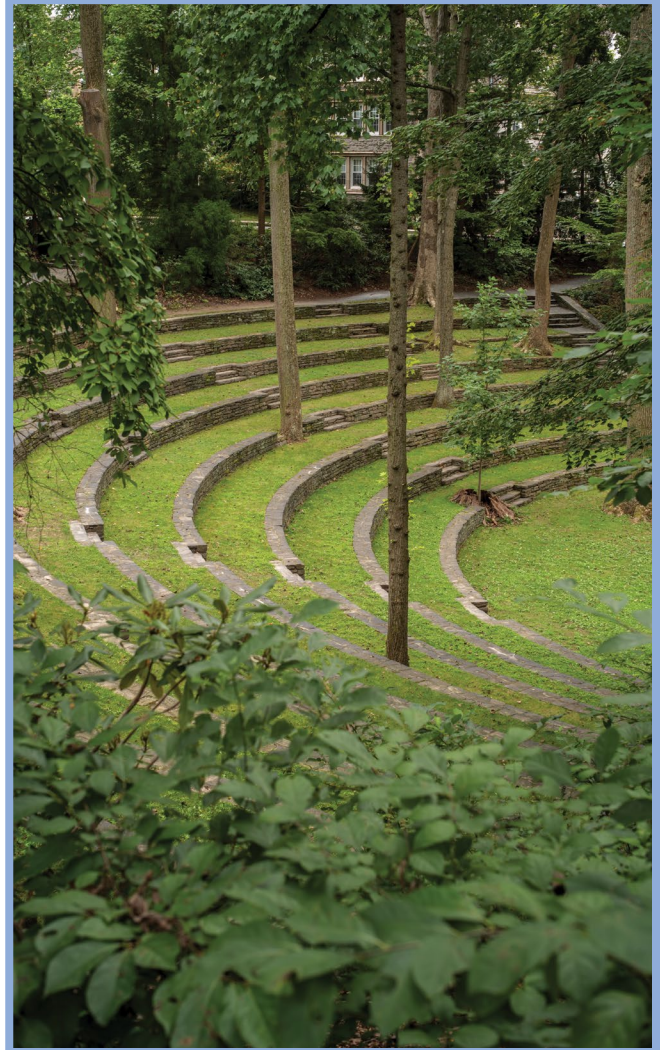
*Swarthmore College is committed to creating a culture of respect and inclusion so that every member of our community feels a sense of belonging. We actively seek and welcome candidates with diverse perspectives and experiences, exceptional qualifications, and a demonstrable commitment to a more inclusive society and world. Swarthmore College is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate based on any identity or characteristic protected by law or College policy.*

## APPENDIX: MORE ABOUT SWARTHMORE

### Campus and Location

Swarthmore's campus is situated on 425 acres of rolling lawns, wooded hills, and hiking trails, just 11 miles from Philadelphia. The campus is also home to the [Scott Arboretum & Gardens](#), which is free to the public and seeks to delight, educate, and inspire visitors to enjoy horticulture and the natural world. Among the most popular destinations are the Crum Woods, one of the local area's last remaining forests, and the [Scott Outdoor Amphitheater](#), one of the College's most treasured spaces.

Swarthmore has a long history of environmental stewardship, and the College strives to model sustainable practices and create pathways for the community to advance sustainability. Swarthmore's energy plan, [To Zero By Thirty-Five](#), is currently underway and charts a transformative path to efficient, combustion-free energy on campus. Buildings across campus are being connected to a new heating and cooling geexchange system powered by renewable energy. Together with ongoing energy efficiency improvements across campus buildings, onsite solar and off-site renewable energy procurement, and a standby electricity generation plant, the College is positioned to reach carbon neutrality by 2035.



In recent years, Swarthmore has invested in major facilities such as Singer Hall, a new science building housing biology, engineering, and physics; the Dining and Community Commons, which offers a variety of fresh and local dining options and a new array of inclusive social and community spaces; and the reconstructed Martin Hall, a home for computer science and media innovation. The College continues progress on its robust campus renewal plan, which next targets significant renovations to the campus library and athletics facilities.

### Academic Program

A playground for the intellectually curious, the liberal arts curriculum at Swarthmore encourages its students to spend their first two years taking courses in a range of disciplines spanning the liberal arts, learning to be agile thinkers, and only later selecting their focus of study for the last two years of their Swarthmore education. Swarthmore fosters the freedom to explore academically with its pass/fail policy for students in their first semester. While students are graded, their grades do not appear on transcripts. The policy aligns with Swarthmore's broader spirit of close interactions with professors and collaboration rather than competition with classmates. Students also have the option of embarking on multiple [first-year seminars](#)

designed to help them develop the skills needed for a successful academic career at Swarthmore. These courses serve as preparation for Swarthmore's seminar-model [Honors Program](#), uniquely focused on eight semester course credits of deep collaboration between students and faculty, and drawing the input of experts from outside the College who administer and evaluate seniors' written and oral exams. Students apply for the program at the end of their sophomore year and must be accepted by the faculty.

Swarthmore's academic programs are a point of distinction across higher education. The College is among a select few liberal arts schools that offer an ABET-accredited engineering program, which allows students to secure a strong technical education alongside an outstanding liberal arts foundation. Additionally, two-thirds of Swarthmore students participate in undergraduate research or independent creative projects with the support and mentorship of faculty. Each summer, the College awards more than \$800,000 in grants to support research across disciplines, and 30% of students receive College funding to participate in research experiences.

Swarthmore has also led in its longstanding embrace of growth via partnership. As a member of the Tri-College (Tri-Co) Consortium, Swarthmore offers students access to courses, academic resources, dining halls, and social life at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, about 20 minutes away via shuttle. Students can also cross-register for courses at the University of Pennsylvania.

## Faculty and Staff

Swarthmore's standards of excellence are exemplified by its outstanding faculty and staff, and attracting and recruiting these standouts is a key priority. Across departments and disciplines, Swarthmore's 166 tenure-track faculty and 118 non-tenure-track faculty bring an extraordinary blend of curiosity, creativity, and care to their work. They are scholars pushing the boundaries of knowledge, mentors who see potential in students before students see it in themselves, and collaborators who believe that learning is a shared, transformative endeavor. Swarthmore has purposely invested in a low student-to-faculty ratio of 8:1, allowing faculty to create new and varied opportunities to engage with students, including in novel research.

And the College's strong financial position provides faculty with robust resources to extend their own scholarship, research, and creative activities. In addition, the Offices of [Sponsored Programs](#) and [Institutional Relations](#) provide valuable guidance for faculty interested in pursuing external sources of funding.

Swarthmore is one of few liberal arts colleges in the country to receive the Carnegie Research Activity designation, and faculty have recently received grants from institutions such as the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, demonstrating a spirit of innovation and pursuit of new knowledge.

As a small academic community, members of the faculty participate significantly in the life of the institution through shared governance and serve on a large number of [committees](#) determining key aspects of College life and strategy.

The Swarthmore community is also supported and enriched by over 800 dedicated and highly skilled staff, including senior leaders, managers, and frontline employees who sustain the full breadth of campus operations and student services. These professionals are integral to advancing the College's mission, fostering its distinctive sense of community, and supporting Swarthmore's mission of academic excellence and student development.

## Student Life

Swarthmore enrolls just under 1,700 students, and student learning and success are priorities of the College. The Class of 2029's cohort is made up of 23% first-generation college students, 25% Pell-eligible students, and 19 transfer students, one-third of whom come from community colleges. Increasing access and expanding outreach in the local and national community is spelled out in the College's 2024 strategic plan, [Swarthmore Forward](#). This goal is aided by Swarthmore's need-blind, loan-free financial aid policy, as well as popular policies such as the cash-free campus and textbook affordability programs. Students hail from all 50 states and 60 countries, and approximately 53% identify as domestic students of color. In 2025, the College's acceptance rate was 7%, consistent with that of recent years.

Ninety-five percent of Swarthmore students reside in campus housing each semester, resulting in a close-knit environment for living and learning. Traditions such as Crum Regatta, Senior Week, Worthstock, and First and Last Collections contribute to a sense of community, in addition to nearly 140 student organizations active on campus. Swarthmore students take social responsibility seriously, as reflected in the College's 2026 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, and are supported in these efforts by the [Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility](#), which facilitates engagement with the local communities of Chester, Pa., greater Philadelphia, and beyond. In their downtime, Swatties often gravitate toward small, intimate social settings, whether through cultural clubs, shared meals, pursuit of the arts, or trips to nearby Philadelphia via rail paid for by the College, creating a distinctive culture that emphasizes connection over high-intensity social settings. The institution's leadership is focused on the importance of ensuring that students have access to healthy outlets for expression, relaxation, and joy.

Additionally, 22 varsity sports and numerous club sports and courses offer students outlets for physical and mental wellness, which have gained popularity and participation in recent years. Swarthmore's Garnet athletes compete in the Centennial Conference against Division III peers. The athletics program boasts a long and decorated history, with eight national championships and more than 330 All-Americans since the 1860s. Swarthmore student-athletes are successful not only in their respective sports but in the classroom and in their other extracurricular pursuits; since 1903, 17 of the College's 28 Rhodes Scholars have competed in varsity athletics.

## Finances

The College remains fiscally disciplined, supported by an operating budget of approximately \$233.3 million. As of June 30, 2025, the institution carried \$601.6 million in long-term debt issued through the Swarthmore Borough Authority, which received the highest possible ratings from Moody's and Standard & Poor's (Aaa and AAA, respectively). The College's endowment, now valued at approximately \$2.9 billion, serves as a critical foundation for operations, and College policy maintains an annual endowment spend rate between 3.5 and 5%. Over the past 15 years, the spending rate in practice has fluctuated between 4.25 and 4.8%, and 60% of the College's annual budget comes from the endowment, a ratio exceeding that of many peer institutions. Thus, continued philanthropic support will be important to sustaining and advancing the College's strategic priorities.

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Swarthmore College. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Swarthmore College would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*