

Hello and welcome to Valpo from the Society of Women Engineers!

We are so pleased that you are considering Valpo and we can't wait to see you on campus! Picking a college is a big decision, and as members of SWE, we genuinely want to help you. Of course, we're a little biased for you to come to Valpo. But, in the end, as fellow women in engineering, we're looking out for your best interest. That's why we put together this packet, which includes the following:

- What is the Society of Women Engineers? What's so Great About Valpo SWE?
- What Valpo SWE Means to me: a Testimony
- Frequently Asked Questions about Valpo Engineering
- Resources for New Students

All of these questions and answers were written by women in Valpo's engineering program to give you actual insight about Valpo SWE and Valpo Engineering. We all know that engineering is still male dominated, so we women engineers need to stick together and help each other out.

Good luck as you make your college decision!

Valpo Society of Women Engineers (SWE)



A few Valpo SWE members with the societal SWE president

What is SWE?

SWE is an international engineering society for professional and collegiate members which promotes and encourages women in the engineering workplace. Being a part of SWE is a wonderful opportunity to develop professional skills, network with other female engineers and promote math and engineering education for younger girls in the community. Specifically, the mission of SWE is to “stimulate women to achieve full potential in careers as engineers and leaders, expand the image of the engineering profession as a positive force in improving the quality of life, and demonstrate the value of diversity” (Society of Women Engineers 2015).

SWE provides its collegiate members with wonderful leadership and networking opportunities. Leadership roles of various importance and time-commitments are available on a local level and on a societal level to develop skills that stand out in an interview and are coveted in the workplace. Networking is also developed through webinars, conferences, professional section events, and career fairs.

For more information about the Society of Women Engineers, please visit www.swe.org.

What’s so Great About Valpo SWE?

Our local SWE section is very active, winning awards on national, regional, and local levels. We have been named National Outstanding Collegiate Section~Silver, Region H Outstanding Collegiate Section, Region H Governor’s Choice Award, and the Chicago Professional Section’s Outstanding Collegiate Section. Valpo SWE focuses on professional development, community outreach, and social events. Over the past semesters, we have hosted a Dale Carnegie Women in Leadership Forum, started a partnership to get fifth graders from a local grade school interested in STEM, had another one of our famous cupcake and movie nights, and continued to grow our Big SWEester mentoring program for incoming students. In addition to the fun activities, SWE is a really great support system for young women entering a technical field.

Through Valpo SWE, members have the opportunity to travel for free to four conferences all across the Midwest. Executive Board members travel to an additional four conferences all across the country! Members who have run for society level positions have the opportunity to go to even more all-expense-paid trips. These are great opportunities to network with professional women engineers. Furthermore, SWE career fairs cannot be beat with over forty companies at the Midwestern conferences and over 200 companies at the societal level conferences!

What Valpo SWE Means to Me: a Testimony

Dear Future Valpo Students,

In my time at Valparaiso University, SWE has been one of the most beneficial and influential organizations. Not only did SWE provide me with a whole family of SWEsters, it also gave me opportunities to learn and grow, both as a future professional and as a future engineer. I have met some of the best people through SWE, women who understood what I was going through and helped me through the hard tests and stressful classes because they had gone through it, too. SWE is all about reaching out to my fellow women engineers to help me reach higher in my career, and then turning around and reaching back to the next class. I have attended conferences and learned so much from other collegiate women and professionals on things I could never learn in a classroom, and that was all made possible through SWE. On the flip side, I was reminded to have fun; from cupcake and movie nights to apple picking to going to the beach, I had a great time with these incredible women. I got to know them better and laugh with them as we left behind equations and exams for a few hours. Among the most rewarding parts of my Valpo SWE experience has been to help with Maker's Club, a local middle school science club. I have gotten to do experiments with the kids and watch their faces light up as they learned. I have been part of helping break the stereotype that all engineers are nerdy, old men. All in all, SWE means the world to me, and I hope that you will come to love it, too.

Good luck in all your future endeavors!

Sydney Senger
Electrical Engineering
Class of 2018

Frequently Asked Questions: Written and Answered by Actual Female Engineers

1. What is it like having mostly male classmates?

To start, it's not a bad thing. Yeah, you hear a little more about trucks and Star Wars than in some other fields, but that's no reason for concern. Your classmates will respect you for you, instead of giving you any negative labels. You might have a few more male friends than usual, but female Valpo engineers have never had an issue feeling isolated.

2. Is it weird not having a lot of female professors?

It's a little strange at first, but it's easy to get used to and certainly not uncommon. One thing that sets Valpo engineering apart is the professors' full dedication to creating a diverse and inclusive environment. Open communication is encouraged, and professors are specifically trained in issues like Stereotype Threat.

3. I've heard engineering is hard—am I in over my head?

Is it hard? Yes. Are you in over your head? No. The biggest advantage of going to a smaller school is receiving individual attention, whether you're struggling or succeeding. You will definitely face challenges, and you will probably experience your worst grade in school at some point. Nevertheless, the faculty, staff, fellow students, and free tutors in the Hesse Tutoring Center will always be there to help you succeed. Valpo professors have open door policies and are always happy to help and form a relationship with students.

4. What are some of the opportunities available for women engineers at Valpo?

SWE! But, that's not it. Valpo has seven different professional and/or service engineering societies on campus. That doesn't even begin to cover all of the opportunities and activities available. Just because you're an engineer doesn't mean you need to live in the engineering building. Tons of our women have been involved in Greek life, softball, handbell choir, ballroom team, cheerleading, Humans vs. Zombies, and intramural soccer, just to name a few.

5. What is the atmosphere in Valpo's College of Engineering?

An engineering degree is a lot of work and must be taken seriously. But that isn't a death sentence at Valpo. Our professors are capable teachers who also know how to joke around and are always willing to partake in student activities, even if that involves being roasted. Students develop a real sense of comradery; it's not unheard of to have class holiday parties and group trips to the dunes. And the engineering staff is not only a fantastic resource, but the staff members care about the students and develop true friendships with them. So to summarize, Valpo engineering is fun, studious, friendly, and inclusive.

Resources for New Students

Do you still have questions? We want to help! Please feel free to contact any students on the list below along with any faculty or staff.

Abigail Hedlin
Civil Engineering
Class of 2016
Abigail.hedlin@valpo.edu

Helen Periman
Mechanical Engineering
Class of 2017
Helen.periman@valpo.edu

Sydney Senger
Electrical Engineering
Class of 2018
Sydney.senger@valpo.edu

Maria Barlas
Civil Engineering
Class of 2019
Maria.barlas@valpo.edu

We can't wait to hear from you!