With 41% of Virginia Tech’s undergraduate students being female, the overall gender balance within the University is relatively un-weighted. However, only about 18% of the undergraduate students in the College of Engineering are female. This is not just a trend within Virginia Tech, but this trend can be observed in Universities across the country. In order to increase diversity within the field, there has been a nationwide push to increase the prevalence of women in science and engineering. Virginia Tech hopes to walk comfortably alongside this movement by increasing the number of women within the College of Engineering.

Founded in 1950, the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) is a national society that brings together women in the field of engineering in order to create connections and provide professional development. With a strong undergraduate chapter of SWE at Virginia Tech, the University aims to gain a greater population of women in the College of Engineering at the graduate level as well. Nicole Keenan, a first year graduate student in Virginia Tech’s new multidisciplinary Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health Ph.D. program, attended SWE’s 2014 annual conference in Los Angeles this October in order to share with undergraduate engineering students from across the country what it is like to be a graduate student in engineering at Tech.

Keenan, who became interested in graduate school at Virginia Tech through a discussion with Bevlee Watford, Tech’s Director of the Center for Enhancement of Engineering Diversity, at the 2013 SWE conference in Baltimore, was excited to be given the opportunity to reach out to potential students and discuss the ins-and-outs of graduate life as a women in engineering at Virginia Tech. She looks forward to continuing being a part of the society as she proceeds through her graduate education.