

The Gear

Serving the 579 Members of the SWE-WI Section

Jul - 2025

President's Welcome

Natalie Gamez, SWE-WI FY26 President

Welcome to fiscal year 2026! I am very excited to be able to serve as the president of the section this year! FY25 was a busy year with the Annual Conference in Chicago and WE Local in Milwaukee and I'm looking forward to continuing the momentum throughout SWE's 75th Anniversary and beyond.

FY26 started off strong this July when our executive council got together for our Summer Strategic Planning Meeting. This meeting was an all-day event where we discussed what went well and not so well in the previous fiscal year and started to plan our events and goals for the future. We have an inspired group of board members that have brought a fresh perspective and new ideas to the council. I'm very excited to see where this year takes us!

As we look forward into FY26, remember to register for WE25, which is October 23-25 in New Orleans, LA. Attending the annual conference is a great opportunity to gather with other bright-minded and trailblazing individuals to network and grow professionally. Also, if you can, register for the WE Locals in Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and/or Columbus, Ohio. Or if you're feeling adventurous, there are WE Locals in Brazil, India, and Ireland! We'll be coordinating meet-ups to some of the conferences so keep an eye out!

Our Wisconsin section saw tremendous growth in membership last year and we'd love to have more members involved in professional development, social, and outreach events. My goal is to further our support throughout the entire Wisconsin and Upper Michigan areas. If you're interested in helping us achieve this goal, please reach out to me or any member of our EC board.

Stay tuned to our E-Blasts, website, and socials for all the latest news and events!

Thank you,
Natalie

Key Upcoming Events

- WE25 – New Orleans, LA – 10/23-10/25
- WE Locals – Various Cities – Feb-April '26

Stay up to date on all SWE-WI events at our [Google Calendar \(link\)](#)



Inside this Issue

President's Welcome 1

SWE-WI End of FY25 Picnic 2

SWE-WI FY26 Election Results 3

FY26 Strategic Planning Meeting 4

SWE-WI Outreach News 5

Math-In Day Recap 6

FIRST Volunteer Opportunity 7

SWE-WI Outreach Policies 8

WE25 Registration Open! 9

SWE-WI End of FY25 Picnic

Thanks to everyone who travelled to Pewaukee Kiwanis Village Park on June 21, 2025, to celebrate the end of FY25 with fellow SWE-WI members! Though the temperatures were high, a great time was had by all with an excellent spread of potluck dishes and great conversation.



SWE-WI Newsletter Entries

Send us your stories! We want to see what our professional SWE-WI and affiliated collegiate SWE members are up to! We are looking for events that SWE has hosted, member milestones, interesting articles/books to share, and more! If you have something you want to see in the newsletter, please fill out the following Publicity Request Form and check 'The Gear Newsletter'.
SWE-WI Publicity Request Form: <https://forms.gle/CztqytTXYQB2hK6JA>

SWE-WI FY26 Election Results

Congratulations to the FY26 SWE Wisconsin Officers:

President – Natalie Gamez

VP1 Professional Development – Danielle Schmitz

VP2 Collegiates – Emily Demchik

VP3 Outreach – Heidi Balestrieri

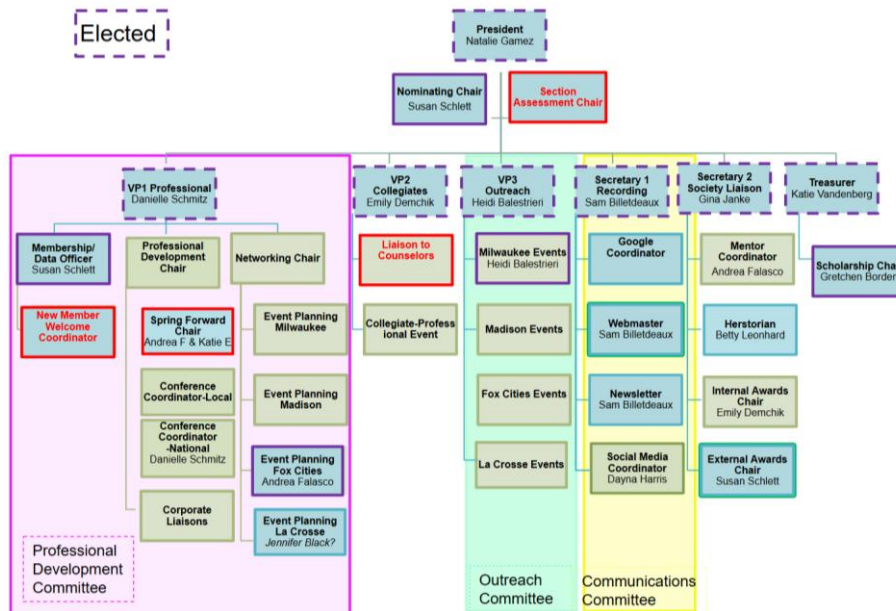
Secretary 1 Recording – Sam Biletdeaux

Secretary 2 Society Liaison – Gina Janke

Treasurer – Katie Vandenberg

If you are interested in being on a committee or looking to be more involved in the section, feel free to reach out to Natalie at natalie.m.gamez@gmail.com to learn about opportunities!

FY26 SWE-WI Organizational Chart



Seeking Support for SWE-WI Communications Committee

Are you interested in:

- Getting more involved with SWE-WI but not sure how to get started?
- Contributing to the newsletter, website, e-blasts and more?
- Shaping future communications within SWE-WI?

Consider joining the communications committee to support these efforts and more! To learn more or join the committee, please reach out to Sam Biletdeaux.

FY26 Strategic Planning Meeting

SWE-WI FY26 Executive Council (EC) Board and other section leaders held the annual summer strategic planning meeting on July 12th, 2025. The group reflected on the previous fiscal year, set goals, and began planning out events and initiatives for the section in FY26.

Thank you to all SWE members who volunteer their time to help keep our section strong!



Pictured in right photo:

- Back row – Heidi Balestreri, Andrea Falasco, Natalie Gamez, Danielle Schmitz
- Front row – Emily Demchik, Susan Schlett, Sam Billetdeaux

(Katie Vandenburg not pictured, attended virtually)

**Renew your
SWE
Membership
for FY26!**

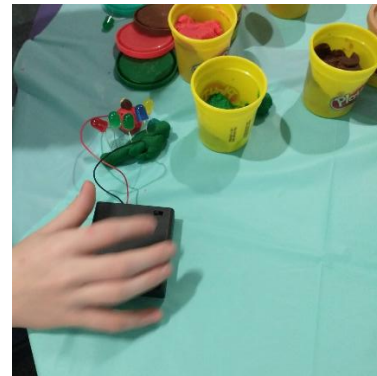
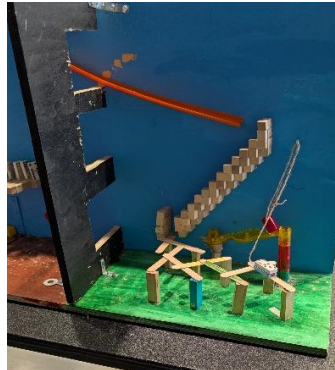
If you have not done so already, please renew your SWE membership! *Note that SWE works on a fiscal year of July 1 - June 30th. If you are unsure of your membership status, contact your membership chair, Susan Schlett, at 262 337-3934 or at schlett@yahoo.com. Please keep in mind that a portion of all SWE membership dues go back to our local section. Help us keep our SWE-WI section strong!

SWE-WI Outreach News

Heidi Balestreri, SWE-WI FY26 VP3 Outreach

FY25 by the Numbers:

- 11 Total Events: 10 K-12 Events, 1 Event for Educators and Community Members
- 22 Unique Volunteers and over 100 volunteer hours
- 800+ K-12 Student interactions, 35+ parent/educator interactions
- Over 250 outreach kits made at 2025 WE Local Milwaukee
- Countless STEM inspired Smiles



Thank you to all the FY25 SWE-WI Outreach Volunteers, your time and talent continues to spark and preserve students' interest in engineering and technology!

SWE-WI looks forward to reaching more students and offering more volunteer opportunities in FY26:

- Events - see the "Save the Date" for known FY26 events
- Events/activities outside the greater Milwaukee area
- SWE Certificate of Merit expansion in FY26- awarded to High School Seniors

How you can help:

- Volunteer!
- Send information about STEM events/activities to SWE-WI Outreach email.
- To expand our SWE Certificate of Merit Program in FY26, please send contact information for Wisconsin and UP Michigan High School Counselors/Administrators to SWE-WI email.
- Contact swewioutreach@swe.org

SWE-WI OUTREACH SAVE THE DATE

TWIST Robotics Competition – October 11, 2025

sySTEMNow Conference (Milwaukee) – October 29, 2025

Future City (Milwaukee) – January 17, 2026

STEM Fair (Milwaukee) – February 22, 2026

EMDC (Milwaukee) – March 13, 2026

SWE-WI Advertisement Information

Are you a company looking to show your support of SWE-WI, advertise on our website or in our newsletter, or post a job opening? If so, we want to hear from you. If you are interested, please find additional details and fill out the contact form on our corporate involvement page of the SWE-WI website:

<https://wisconsin.swe.org/corporate-involvement/>

Math-In Day Recap

Heidi Balestreri, SWE-WI FY26 VP3 Outreach

Since 2018, Banting Elementary has been hosting “Math-In” Day for the entire school to focus on math-oriented activities to increase their math awareness. Since the first Math-In Day, SWE-WI has had a group of volunteers run a series of STEM activities to show how engineers use math and that math isn’t just worksheets. This year on May 29th, we had five SWE-WI volunteers visit multiple classrooms from first grade to fifth grade and the students designed, built, and tested catapults. The catapult materials were put into kits at the 2025 WE Local Milwaukee.

Thank you to the volunteers at the event: Sojin Kim, Emily Ballweg, Rejoice Stevens, Mariya Sorensen, and Heidi Balestreri, and those who volunteered during WE Local Milwaukee! The kids had a great time building catapults to launch their puff balls.



Catapults were made from popsicle sticks, spoons, rubber bands, clothes pins, binder clips and launched a puff ball. Students from Banting Elementary enjoyed Math-In Day and making catapults.

Additional kits are available if you would like to bring this to a group near you!



Save the Date - The 2026 cities hosting WE Local conferences have been announced:

- Austin, TX – February 20 – 21, 2026
- Portland, OR – February 27 – 28, 2026
- Columbus, OH – March 13 – 14, 2026
- Bengaluru, India – April 9 – 10, 2026
- Dublin, Ireland – April 23 – 24, 2026

FIRST Volunteer Opportunity

TWIST (Together, Women in STEM Thrive), is an event for FIRST Robotics teams dedicated to providing an opportunity for girls to show their strengths in a predominantly male-dominated field. Unlike typical robotics competitions, TWIST requires teams to have girls driving the teams' robots during the competition. Through this event, we hope to contribute to closing the gender gap in STEM and promoting inclusive team cultures. 32 teams have registered and there are expected to be over 1200 attendees in-person, and thousands of live stream views from across the Midwest. SWE is a [Strategic Alliance](#) partner of FIRST.

This year's event will take place October 11th, 2025, at Muskego High School in Muskego, WI. If you would like to learn more about the event, be a woman in STEM role model as a volunteer, or attend to see what FIRST robotics is all about, visit <https://warriorbots6421.com/twist/>.



**WE Local U.S.
Call for
Participation
Open until 9/8!**



Call for Participation



Do you have an interesting topic you want to present to other SWE members? Do you want to gain practice presenting at a WE Local before presenting at an Annual Conference? Submit your breakout session proposal for an upcoming WE Local! To learn more, see [submission guidelines](#).

SWE-WI Outreach Policies

Outreach Volunteer Notice

SWE has implemented a Youth Protection Policy. This year to be a volunteer at a SWE-WI sponsored event you must have completed the Youth Protection course and provide a SWE Certificate to the organizer.

Please consider taking the youth protection course early and sending SWE-WI a digital copy of your certificate. This course will need to be taken every three years. To access the course, or for more information please visit <https://swe.org/youthprotection/>

Outreach Involvement

If you have been involved in an outreach event and are a SWE member, send information about the event to Heidi Balestrieri at swewioutreach@swe.org so we can report the information in the SWE outreach tool.

Information needed for the report: event name, date, all SWE sections that were involved, description of event, breakdown of girls and boys who participated, age of students, number of adult guests, number of SWE member volunteers, number of other volunteers, any partner organizations involved, or any other information to share.

Girl Scout STEM Badges

Would you be interested in working with a Girl Scout Troop and introducing a girl to engineering? The Girl Scouts have introduced new engineering and STEM badges and troops are looking for engineers who would be willing to help them earn these badges. For information on how to be involved, project ideas, and how to find a troop contact swewioutreach@swe.org

SWENext Membership



SWENext is a way to become part of SWE as a student through the age of 18. Joining is free, any student 13 or older can become a SWENext on their own, for those younger than 13, a parent will need to be the primary contact.

When registering for SWENext use event code: **Wisconsin**

Learn more about SWENext visit: <https://swe.org/k-12-outreach/swenext-2/>

For any SWENext questions, contact: outreach@swe.org

WE25 Registration Open!

Registration is now open for the annual SWE conference, WE25. This conference is a great opportunity to build your professional skills by learning from the best women engineers from across the globe. Don't miss the chance to attend an inspiring conference in the historic city of New Orleans. As WE25 gets closer, check the weekly SWE Wisconsin E-Blasts for opportunities to meet up at the conference.

For more details about the event and to register, visit: <https://we25.swe.org/>

We25

EMBRACE
Your STORY

New Orleans
October
23-25
Ernest N. Morial convention center

#WE25 | WE25.SWE.ORG

swe

WE25 Housing Open

Act fast, official housing for the WE25 conference has opened! There are still rooms available, secure yours today at: <https://we25.swe.org/about/housing-information/>