

Brevard begins fall semester strong with one of the largest enrollments in school history

Classes began Monday at Brevard College with 790 full-time undergraduate students enrolled for the Fall 2026 semester, one of the largest enrollments in the College's history.

The 2026–27 academic year welcomes more than 300 new students to the BC community. The incoming class and total undergraduate enrollment each rank among the three largest in the College's 173-year history. In addition, over 60 graduate students are enrolled for the Fall 2026 semester.

"The continued strong interest in Brevard College is reflected in this year's enrollment, one of the largest in the College's history," said Dr. Bradley J Andrews, President of Brevard College. "We are excited about this incoming class and the many experiences, perspectives, and talents they bring to our campus. We look forward to seeing the impact they will make at Brevard College and in our community."

The strength of this year's incoming class follows a record-setting admissions cycle at Brevard College.

"Fall admissions brought record application volume from 43 states and more than 63 countries," said Dr. Chad Holt, Vice President of Admissions and Financial Aid at Brevard College. "This year's incoming class also features one of the strongest academic profiles we've seen, reflecting the continued interest in a Brevard College education."

Brevard College continues to earn national recognition for academic excellence, including a National Teacher of the Year award and distinction in the U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings. The College has also introduced new academic programs in Artificial Intelligence Management and Engineering Science, along with new graduate programs and the launch of an annual undergraduate research conference.

Brevard College enters the 2026-27 academic year at a transformative time. Construction is underway on a new Student Center, which is expected to open in spring 2027. The College is also making significant investments in campus infrastructure, including a major internet upgrade in partnership with Comporium.



Classes began Monday at Brevard College with 790 full-time undergraduate students enrolled for the Fall 2026 semester. Photo Credit: Brevard College Communications.

Meet the Staff!



Senior **Autumn Jones**
Editor in Chief

Major: English and Communication + teaching license

Campus Commitments: English Honor Society, third year as editor in chief of The Clarion

Fun Fact: I want to teach middle school ELA!



Senior **Madeleine Pollock**
Managing Editor

Major: English and Communication

Campus Commitments: BC Cycling, president of the COM Honor Society and Vice Prez of the English Honor Society

Fun Fact: I am Canadian and bilingual, as I speak English and French fluently!



Senior **Emma Murray**
Layout & Design

Major: History

Minor: Pre-law and Ecology

Campus Commitments: Brevard Women's Soccer, Clarion Staff for 2 years, Bill's

Fun Fact: i love bugs



Sophomore **Ali Clark**
Staff Writer

Major: English

Minor: Potential Religions and Philosophy

Campus Commitments: BC Cycling, The Clarion

Fun Fact: I'm super excited to go on some fun adventures in Pisgah (camping or swim missions) with my friends and teammates.



Senior **Liam Smith**
Staff Writer

Major: History

Campus Commitments: BC Cycling

Fun Fact: Afrobeat is one of my favorite music genres!



Junior **Tom Webb**
Staff Writer

Major: Environmental Studies

Minor: Ecology

Campus Commitments: Peer leader, Pride Club president

Fun Fact: I absolutely LOVE bugs and have a pin board I caught myself during my Entomology class



Senior **Jordan Ramey**
Staff Writer

Major: History

Fun Fact: I am looking forward to working in Admissions for my work study this semester.

Fatal crash involving Milligan University cyclists sparks grief and road safety awareness

Elli Clark
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, August 19, 2026, a group of 11 cyclists from Milligan University's Collegiate cycling team was struck by a vehicle during their morning training ride. Two cyclists, sophomores Haylan Engdahl and Brayden Rogers, were killed in the incident, and seven other students were hospitalized due to severe injuries.

Reports state that the crash occurred around 8 a.m. Wednesday morning, on US Highway 19E near the intersection of Tiger Creek and Simery Creek. From the site, the cyclists were taken to Johnson City Medical Center for care.

Milligan University's President, Stephen Waers, invited communities in prayer and in grief for those who were lost and those receiving medical attention. He asked that communities "help our brothers and sisters bear burdens that are too great for any one person to carry alone."

Brevard College and Milligan University have a long history, as the two cycling teams have fostered friendly competition within the Southeastern Collegiate Cycling Conference. As a neighbouring school, the tragedy of such an incident is felt within the Brevard cycling team and the town's community as a whole.

It is without a doubt that the cycling community in Brevard and elsewhere will answer President Waers' invitation to support and grieve with the parents and friends of the Milligan cyclists.



Roster photos of Milligan Sophomores, Haylan Engdahl (left) and Brayden Rogers (right).

With the announcement of this tragic event, we are reminded of one of our own cyclists, Owen Clark, who was also struck by a vehicle in November of 2025, which resulted in him undergoing a spinal fusion surgery.

The reality of road safety and the rules of road usage are vital topics of awareness. It is a shared responsibility between all motorists, cyclists,

and pedestrians to maintain a safe environment, and to understand the risks of poor conduct and the consequences that can be inflicted upon either party.

So please recognize that beneath the helmets and jerseys, there is a person, a friend, a teammate, a son or daughter, whose life holds great importance to those around them.



Team photo of the Milligan Cycling Team.

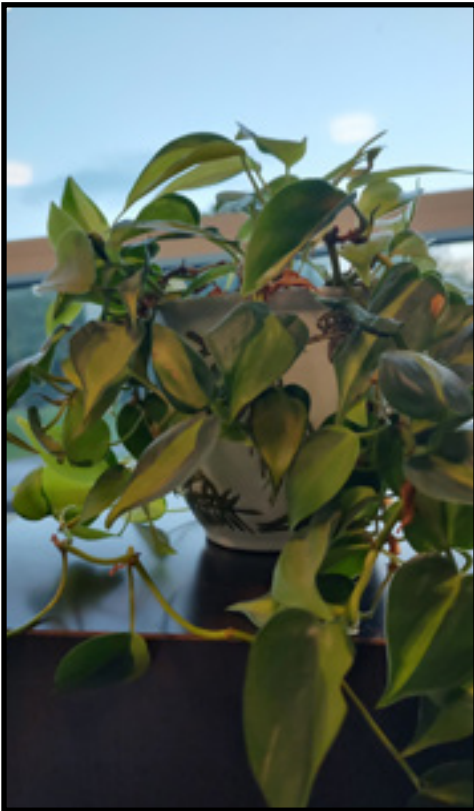
What are the best plants for your college dorm?

Tom Webb
Staff Writer

In a college dorm, one of the major limitations to one's personal greenhouse is the lack of sunlight. Most of us live in a dorm room with one window, and if you live in a basement room, your access to sunlight may be even more limited. To many plant lovers, this can be disheartening, but fear not! Even in a low-light environment like a dorm, you can still successfully maintain a variety of plant species.

The best plants for a college dorm are species with low light and water requirements; also, if you have a pet, the plant should be non-toxic to your pet (always verify that a plant is non-toxic before purchasing it). Here are a few plant recommendations that thrive in low-light and low-water conditions.

Philodendron



Variegated Heart Leaf Philodendron, Photo by Tom Webb

There are dozens of varieties of philodendron, and while care needs vary, most philodendrons are considered to be low maintenance. A popular variety of philodendron is the heart leaf philodendron; this type of philodendron has low water requirements and can handle living in low to moderate light levels. Non-toxic to Cats and Dogs.

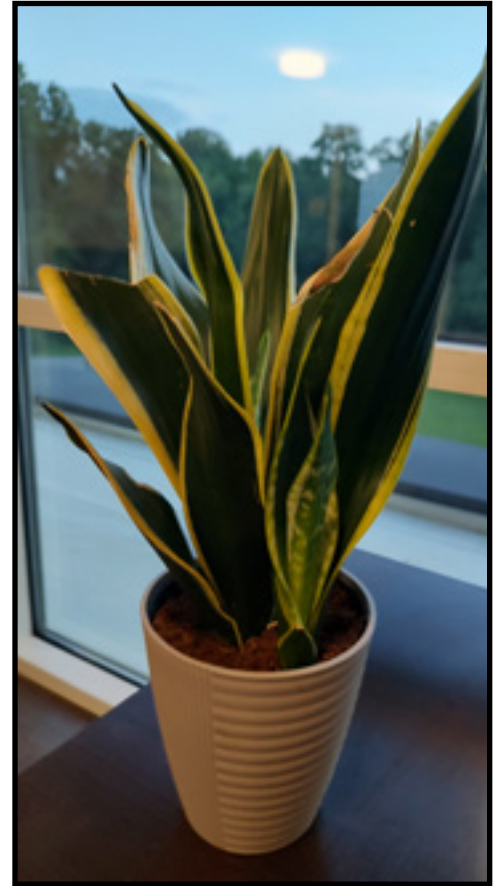
ZZ Plant



ZZ Plant, Photo by Tom Webb

ZZ plants do best in low light conditions with little water. This plant has thick, waxy leaves that hold onto water, and when overwatered, the plant engages in a process called "guttation," in which it secretes water through the tips of its leaves. Green and black varieties of the plant are commonly available at plant stores, and it is inexpensive for the lack of maintenance it requires. Toxic To Cats and Dogs.

Snake Plant



Snake Plant, Photo by Tom Webb

Snake plants are incredibly beginner-friendly and have both low light and low water requirements. Some even say this plant *benefits* from neglect, due to the fact that excessive watering will cause root rot. It can live for many years, and because of this, you could very well have a plant that survives through all four years of college and beyond. Non-toxic to Cats and Dogs.

Check out these hikes nearby

Madeleine Pollock
Managing Editor

It is no secret that Brevard has a plethora of outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, and kayaking. Situated in the Southern Appalachians, Brevard has access to the varying terrain of some of the oldest mountains in the world and a variety of national, state, and regional parks.

A great way to get out and explore Brevard is on foot. Here are some easy hikes that we recommend if you want to see the sights and get some exercise as you familiarize yourself with the area!

Bracken Preserve - City of Brevard

Right above the Brevard Music Center is the Bracken Preserve, which is home to a 430-acre property that has 9 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails. These trails can connect to Pisgah National Forest. These trails can be accessed with or without a car, as the trailhead is located only 2 miles from campus. Multiple loops can be done within Bracken Preserve—so whether you want to hike for an hour or a day, there are options.

Hooker Falls - DuPont State Recreational Forest

Looking for an easy hike and a swimming spot? Well, look no further. At only 0.8 miles, Hooker Falls is a quick and easy hike that takes you to a scenic waterfall with a deep pool that is great for swimming or lounging. Due to its location in Dupont State Recreational Forest, it is also easy to add on some other hikes while you are there, like Triple Falls or High Falls. These hikes can be started from the Hooker Falls Access Area, located 12.5 miles from campus.

John Rock - Pisgah National Forest

John Rock hike starts at the Fish Hatchery in Pisgah National Forest and generally takes about two and a half to three hours to complete. It is 4.8 miles in length with 1,062 feet of elevation gain. It meanders by the Davidson River before heading up some steep slopes towards John Rock—a breathtaking lookout point on a massive rock. This would be easier to access with a car or a bike, as the parking lot is located about 10 miles from campus.

Panthertown - Nantahala National Forest

The Panthertown Valley in Nantahala National Forest is home to around 30 miles of hiking trails that can be completed as loops or “out and backs.” One of the most popular loops is Panthertown Valley Trail to Mac's Gap Loop, which has many scenic stops, such as Schoolhouse Falls, Salt Rock Overlook, and Sandbar Pool Beach. It is 5.6 miles long with 869 feet of elevation gain, meaning it takes about two and a half to three hours to complete. It is about 30 miles from campus, but definitely worth a visit!

Remember...

When hiking, it is important to remember to wear proper clothing and footwear, to pack snacks, water, and a small first aid kit, and to let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. It is also essential to leave no trace, as we want to preserve our ecosystems and help the plants and animals thrive. Furthermore, be sure to have a map for navigation. Paper maps can be bought in town, or sites like AllTrails, TrailForks, and Strava can provide maps. If you are looking for more outdoor recreation opportunities, stop by the OLEE Barn!

If you go on any of these hikes, send a photo to clarion@brevard.edu for a chance to be featured in a future issue!

THE CLARION

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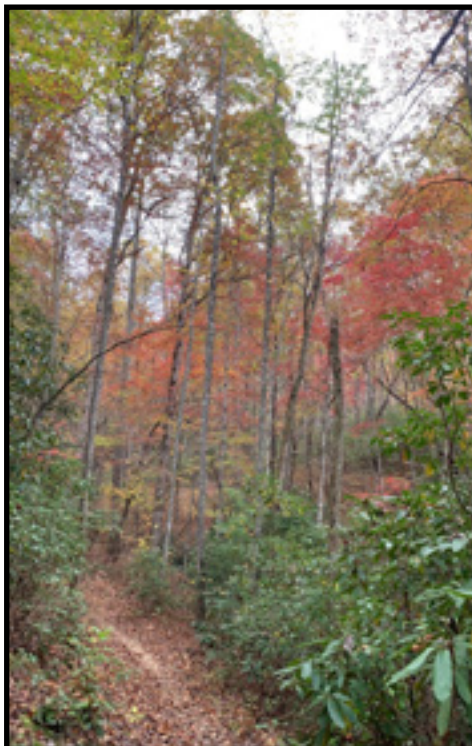
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Hiking in Bracken Preserve in October is a great way to experience the fall colors—photo by Madeleine Pollock.



Even the crows stop to admire the view of Looking Glass from John Rock—photo by Madeleine Pollock.

Brevard College welcomes new faculty as 2026–27 academic year begins

Brevard College welcomes seven new faculty members for the 2026–27 academic year, adding expertise and experience across a range of academic disciplines while strengthening the College's newest academic offerings. The incoming faculty include educators who will help launch BC's new majors in Artificial Intelligence Management and Engineering Science, along with new faculty in Art, Business, Environmental Studies and Psychology.

"We are delighted to welcome these new faculty members to the Brevard College community," said Dr. Jennifer Frick-Ruppert, Brevard College Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty. "Each brings a unique combination of academic expertise, professional experience, and a commitment to teaching that will benefit our students. As we launch two new majors and continue to strengthen our existing programs, these faculty members will play an important role in helping our students prepare for their futures."

The addition of new faculty comes as Brevard College launches two new majors designed to prepare students for rapidly evolving fields. Dr. Kyung Hoon "Audie" Lee and Dr. Sadia Kamal will play key roles in establishing the new Engineering Science and Artificial Intelligence Management programs. Lee has been hired as an assistant professor and will serve as the lead faculty member for the new Engineering Science major. Kamal will serve as an assistant professor of computer science and artificial intelligence management. Entering his third year at BC, Josh Andrews, assistant professor of computer science and artificial intelligence management, will serve as the coordinator for the new AI Management major and help lead its development.

The College also welcomes five new assistant professors: Dr. Seth Barnett and Dr. Erin McLeave in Business & Organizational Leadership, Dr. Shannon Conner in Environmental Studies, Amanda Musick in Art, and Dr. McKenzie Sheets in Psychology.

Bringing a broad range of academic, professional, and research experience to Brevard College, all seven new faculty members hold terminal degrees in their respective fields, including six who hold doctorates. Their backgrounds include experience at institutions such as the University of Southern California, Clemson University, Davidson College, Oklahoma State University, and the University of Tennessee, as well as extensive professional experience beyond higher education.

Dr. Seth Barnett, Assistant Professor of Business & Organizational Leadership and Business Program Coordinator

Dr. Seth Barnett arrives at Brevard College as an assistant professor of business & organizational leadership and business program coordinator after most recently serving as professor and program director for the College of Business at Cisco College in Texas. Before entering higher education, Barnett spent several years in the business world, including positions as a senior strategist at Lockton Companies and AT&T Business. Barnett holds a Doctor of Business Administration from Johnson & Wales University (Rhode Island) as well as a Master of Arts in Legal Studies from American Public University and a Bachelor of Science in Management from Johnson & Wales University (Colorado).

Dr. Shannon Conner, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies

Dr. Shannon Conner has been named an assistant professor of environmental studies at Brevard College after spending the last academic year as a visiting assistant professor at Davidson College. She also taught as a graduate instructor of record at Clemson University. Conner holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering and Science Education from Clemson University, as well as a Master of Science in Geology from Washington State University and a Bachelor of Science in Geology from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Sadia Kamal, Assistant Professor of Computer Science and AI Management

Dr. Sadia Kamal joins Brevard College as an assistant professor of computer science and artificial intelligence management after working as a graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Computer Science at Oklahoma State University. While at OSU, Kamal taught courses in Artificial Intelligence and the Ethics of AI, and trained high school teachers in AI modules for K-12 classrooms. Kamal holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Oklahoma State University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from the American International University in Bangladesh.

Dr. Kyung Hoon "Audie" Lee, Assistant Professor of Engineering Science

Dr. Audie Lee has been named an assistant professor of engineering science at Brevard

College, where he will serve as the lead faculty member for the College's new Engineering Science major. Lee comes to BC from the University of Southern California, where he was most recently a graduate teaching assistant in civil engineering. During his time at USC, Lee received the Outstanding Mentor Award and co-authored several publications. He holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Southern California, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Korea Polytechnic University.

Dr. Erin McLeave, Assistant Professor of Business & Organizational Leadership

A proven executive aerospace leader, an advisor with experience managing large businesses, and a graduate-level business professor, Dr. McLeave has been named an assistant professor of business & organizational leadership at Brevard College. Since 2023, she has served as an M.B.A. and program management professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York. McLeave holds a Ph.D. in Organization & Management from Capella University in Minnesota as well as Master of Science and Bachelor of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Amanda Musick, M.F.A., Assistant Professor of Art

Amanda Musick is Brevard College's newest assistant professor of art, bringing extensive experience as a photographer, educator, and artist to the College. With a focus on photography, Musick spent the last two years as a lecturer in the Art Department at Clemson University. She has numerous exhibitions, presentations, and workshops to her credit and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Photography from Clemson and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from East Tennessee State University.

Dr. McKenzie Sheets, Assistant Professor of Psychology

Dr. McKenzie Sheets comes to Brevard College as an assistant professor of psychology from the University of Tennessee, where she accumulated substantial graduate teaching and research experience in several disciplines. Sheets holds a Ph.D. and a M.A. in Experimental Psychology from the University of Tennessee, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

When is a poll not a poll?

John B. Padgett
Contributor

Election Day is still more than two months away, but candidates, political parties, and other groups are well underway in their attempts to sway voters—sometimes in ways that are intentionally deceptive.

For that reason, it is all the more important that citizens use reliable sources to learn about candidates and their positions before casting ballots. We're already facing a deluge of advertising, from television and radio spots to yard signs, social media blasts, and more, and we're likely to see even more over the coming weeks. This year's midterm election will determine who controls Congress, and thus which party might serve as a check on the president's administration.

Every two years, voters elect the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the U.S. Senate. Historically, whichever party is in the White House typically does poorly in midterm elections, which means control of the House—currently held by Republicans by the slimmest of margins—could pass to the Democrats. Polls suggest something similar could happen in the Senate, which the GOP currently controls by three votes.

As a snapshot of a moment in time, opinion polls are highly useful for candidates, the news media, and ordinary folks. When done right, they can reliably show those in power what voters are thinking and even lead to real results that can improve life for the American people.

But what happens when a poll really isn't a poll?

Most polls are designed to “receive” information, to measure what people think about candidates, issues, and more. But sometimes, outfits masquerading as opinion pollsters have a more subversive purpose: to plant information about candidates or issues, in hopes of swaying votes in an upcoming election.

These so-called “push” polls often begin exactly like a regular poll, asking typical questions such as how likely you are to vote in the election, how you rank candidates or issues on a “favorable/unfavorable” spectrum, and what issues matter most to you in casting your vote. But don't be deceived: this “normal” part of a push poll is a setup for the information its sponsors want voters to remember come Election Day.

Push polling as a means of planting information about a political opponent can be traced back to Richard Nixon in the 1940s and '50s, but one of the more infamous examples of the tactic occurred in 2000, when Sen. John McCain of Arizona was running against then-Texas Gov.

George W. Bush for the Republican nomination for president. McCain had done well in the early weeks of the race, but then came the crucial South Carolina primary.

In the days leading up to the election, South Carolina voters began receiving calls from an alleged pollster asking their opinions about the candidates and their beliefs. Among the questions asked, however, was this: Would they support McCain if they knew he had fathered an illegitimate Black child?

To this day, no one knows for sure who conducted this deliberate smear campaign against McCain, but McCain lost the South Carolina primary, and Bush went on to receive the nomination and win the 2000 presidential election in one of the closest, most contested elections in U.S. history.

As for the smear itself, there is no evidence that McCain ever fathered an illegitimate child, but he and his wife did have a daughter with dark skin whom they had adopted from Bangladesh.

Push polls like the one that targeted McCain's campaign often contain a kernel of truth, but they can also refer to matters that are utterly irrelevant or untrue. That's the case with a survey call I received not once but twice last weekend.

Each came from a different person and a different phone number, but both had an 828 area code, making the calls appear local to western North Carolina. The first part of the poll sounded legitimate, asking the kinds of questions one would expect in a poll.

Then it turned local. Personal, even.

The survey completely skipped the 11th Congressional District race, which was upended Aug. 5 when incumbent Chuck Edwards announced he would withdraw from the race after the House Ethics Committee recommended he be censured for unprofessional and inappropriate conduct toward two female staffers in his office.

Instead, the survey asked questions about a North Carolina state House race between Democrat Mark Burrows and Republican incumbent Anna Ferguson, who currently represents the 119th District.

The survey attempted, rather ham-handedly, to plant information about Burrows, who is married to longtime Brevard College education professor Betsy Burrows. She retired in May after teaching here for more than 30 years. The questions presented a series of statements about Burrows and asked how likely respondents would be to vote for him “knowing” that he:

- favors eliminating “traditional fossil fuels that power our cars and heat our homes”;
- is “not concerned with illegal immigration or their use of our systems”;

- “supports bringing more data centers to Western North Carolina which would result in higher utility bills for all consumers”;
- “opposes the parents’ bill of rights, which bans gender identities curriculum in K-12 classrooms and requires schools to tell parents when their child changes pronouns”;
- and
- spent “nearly 30 years as a top economic development official in ‘Tanzania’ County, during which the county lost 89 percent of its manufacturing jobs.” (The caller apparently had trouble pronouncing “Transylvania.”)

Needless to say, most of this is utter nonsense. Several of these assertions seem worded to conjure negative impressions on contentious issues like immigration and data centers, while others are wildly lacking in nuance or context.

It is true, for instance, that Transylvania County has fewer manufacturing jobs than it did 30 years ago, but that stemmed largely from the closing of just three plants: Ecusta, Coats America, and DuPont, which all closed around 2002 amid a much larger shift in American manufacturing as production increasingly moved overseas.

Burrows was not to blame for those plants closing. In fact, as director of economic development in Transylvania County, Burrows worked to offset many of those job losses by recruiting and supporting new businesses and economic opportunities.

But of course, the goal of that statement was not to provide anything like a nuanced picture of economic development over the past three decades. Like the other statements in the survey, its purpose is to tar a political candidate with claims that are misleading, irrelevant, or false.

For his part, Burrows said his campaign is focused on the people of the district and encouraged voters with questions about his positions to seek information directly from him or his website, markburrowsnc.com. “My team and I are focused on the citizens across NC House District 119 (Jackson, Swain and Transylvania counties) and seeking ways to help them, their families and WNC,” he said in a written statement.

The source of the survey—TCSG, or The Campaign Solutions Group—describes itself on its website as a “privately held polling and marketing research data collection service” in operation since 1995. While the company does not explicitly say so on its website, a separate listing for telephone contact services on the “Campaigns & Elections” website says TCSG “has made millions of voter-contact phone

BC Women's Basketball to receive USA South Champion rings at halftime of football season opener

The 2025-26 Brevard College women's basketball team members are set to receive their USA South Conference Regular Season Championship in a special halftime ceremony at the season-opening football game between Brevard and Sewanee, which kicks off at 1 p.m. on Saturday, September 12 at Ives-Lemel Family Field.

"We look forward to sharing this moment with our Nado Family," commented Head Coach Donald Hudson. "Our success last season wouldn't have been possible without the support that we received game in and game out. We look forward to the passion and encouragement from our fans every time we take the floor. I'm extremely proud of the work our group put in, and even more happy that we have a chance to experience this moment together."

The 2025-26 edition of BC women's basketball set new single-season highs for overall wins (23) and conference wins (16) in the NCAA era. Brevard secured the program's first USA South Conference Regular Season Title and earned the top overall seed in the USA South Tournament for the first time. Brevard claimed wins in the first round and the semifinal, and hosted the championship contest for the first time in program history.



Photo by Chris Fortman '29.

Brevard College Women's Basketball secured seven total postseason accolades from the USA South Conference in 2025-26. Kayden Johnson secured the program's first-ever USA South Defensive Player of the Year selection, while 10th-year Head Coach Donald Hudson was voted as the league's Coach of the Year. Olivia Miller was named to the All-Conference First Team, with Johnson alongside Jada Petty-Wilkins securing All-Conference Second Team accolades. Analee Morris secured All-Conference Honorable Mention, and Kennedie Noble represented BC women's basketball on the All-Sportsmanship squad.

2025-26 Brevard College Women's Basketball Team

2 Kenadi Gentry
 3 Somer Johnson
 4 Marlee Carnathan
 5 Aleysa Hill
 10 Analee Morris
 11 Jada Petty-Wilkins
 12 Alisha Watkins
 13 Malayka Rankin
 14 Kayla Jean
 20 Kennedie Noble
 22 Christena Rhone
 23 Kayden Johnson
 24 Olivia Miller
 33 Schuyler Pettibone
Head Coach: Donald Hudson
Assistant Coach: Brittany Lawson
Volunteer Assistant Coach: Josie Hester
Student Manager: Elizabeth Auciello

Continued from page 7

When is a poll not a poll?

calls for GOP campaigns and collected millions of data points for GOP pollsters."

That same website, incidentally, lists three other firms providing similar services, one for Democratic/progressive campaigns and two for Republican/conservative ones.

Many legitimate polling firms may contact you in the days and weeks ahead, and I do think their work is valuable. But be aware that with some surveys, the real goal is not to measure your opinion but to shape it.

Buckle up, everyone. We're in for a bumpy ride.