

# General Information

---

## The University of the South

Sewanee is the familiar name of the University of the South, a liberal arts college and Episcopal seminary, which was chartered in 1858 and opened its doors just after the Civil War. It's also the name of the unincorporated village that contains, besides the University, several churches, a handful of shops, one stoplight, and about 2,000 residents. And it is the name of the "Domain" that surrounds both village and University, 13,000 acres of woods, caves, lakes and streams, sitting atop the Cumberland Plateau about 2,000 feet above sea level. One of its early graduates, the poet and memoirist William Alexander Percy, claimed that "there is no way to tell of youth or of Sewanee, which is youth"—but then went on to make this attempt:

*It's a long way away, even from Chattanooga, in the middle of the woods, on top of a bastion of mountains crenellated with blue coves. It is so beautiful that people who have once been there always, one way or another, come back. For such as can detect apple green in an evening sky, it is Arcadia—not the one that never used to be, but the one that many people always live in; only this one can be shared.*

In Percy's time Sewanee was a college of about 300 male students, still presided over by the ghosts of the Civil War veterans who taught the first classes. Now it enrolls nearly 1,800 men and women, from all over the United States and several foreign countries, who rarely encounter ghosts but regularly encounter faculty and facilities that make it one of the top liberal arts colleges in the country. Thanks to Interstate 24, which passes just six miles away, Chattanooga, Nashville, and even Atlanta are now easy drives, but its beauty and sense of wooded seclusion, along with Percy's nickname for it, "Arcadia," still linger. Its elevation, and the relatively cool temperatures that come with it, have made Sewanee a summer destination since the 19th century.

Physically the University is an architecturally coherent collection of Gothic buildings, built of locally quarried sandstone, some more than a century old, others built just yesterday. In between are expansive greens, ancient oaks and hickories, quiet streets and faculty houses. Sewanee's location makes it an excellent place for study and writing.

The University has a long-standing, special commitment to advancing the creation and understanding of literature. It has sponsored *The Sewanee Review*, the nation's oldest continuously published literary quarterly, since 1892.

## Sewanee School of Letters

Visit us at: [letters.sewanee.edu](http://letters.sewanee.edu)

The Sewanee School of Letters is a summer program. M.F.A. students attend four six-week summer sessions, then complete a thesis, working with a faculty advisor. M.A. students also attend four six-week sessions, then may choose either to write a thesis or return for a fifth summer of class work.

Administrative oversight of the program is provided by the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, under whose authority the program operates. The dean appoints the program's director and faculty and is assisted in overseeing the program by a standing School of Letters Committee, chaired by the director of the School of Letters and consisting of the chair of the Department of English, director of the Teacher Education program, an associate dean of the College, and two faculty members elected by the College Faculty.

The School of Letters is served as well by an advisory board composed of experienced secondary-school English teachers, professors from distinguished English and Creative Writing programs, and an alumnus of the program. Nominated by the director and formally appointed by the dean of the College, the board advises the director and functions as a mechanism for ongoing assessment and improvement.