

## Projections from the Chair

*Eric Carter, Geography Department Chair*

This is no ordinary aloe plant!

When she graduated in 2017, Geography major Stephanie Shimota gave me a small aloe vera plant. She had inscribed the clay pot with a simple message in neat cursive: *Thank you for helping me grow!*

I took this sweet gift home, and as aloe plants will, it grew and grew. Later, I moved it into a bigger pot and brought it to work. Eventually, Laura Smith took it into her office, where the plant got plenty of sun on top of a filing cabinet near a window with good southern exposure. With Laura's care, the plant continued to flourish until it became wildly overgrown. In May of this year, I decided it was finally time to repot!

I made this one of my summer projects. In my garage, I carefully separated the little babies, or pups, from the mother plant. I ended up with about two dozen new plants all over my living room, where they adapted to a new environment, established new roots, and learned to live on their own. Aloe plants need very little water, and less sunlight that you might think. You would be surprised how quickly they grow big and strong, with just a little bit of love!

At the start of the school year, I handed off the new plants to every faculty and staff member in the department. You'll probably see these little aloe plants on windowsills in offices on the first floor of Carnegie, at some point.

These descendants of Stephanie's original plant are living reminders of how we all grow together in community, through our exchanges, conversations, and collaborations, over the years. And, even if you're here for a short time, you can leave a lasting impression on us.

*Welcome (back) to Geography, and best wishes for a successful academic year!*



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# Welcoming our Visiting Instructor

## Meet Lauren Gerlowski

*Sophia Weil '28*

Meet Lauren Gerlowski, the Geography department's new visiting instructor for the 2025–2026 academic year.

Lauren graduated from Point Park University in 2018 with a BA in Global and Cultural Studies and a BFA in dance. After graduation, she danced professionally for one year before completing her MS in geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she is currently a PhD candidate. Her research focuses on the urban political economy's role in dance and “the precarity of dancers in different spaces”.

Lauren's firsthand experience with the undercompensation of professional dancers sparked her area of interest.

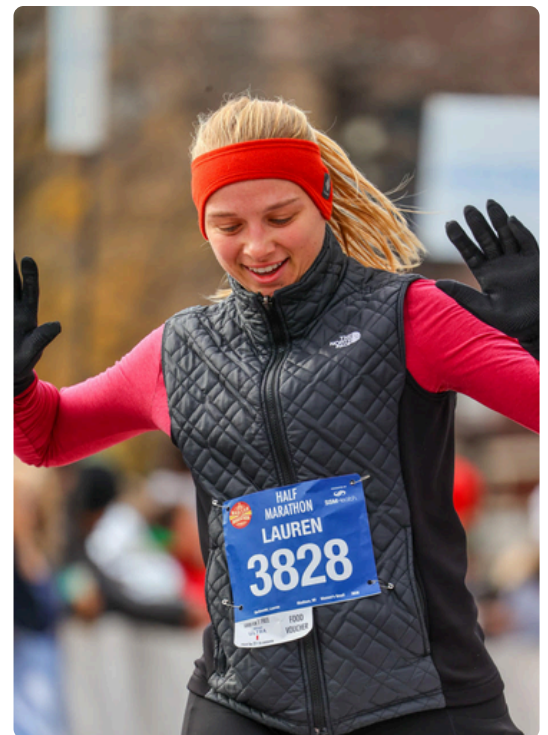
“In geography, especially traditional economic geography, value is strongly associated with capital and with money exchange, but artists really complicate that and add different levels of meaning to the word value,” she said. “They're producing symbolic value that complicates traditional economic geography understandings of value and capital.”

Fueled by her own artistry, she encourages students to take on assignments creatively to expand the value of their education. She quickly realized students at Macalester are up for the challenge.

“It makes my job really easy and delightful to see students engage critically with geographic scholarship,” she said. “I love working with students that are dedicated to their education—that's what drew me to Macalester. It's so exciting to be a part of a school where all of the students are actually eager to learn.”

After her time at Macalester, Lauren intends to continue teaching, the path she deems most fulfilling. She appreciates her colleagues at Macalester for nurturing her teaching experience.

“It's such a great support system to have so many faculty that are welcoming to me and eager to come see me teach, give me evaluations, give me feedback, and [help me] find ways to improve.”





## Meet Fitz and Oliver

Henry Kling '28

Last year, Geography majors, minors, faculty, and staff elected two new Gamma Theta Upsilon chapter co-presidents for the 2025–2026 school year, Caroline “Fitz” Fitzpatrick '26 and Oliver Matus-Bond '26.



Both Fitz and Oliver are looking forward to sharing their love of geography and getting other students engaged with the department.

Oliver wants to help students realize “anything you really want to do can be put into geography, and with such good professors and good people, we want to show people that this is a spot at Mac for you.” Fitz agrees, “There's really so much that's within geography, and I love that aspect of it. I'm especially passionate about cultural geography and GIS, and in this major, I get to pursue both, which is really special.”

### New Ideas and a New Year

As co-presidents, Fitz and Oliver are also excited about bringing back the community connections program. The program is an opportunity for underclassmen to meet other geographers and receive an upperclassmen mentor to answer questions and help get involved in the geography community.



## Fitz



**Favorite Geography Memory:**  
Working with the Eastside Freedom Library and Peter Rachleff in the class Qualitative Research Methods.

## Oliver



**Favorite Geography Memory:**  
Spending hours in the remote sensing lab last year, and the community and camaraderie there.



## Out & About with Mac Geography

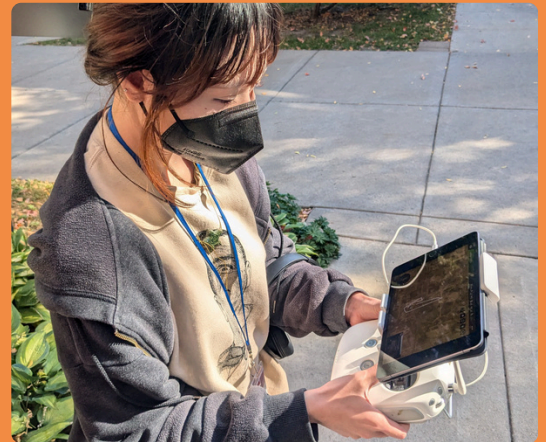
Henry Kling '28



The Geography welcome back lunch! There were plenty of familiar faces, post-summer catch-ups, introductions, and snacks.



Xavier Haro-Carrión's Remote Sensing class practicing their drone flying.



The Geography open house, featuring pizza, donuts, and more.



The first meeting of the Geography community connections buddy program.





Dan Trudeau's Urban Geography class took a walking tour around the Mac-Groveland neighborhood to get a close-up look at our urban environment.



Mac Geography sent a delegation to the MN GIS/LIS Conference in Duluth.



Laura Smith's Regional Geography of the U.S. and Canada class took a day trip to northern Minnesota to visit the Iron Range, stopping along the way at Hibbing High School, the Hull Rust Mine, and more!



## Mission Malnutrition

*Sophia Weil '28*

Geography students Alice Gray '26, Oliver Matus-Bond '26, and Claire Rochelois '27 conducted research in Tanzania's Mara Region this summer. The team was led by Professor Bill Moseley, who worked with the Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship to connect with Mwalimu Nyerere University of Agriculture and Technology, located in Musoma, Tanzania, and the St. Paul-based NGO Project Zawadi.

The research team spent six weeks investigating the impact of school farm and garden programs by comparing two Project Zawadi model schools and two control schools. Project Zawadi supplies its model schools with staff members and community leaders to teach students about agroecology with the goal of securing more reliable school meals for students.

The researchers conducted 240 interviews of 30 primary school students from each school. They asked questions about their family farming patterns, what they learned from farm and garden programs at school, if they introduced what they learned to their families, and if their families implemented the new strategies.

Other interviewees include school staff members, agricultural extension officers, and local champion farmers. These farmers are recruited by the government to promote sustainable farming methods. Additionally, they give a portion of their harvests to local schools and teach students about agroecology.

"It was really special to have designated time to listen to farmers and hear about the challenges that they're facing, how they're making decisions about their land, and how they're seeing the agricultural environment in their region evolving," Alice said.

Field work is one way to go beyond the classroom to learn about complex topics firsthand, oftentimes supporting a community and creating a long-lasting impact along the way.

"Doing field work expands your understanding of the theories that you're learning in class in a way that no other undergrad experience can," Claire said. "I don't think you always need to necessarily have a foreign experience—it can be local, it could be in the Twin Cities, it could be wherever you're from. No matter where it is, it's impactful."





## Smart Cities & Healthcare Access

Henry Kling '28

### Professor I-Chun Catherine Chang



Professor Chang has been part of an international research consortium focusing on smart cities.

The consortium conducted a collaborative research project, “Smart Cities in Global Comparative Perspective: Worlding and Provincializing Relationships,” on seven international cities (Barcelona, Calgary, Seoul, Stockholm, Singapore, Taipei, Toronto) from 2020 to 2024.

### Professor Eric Carter

In August, Professor Carter traveled to Argentina to deliver a speech to the Tucumán provincial legislature, presenting his research on health outcomes and disparities in the region.

After decades of work in the area, his most recent project, alongside Laura Cordero, a health geographer from Tucumán, involves examining how social capital affects access to healthcare and social services.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Geography Awareness Week

11/17/2025-11/21/2025,  
Details TBA

### Winter Dinner

12/02/25 5:00-7:00 pm,  
Weyerhaeuser Hall

### Dave Lanegran Day

02/20/2026 5:00 pm,  
AGH Ballroom | Kagin Commons

## NEXT ISSUE

- Alumni Updates
- Semester Recap
- ... and much more!

## Alumni, What's Up?

We've heard from several of you in response to our past calls to action and hope to include a special alumni updates section in a future edition.

If you've been out and about, tell us what you've been up to! Where in the world are you? What have you been doing since you left Macalester? Have you traveled to far off places? Written a book? Started a new business?

[Submit an update here](#)

## Want More?

Keep up with the wider Macalester Geography community by joining our Linkedin Group (Macalester College Geography Network), Facebook Group (Macalester College Geographers), or follow us on Instagram (@macgeography).



## THE GRATICULE

Macalester Geography Department Newsletter

### Newsletter Editors

Henry Kling '28  
Sophia Weil '28



### Departmental Support

Eric Carter  
Constance DeLage



## Support Geography!

When giving to Macalester, consider making a gift to the Geography Department. To direct your gift to our program, please select "other" in the "designate gift to" option and write "Geography" in the comments. Your gift will support high-impact activities, including field trips and professional development opportunities for students that are a signature part of the Macalester Geography experience.

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