



A Success Story: How David Lanegran Saved Macalester's Geography Department

Sophia Weil '28

On February 20, Macalester celebrated Lanegran Day, an annual event supported by the Lanegran Endowed Fund. In early March, I sat down to chat with Professor Lanegran, and he told me about his integral role in cultivating Macalester's Geography department.

Professor Hildegard Binder Johnson founded the Macalester Geography department in 1947. She went to the office of former Macalester President Charles J. Turck, and told him that a school claiming to be international needed to have a geography department.

At the beginning of his time at Macalester, David Lanegran was uncertain about what he wanted to study. During the second semester of his sophomore year, however, he took his first geography class, taught by Professor Johnson.

"I couldn't believe it," Lanegran said. "I thought, This is the best thing ever. It's exactly what I want to know."

He ended up as a pre-law student with a Geography minor, as there wasn't yet a Geography major at Macalester. After graduation, he realized that he couldn't ignore his true passion for cities.

Professor Johnson recommended that he study urban geography at the University of Minnesota. Johnson hired him to teach at Macalester's summer school, and eventually for

the remainder of the term as the urban geographer for the new Urban Studies Program.

Lanegran's classes were oriented toward team-building and having fun. He and his late wife, Karen, often invited his Urban Geography senior seminar into their home to have parties, field trips, and dining clubs, to form a sense of community between the students.

"WE HAD THIS KIND OF CULTURE OF LIKING WHAT WE DO AND HELPING PEOPLE WHO WANTED HELP."

The senior seminar worked on community projects for neighborhood organizations and advocated for community members.

"The skills that geographers have fit perfectly in this niche because we knew how to talk to people, do surveys, analyze data, and make maps," he said. "We had this kind of culture of liking what we do and helping people who wanted help, rather than pushing plans on them."

The Geography Department's reputation spread throughout the student body, and enrollment gradually increased. New faculty members were brought in to support this growth, including Laura Smith (his former advisee), Holly Barcus, Bill Moseley, and Eric Carter.

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Lanegran Days Cont. & Projections from the Chair

A Success Story, cont.

“The things that students did interested other students, and the department was built that way,” Lanegran said. “It’s a good department because the students attract their peers and keep the momentum going.”

Geography, to Lanegran, is not only a discipline, but a way of thinking. Geographers can use their unique minds to actively change flawed systems and to build an ideal future.

“It’s been the experience here at Macalester that people come to the college not knowing what geography is, but they’re basically geographers: their mind works spatially, they’re interested in places, and interested in people,” Lanegran said. “When they come into the intro classes, they say, This is who I want to be, this is what I want to learn about.”

Projections from the Chair

Eric Carter, Department Chair

I was planning to write a column on the perils of AI, but instead, *let me tell you about my fur baby!*

We’ve had our puppy Jango for two months. He’s the first dog I’ve ever owned, and I’m seeing things a bit differently now, as I become more attuned to his desires and rhythms. What’s under that leaf pile? Probably some source of protein I don’t recognize. Why so much sniffing around under hedges? Probably looking for birds or rabbits, or their traces. Through his eyes, I can see that the earth is coming alive again after a long winter, not all at once, but in a patchwork of sunlight and shadows, as he digs into wet soil under the melting snow.

Scholars in animal geography — a niche but fascinating subfield of geography — explain how all animals are enveloped by sensory “atmospheres” that are undetectable to us without technological assistance. Human beings rely so much on eyesight and sound, due both to our biological limitations and cultural disciplining, that we miss quite a lot of what’s happening as we navigate the world around us. In other words, we tune things out.

But “attending to animal atmospheres opens analysis to a rich and underexplored diversity of ways of being in the world” (1).



Professor Lanegran with students (including Laura Smith), 1990s.

Jango and I are companions, but of different species. I’ll never be able to fully understand his world, although I can try to attune myself to him better. Similar to what geographer Darren O’Brien has found, walks with Jango are helping me to “unlearn” my own “entrenched modes of moving through space,” as I give into his own “navigational desires,” propelled by mysterious intentions (2).

The world must look different from a foot off the ground, and Jango is led more by his nose than his eyes, anyway. The things that catch my attention — signs with words on them, makes and models of cars, quality fences, potential ice dams — don’t interest him. Still, I am noticing more detail as I walk through my familiar neighborhood, as I slow down for his nose-forward meanders. Jango doesn’t care about time, at least not clock time, the minutes and hours that structure my overscheduled days. As long as we’re tethered to each another on the leash, we’re on our time together. That time seems eternal, glacial. I wonder how it feels to Jango?

Interested in learning more about the Geography department’s pets? Check out the next page to guess which pet belongs to each department member!

1. Lorimer, J., Hodgetts, T., & Barua, M. (2019). Animals’ Atmospheres. *Progress in Human Geography*, 43(1), 26-45.
2. O’Brien, D. (2024). Embracing the Radical Cartographies of the Doggy Dérive: A Walk in Three Acts. *Humanimalia*, 14(2), 23-54.

Can you guess whose pet is whose?

Henry Kling, '28

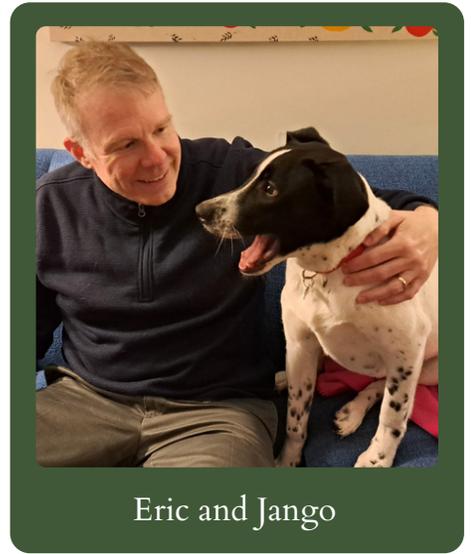
Find the answers on the back page.



Sparkle



Dana



Eric and Jango



Pepper



Daisy (left) & Ryan (right)



Mimi



Romeo



Lynx (left) & Sandor (right)



Clementine



Colbie

Department members:

Connie DeLage

Bill Moseley

Xavier Haro-Carrión

Lauren Gerlowski

Robert Hendrickson

Laura Smith

I-Chun Catherine Chang

Holly Barcus

Dan Trudeau

Lanegran Day 2026

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Tim Wallace '02, a senior editor at The New York Times, delivers his keystone address, "Newsroom Geography."

"I wanted to convey to the audience the great care and concern we in the newsroom have for getting the story right, and what it feels like to try to do that from near and far," Wallace said.

"The greatest thing about being back on campus was the feeling of being at home. The sharp and thoughtful conversations and the warm welcome were just the best."

Lanegran Day 2026 brought together the Macalester Geography community — students, alumni, and faculty bonded over their shared passion for geography and gratitude for Professor David Lanegran.



Returning from Abroad

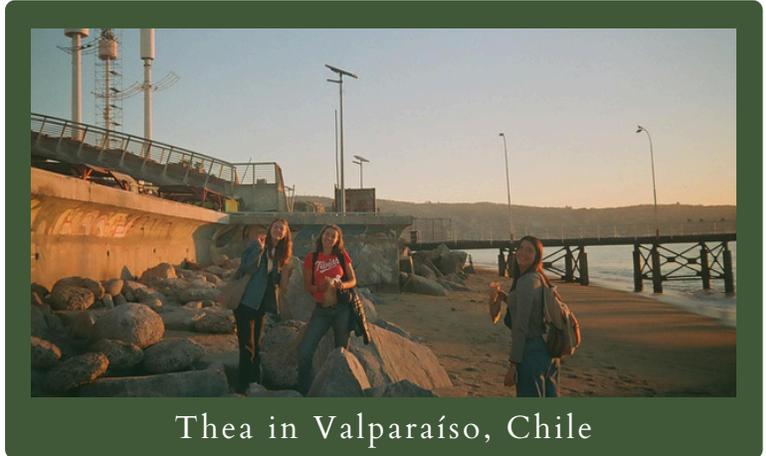
Mac Geography Across the Globe

Henry Kling, '28

Many of our Geography students had the opportunity to study abroad last semester. Check out where some of them went!



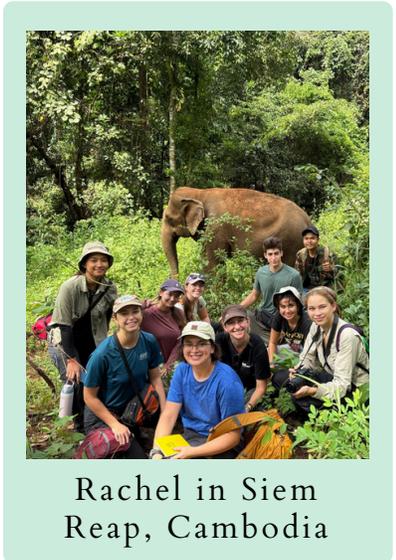
Zayna in Cali, Colombia



Thea in Valparaíso, Chile



Zach in The Hauge, Netherlands



Rachel in Siem Reap, Cambodia

Where else did Mac Geographers Go?



In Fall 2025, Mac Geography students also studied away in Capetown, South Africa; Sydney, Australia; Amman, Jordan; New York City, USA; Barcelona, Spain; Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Copenhagen, Denmark.

Community Geography

Henry Kling, '28

Professor Holly Barcus

Professor Barcus, who is currently on sabbatical, spent several weeks in India working on a pilot research project and delivering lectures and workshops at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, and Mohanlal Sukhadia University.

There, she discussed her research on migration and rural sustainability, and highlighted her work with the International Geographical Union (IGU). She also currently serves as the IGU's Vice President.

Her work on migration and identity includes looking at how material objects influence and connect to those subjects. During her recent time in India, she had the opportunity to explore these ideas, learning about local textiles and handicrafts in person.



Professor Barcus's guest lecture at the Delhi School of Economics



Professor Barcus learning about block printing in Jaipur, India

Milosz Fernandez-Kepka '23: Soccer Without Borders

Macalester Geography alum Milosz Fernandez-Kepka was recently interviewed on the San Francisco Bay Area T.V. station Telemundo 48 about his work at Soccer Without Borders. The global nonprofit works to improve access to soccer, utilizing it to enact positive change and provide under-represented youth with the opportunity for success. Working in the Bay Area as a Coach Mentor Fellow, Milosz uses soccer to help build community among immigrant youth and support them in reaching their personal goals.

In the interview, Milosz discussed how Soccer Without Borders reduces barriers to playing soccer by making it free to play for the communities they serve, providing them with a safe space to make friends, be themselves, and play some soccer.



Geography Department Announcements

Sophia Weil '28

Midwest Undergraduate Geography Symposium 2026 (MUGS)

Macalester will host the 2026 Midwest Undergraduate Geography Symposium, where undergraduate geography students from across the Midwest will have the opportunity to formally present their research to a community of geographers and fellow students. Keynote Speaker Professor Bill Moseley will present his address, "Nourishing Geography: The Six Dimensions of a Thriving Discipline."

The event will be held on Saturday, May 2 from 8:30 am - 3:30 pm in the Janet Wallace Fine Arts Building. Presenters must submit their abstracts by April 12. Macalester students do not need to pay for registration! Look for an email soon for more details on registration for Mac students.

Hansen Research Fund Winners

Three geography students received grants to carry out projects in summer 2026.

Patrick Angelo Sursano, "Reconfiguring Urban Public Spaces: Public-Private Partnerships in Public Market Redevelopments" (mentor, Catherine Chang)

El Davis-Greene and Timotei Chas, "The Joy of the Everyday City" (mentor, Laura Smith)

The Hansen Research Fund was established in 2013 and supports students involved in research projects in the field of urban geography, with preference given to current Geography majors. Funding is awarded every year.

AAG Meeting

San Francisco Bay Area alums and fellow geographers: This year's AAG (American Association of Geographers) Meeting takes place in San Francisco, March 16-21, 2026. The Macalester Party will take place from 7-9 pm on Wednesday, March 18, in the State Suite of the Hilton San Francisco Union Square. Bill Moseley, who is also AAG president, and other Geography faculty will be in attendance. We hope to see you there!

UPCOMING EVENTS

American Association of Geographers (AAG) Meeting

March 16th - 21st, 2026
San Francisco, CA

Midwest Undergraduate Geography Symposium (MUGS)

Saturday, May 2nd, 2026
Hosted by Macalester Geography Department

Alumni, What's Up?

We've heard from several of you in response to our past calls to action and hope to include more alumni updates in future editions.

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? Let us know!

[Submit an update here](#)

NEXT ISSUE

- Graduation
- Student Research Spotlight
- And much more!

Guess the Pet Answers

Sparkle: I-Chun Catherine Chang; Dana: Xavier Haro-Carrión; Pepper: Laura Smith; Daisy & Ryan: Holly Barcus; Mimi: Bill Moseley; Romeo: Rob Hendrickson; Lynx & Sandor: Dan Trudeau; Clementine: Connie DeLage; Colbie: Lauren Gerlowski

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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