



Carleton

PARENTS & FAMILIES

NEWSLETTER

February 20, 2026



Photo by Zachary Spindler-Krage

Campus News

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Carleton named a Fulbright Top Producer for 21st consecutive year

Carleton has once again been recognized as a [top producer of Fulbright U.S. Students](#), marking 21 consecutive years on the U.S. Department of State's national list. Since the program began, around 200 Carls have earned Fulbright awards.

For 2025, 14 recent graduates received Fulbright grants, placing Carleton among the top seven baccalaureate colleges in the country.

This recognition reflects the strength of Carleton's academic rigor, close faculty mentorship, and individualized fellowship support. The Fulbright Program, the nation's flagship international exchange, selects students for academic excellence, leadership, and meaningful global engagement. Carleton students continue to rise to that standard.

[Read more about the recognition here.](#)

[Learn more about the Office of Student Fellowships.](#)

[Explore the Fulbright Program.](#)

Dr. Jennifer Pietenpol '86 to deliver 2026 Commencement address

Carleton alumna Dr. Jennifer Pietenpol '86, an internationally recognized leader in cancer research, will deliver the address at Carleton College's 152nd Commencement on Saturday, June 13, 2026, on the Bald Spot.

Pietenpol serves as chief scientific and strategy officer and executive vice president for research at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, where she oversees one of the nation's largest academic health system research enterprises. A pioneering breast

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In addition to addressing the Class of 2026, Pietenpol will receive an honorary degree in recognition of her distinguished contributions to science and society. A dedicated mentor and national leader in cancer research and policy, she exemplifies Carleton's commitment to curiosity, rigor, and service.

The ceremony will be live streamed and archived for family and friends around the world.

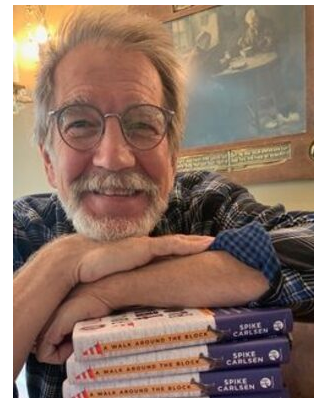
[Read the full story.](#)

[Learn more about Commencement 2026.](#)

Watch the live stream (available June 13).

Author Spike Carlsen explores how things work

Writer and craftsman Spike Carlsen will deliver a convocation address on February 27, sharing insights drawn from more than 30 years of writing about the world around us and how it works. A former editor in the home improvement division at Reader's Digest, Carlsen has contributed to publications including The Wall Street Journal, Smithsonian, Men's Health, and the Minneapolis Star Tribune.



He is the award winning author of A Splintered History of Wood, along with A Walk Around the Block, Cabin Lessons, and several other books. Before becoming a full time writer, Carlsen worked as a carpenter and elementary school teacher—experiences that continue to shape his curiosity driven storytelling.

Carlsen also cofounded Refugee Housing Minnesota and remains active in community based refugee resettlement efforts. He lives in Stillwater with his wife, Kat.

This convocation will be presented in person and as a virtual webinar.

[Register to attend via Zoom.](#)

[Learn more about Spike Carlsen and his books.](#)

Gather with Carls and Carleton Families Near You

Coffee with Carls is a beloved spring tradition at Carleton that brings together alumni and Carleton families around the world for a casual morning of connection and conversation. It's a welcoming opportunity for parents to meet others in their area.

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tea, or another favorite drink.

This year's Coffee with Carls will take place on Saturday, April 11. We invite you to learn more about events happening near you and consider getting involved. If you're interested in hosting, it's simple — just choose a favorite local coffee shop or café, and we'll take care of promotion and logistics support.

[Learn more and explore hosting opportunities today!](#)

Career Center Updates

Microcredentials return for Spring Break 2026

After a successful Winter Break pilot that engaged more than 80 students, Carleton's Career Center is bringing back its Microcredentials initiative this Spring Break. Part of the Externship Experience signature program, Microcredentials provide short, hands on courses designed to help students build practical, in demand skills for internships, jobs, and future careers.



Two popular offerings will return in partnership with AESOP Academy Skills Accelerator: Excel Basics (Level 1) and Excel Intermediate (Level 2). These live, virtual courses use a learn by doing approach and are free for students who register and participate.

Spots are limited to 35 students per course, and registration may close early once capacity is reached. The application opens February 26 and closes March 6.

[Apply for Spring Break Microcredentials.](#) (Opens February 26th)

[Learn more about the Microcredentials program.](#)

Knights Sports Highlights

Knights earn MIAC Player of the Week honors in basketball and tennis

Two Carleton student athletes earned conference recognition this week for standout performances.

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Junior Patrick Smith was named MIAC Men's Basketball Defensive Player of the Week after leading the Knights to a 2–0 stretch that included a win over No. 7 ranked Gustavus and a playoff clinching victory against Bethel. Smith averaged 8.5 rebounds and 3.0 steals, posted a career best 13 points at Gustavus, and recorded six steals in the win over Bethel—the most by a Knight this season.

First year Giana Marks was named MIAC Women's Tennis Player of the Week after a dominant showing against Saint Mary's. Competing at No. 1 singles and No. 1 doubles, Marks did not drop a game in either match and improved to 6–0 on the season.

[Read more about Patrick Smith's MIAC honor.](#)

[Read more about Giana Marks' MIAC recognition.](#)



Knights shine at Meet of the Hearts

Carleton's women's and men's track & field teams delivered standout performances at the Meet of the Hearts in Northfield, combining for seven event victories and dozens of personal bests.

On the women's side, first-year Amelia Campbell won the 800-meter run and added a runner-up finish in the mile, while classmate Claire Vukovics captured the 3000-meter title as the Knights claimed four of the top five spots in the event. The

meet concluded with a dominant victory in the 4x400-meter relay. In total, the women posted 25 personal records and saw three athletes move onto Carleton's all-time top-10 lists.

The men's team matched that momentum with four event wins. Soren Kaster took first in the pole vault, James Alexander won the 400-meter dash, Gabe Nichols cruised to victory in the 3000-meter run, and the Knights closed the meet with a first-place finish in the 4x400-meter relay. Several athletes also climbed Carleton's all-time performance lists with personal-best efforts.

[Read the full women's meet recap.](#)

[Read the full men's meet recap.](#)

Find more [headlines, results, and the schedule](#) for all varsity sports on the Knights website. You can find streaming coverage of Carleton sports on the [MIAC Sports Network](#).

Important Dates

Tuesday, February 24

Registration for Spring Term

Wednesday, February 25

Advising Days End

Friday, February 27

Second Five Week Late Course Drop Deadline

Wednesday, March 11

Last Day of Classes

Thursday, March 12

Reading Days Begin

Friday, March 13

Reading Days End

Saturday, March 14

Exam Days Begin

Monday, March 16

Exam Days End

Tuesday, March 17

Spring Break Begins

Alumni Spotlight

Phil Xiao '15 brings a taste of home to Minnesota

Phil Xiao '15, was recently featured in the Star Tribune in a story titled, "Twin Cities' 'Mandarin Man' brings this lesser known citrus to Minnesota."



While a student in Northfield, Xiao would brave Minnesota winters to pick up boxes of Kishu mandarins sent from his family's Southern California orchard, sharing the sweet, fragrant citrus with friends. Today, he and his father harvest 15,000 pounds of the delicate fruit each year from 200 trees, shipping them directly to customers across the country through their family business, Mandarin Man.

For Xiao, bringing Kishus to Minnesota is more than a business. It is a way to share a taste of home and extend a brief season of brightness during the coldest months of

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[Read the full Star Tribune feature.](#)
[Learn more about Mandarin Man.](#)

Useful Links

- [Parent/Family Gateway](#)
- [Weekly Convocations](#)
- [Campus Calendar](#)
- [2025-2026 Academic Calendar](#)
- [Make a gift to the Parents Fund](#)



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aaf@carleton.edu



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