

1ST EDITION APRIL 2026

CAROLINA
UNIVERSITY
FOCUS
MAGAZINE



**NEW BEGINNINGS
SAME MISSION**

INNOVATE · CONNECT · TRANSFORM





FOCUS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

04
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF
TRUSTEES

05
FACULTY/STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

09
STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

11
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

12
ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS

13
ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

14
CELEBRATION OF LIFE

15
DEVELOPMENT NEWS

16
BUSINESS UPDATES

17
INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

18
UPCOMING EVENTS / NEWS

FOCUS ISSUE NO. 1
April 2026



MESSAGE FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *FOCUS*, Carolina University's new biannual magazine created to share the life and momentum of our institution with our entire community. It is a privilege to introduce this publication, which reflects the collective work, commitment, and calling that define Carolina University. As a Christ-centered university committed to student success, we are honored to highlight the people and programs that bring our mission to life each day. Within these pages, you will find stories that showcase the dedication of our faculty and staff, the achievements of our students, the strength of our academic and athletic programs, and the partnerships that continue to advance our university.

This first issue marks an exciting step as we begin a new tradition of sharing our story each spring and fall. There is much to celebrate across our campus, and we are grateful for the opportunity to recognize the accomplishments, milestones, and contributions of our community, including those we remember with honor. I am confident in what God is doing in and through Carolina University, and am excited for what is still to come. Thank you for being part of Carolina University as we continue to innovate, connect, and transform lives together.

- Dr. Heather Burkard, President of Carolina University



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

These are exciting times at Carolina University. Just as Spring reminds us of the new life we see in creation, we are also reminded of the New life we are offered in Christ as he arose from the grave on that resurrection morning nearly two thousand years ago. For Carolina University, we have watched God breathe new life into our CU family under the leadership of Dr. Heather Burkard and the team she has assembled over the past ten months. From her appointment as interim president in May, after the sudden loss of Dr. Pettitt, we have watched her work tirelessly, along with her team, to ensure student success and assure CU's bright future.

In February, the board of trustees unanimously named Dr. Burkard President of Carolina University, and we are anticipating an even brighter future. Please join us in advancing our university as we seek to enhance our students' walk with the Lord and success in the career they choose.

- Dr. Shahn Wilburn, Chairman of the Board of Trustees



From historic appointments to advanced degrees, the faculty and staff at Carolina University continue to set the bar for excellence. Please join us in celebrating these milestones.

A Historic New Chapter

On February 13, 2026, **Dr. Heather Burkard** was announced as the **5th President** of Carolina University. Her appointment marks a significant milestone in our institution's history as she becomes both the first woman and the first non-ordained leader to serve as President.

This year also marked a leadership position for a long-time cornerstone of the Bruins family, as **Dr. Terrill Gilley** was selected as **Provost and Chief Academic Officer** in February 2026. He has served in roles ranging from Registrar, Learning Management System (LMS) Administrator, Director of Technology, Faculty, and Educational Technologist in Residence. His deep institutional knowledge is invaluable to our academic future.

The "Doctor" Is In

We are incredibly proud of our staff who have reached the pinnacle of their academic journeys. In December 2025, **Dr. Willie Williams**, VP for Student Affairs, earned his Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration with a focus on Organizational Leadership; and **Dr. Alison Lew**, Director of Health & Wellness, earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice.





#WeAreCU

Promotions

We are very excited to recognize several of our faculty and staff members on their recent promotions. **Jared Eldridge** was promoted to **Director of Communications**. **Justine Weber** was promoted to **Executive Coordinator for Institutional Advancement & Business Services**. **Daniel Gutierrez** has been promoted to **Director of Admissions**. **Dr. Murchtricia Jones** was promoted to the **Dean of the School of Computing, Applied Science, and Engineering (CASE)**. **Dr. Kristina Railsback** was promoted to the **Chair of the Moore School of Education**. **Maryann Noriega** was promoted to **Director of Career Services**. **Samuel Blanco** was promoted to **Staff Accountant**. **Logan Conklin** was promoted to **Asst. Head Coach for Baseball**. These accomplishments show the dedication of our faculty and staff and we couldn't be more proud.

The Alumni Homecoming

There is no greater compliment to a university than when its graduates return to lead. We are proud to see a growing tradition of alumni investing their talents back into our community. **Matthew Day** re-joined the staff in December as **Chief Information Officer**, bringing both his IT expertise and his perspective as a CU alum to a leadership position. Additionally, in 2025 3 members of the Class of 2024 graduates in **Maryann Noriega**, Director of Career Services; and **Kamra King**, Undergraduate Advisor & Asst. Volleyball Coach; and **Danielle Brooks**, Housekeeping Manager; have all returned to serve at the school that helped shaped them.

Commitment to Continued Education

At CU, we don't just teach...we learn. We are cheering on the following staff members currently enrolled in advanced degree programs:

Doctoral Programs: **Janulyn Barnes**, Financial Controller; **Amber Burleson**, HR; and **Daniel Gutierrez**, Director of Admissions

Masters Programs: **Justine Weber**, Exec. Coordinator; **Kamra King**, Academic Advisor, **Danielle Brooks** (Housekeeping Manager)

FACULTY/STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



Carolina University faculty aren't just teaching the future, they're writing the books on it. From AI integration to national conferences, our educators are leading the way in academic excellence.

The Scholar's Shelf: New Research & Resources

Our faculty in the **John Wesley School of Leadership & Innovation** are creating the tools students need to cross the finish line. **Dr. Lori Wieters** recently published *From Research to Reality: A Practical Guide for Writing Your Dissertation*. It's a "must-read" for doctoral students looking for clarity in the research process. Soon to be released, **Dr. Lutheran Carter & Dr. Bunnie Claxton** are currently working on a published work to serve as a guide for master's students on the complexities of mixed methods theses, bridging the gap between theory and real-world application.

Tech-Forward Teaching: AI & AWS

CU is leaning into the future of technology with targeted training and innovative pedagogy. Following a summer-to-fall workshop series on **AI in the Classroom**, our faculty are now leading the charge in leveraging Artificial Intelligence to enhance student learning. Additionally, the School of Computing, Applied Science, and Engineering (CASE) faculty have completed Pearson training focused on the **ethical integration of AI**, keeping CU at the forefront of responsible tech instruction.

On top of the strides in understanding and utilizing AI effectively, every faculty member in the School of CASE is now an Amazon Web Services (AWS) certified instructor, ensuring our students are prepared for high-demand technical careers.

Mentorship in Action

Education at CU doesn't stop at the classroom door. In March 2026, **Dr. Murchtricia Jones** led a group of CU students to the Women in Data Science (WiDS) conference, providing valuable exposure to leaders in the field.

"Watching our students engage with leaders in the field, ask thoughtful questions, and envision themselves in these spaces was incredibly rewarding," says Dr. Jones.

Creating Future Ministry

Following the successful Fall 2025 launch of the MA in Pastoral Counseling, Carolina University is preparing to roll out three advanced core courses this Fall, focusing on family care, theology, and professional ethics. Meanwhile, the Doctor of Ministry program celebrates its third year and the addition of new director, Dr. Thomas Gentry. Dr. Gentry is also the first to step into the role of Director for the "Teach All Nations" initiative, driving a Piedmont Divinity School vision to place a university graduate in every country worldwide.

Whether through groundbreaking publications or professional certifications, the CU faculty body remains deeply invested in the holistic development of every Bruin.





STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Our students are more than just scholars; they are leaders, servants, and professionals shaping the future. Here are a few of the standouts making an impact this semester.

Worship In Action: Leading Through Music

A very important core value of Carolina University is that it is a Christ-centered University committed to student success. The commitment to our faith is demonstrated during our weekly Chapel gatherings, where our **student worship team**, leads attending faculty, staff and students in worship and praise unto God through song.

The Heart of Campus: Peer Leaders & Mentors

Daniel Safari & Emmanuel Thompson have defined the "servant-scholar" model. Daniel is a powerhouse of academic excellence who always makes time to tutor others. Emmanuel is the campus gentleman, known for his infectious positivity and his "never says no" attitude when a peer needs help understanding a tough concept.

Adriana Herrera has been a true multi-tasker, balancing full-time studies, clinicals, and her role as a Team Lead in the Communications Department. She has made herself known for her creative leadership and a smile that lights up the room. She is set to graduate in Spring 2026.

Isabella Casco has been described as a "superb" student in International Relations. She pairs a fast-paced work ethic with creative flair. Whether she's the first to submit a high-quality assignment or assisting in shaping the university's public voice in the Communications Department, she represents the best of CU.





From the Field: Professionalism & Legacy

Jocelyn DeMoss is a junior Education major and student athlete, and she is already making a difference in the 2nd-grade classrooms of Salem Christian School. Her maturity as a pre-service teacher and her empathetic approach to student support make her a standout in her field experience.

Adam Drake has been carrying on a deep family legacy as the grandson of former CU President, Dr. Donald Drake, and nephew of former CU Provost, Dr. Beth Ashburn. He brings a wealth of perspective to campus. Adam currently serves as an international missionary in addition to his graduate studies at CU.

Joshua Jordan brings the composure of a 911 dispatcher to the classroom. His contributions to class culture have been described as "influential," and his ability to bridge professional life with academic depth has made him a leader in the classroom as well.

The High Achievers: Academic & Athletic Excellence

William McCamley is a student-athlete who lets his work do the talking. He consistently produces 'A' quality work and has a unique ability to apply leadership principles from the sports world to his academic discussions.

Anthony Massotti has shown that even in a predominantly online format, his dedication is impossible to miss. His professors describe him as an "outstanding" student who consistently goes above and beyond expectations.

Graduate Standouts: Global Perspectives

Etna Juliana Ariza (PhD) is the definition of proactive. As a bilingual student, her "others-centered" approach and professional etiquette make her an exemplary doctoral candidate.

Valentina Torres (MA) is recognized for her incredible resilience and "bubbly" personality. Even in challenging courses, her maturity and forward-thinking nature mark her as a prime candidate for future doctoral work.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

DR. MIKE WIMMER



At just 16 years old, **Dr. Mike Wimmer** made history as the youngest person in the U.S. to earn a PhD. His academic journey at Carolina University was nothing short of legendary. In only 4 years, he completed 4 degrees: a Bachelor of Computer Science, a Master of Data Science, a Master of Business Administration, and a PhD in Innovation.

A lifelong innovator, Dr. Wimmer founded Next Era Innovations at age 7, won international robotics awards at 8, and secured his first Department of Defense contract by 10.

His newest venture, Fierce Industries, which launched in Summer 2025, focuses on engineering advanced robotic systems for extreme environments where conventional technology fails. While most teenagers are navigating high school milestones, Dr. Wimmer is busy engineering solutions to the world's most complex global challenges.

SHANTAZIA GORDON

Carolina University alumna **Shantazia Gordon** discovered her calling during an Introduction to Criminal Justice course taught by Dr. Heather Burkard. A case discussion on filicide sparked a deep interest that quickly became a clear purpose.

From that point forward, she set her sights on becoming a detective specializing in crimes against children, a goal that has remained steady ever since.

Shantazia earned her Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice in 2024, followed by a Master of Arts in Leadership in 2025, graduating cum laude, becoming the first in her family to earn both a bachelor's and a master's degree. With the guidance of mentors like Dr. Burkard and Judge Camille Banks-Prince, she completed two internships with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. She is currently finalizing the hiring process with CMPD and is set to enter the police academy in September 2026.

Beyond the classroom, Shantazia was a dedicated student-athlete on the women's basketball team for 5 years. She was recognized on the Dean's List and received the Bruin's Award in Athletics. Known for her Christ-centered leadership, encouragement, and consistency, she moved from playing on the court to a Graduate Assistant - Director of Basketball Operations and Assistant Coach. Whether in the classroom or on the court, Shantazia's journey from student-athlete to law enforcement professional embodies the very best of the Bruin spirit.



ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS



The Bruins continue to excel off the field, maintaining a strong **department-wide GPA of 3.259**. All three fall sports teams (Men's Soccer, Women's Soccer, and Women's Volleyball) have earned **Scholar Team** honors for their academic rigor. This dedication to excellence also extends to the community. During the fall **NCCAA KingChasing Day**, student-athletes hosted a student-led worship service before completing a full campus cleanup, embodying the university's core values of service and character.



On the competitive front, the Bruins are making waves nationally. **Lamine Diop** secured first place in the High Jump at the NCCAA National Indoor Track Tournament, while teammate **Jaylen Killens-McIntyre** took third; both have already qualified for the outdoor nationals. In volleyball, **Khalia Horta** was named CAC Defensive Player of the Year. Currently, every Bruins sports team has earned a postseason invitation to their respective conference tournaments, signaling a dominant year for the university's athletic programs.





ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past year, CU leadership has prioritized its mission to strengthen its academic foundation through strategic innovation, program development, and meaningful partnerships. A key milestone this year was the successful deployment of the university catalog on a new platform, Coursedog, which integrates internal data directly into the published catalog for improved accuracy, accessibility, and efficiency. Building on this progress, the university is preparing to launch a centralized syllabus platform this fall, designed to create a more cohesive repository while establishing a consistent and professional standard across all courses.

Within the **School of Computing, Applied Science, and Engineering (CASE)**, several programs have introduced initiatives that enhance both academic rigor and real-world application. The Biology program has partnered with Biospherix, a regenerative medicine engine company, with **Dr. Murchtricia Jones** and **Assistant Professor Mariah Jones** leading a specialized bootcamp in regenerative medicine. The Data Science program has launched the SPARK Series and the Industry Insight Series, providing students with regular opportunities to engage with both high-achieving peers and experienced industry professionals. In Public Health, a partnership with the Forsyth County Dept. of Public Health and the Crisis Control Center in Winston-Salem has expanded hands-on learning through student volunteer opportunities in a critical community setting.

In the **Moore School of Education**, continued progress is being made with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) as the university works toward inclusion in the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) for teacher certification. This program accreditation advancement reflects CU's commitment to maintaining high standards in educator training and expanding opportunities for students pursuing careers in education.

Together, these initiatives highlight a university-wide focus on academic excellence, practical experience, and continuous improvement.





CELEBRATING THE LIVES OF OUR BELOVED BRUINS



Dr. Charles Pettit

10/28/1960 – 05/07/2025

President of Carolina University
from 2002–2025



Brian Oakley

10/21/2005 – 03/09/2025

Carolina University student
and baseball player



Tom Calloway

03/03/1946 – 11/26/2025

Board of Trustees



Dr. Nancy Moschetta

10/22/1954 – 12/18/2025

Adjunct Professor for the John
Wesley School of Leadership &
Innovation



DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Carolina University is proud to recognize several members of its leadership team who serve as evaluators for the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), a higher education institutional accreditor for Christian post-secondary institutions, colleges, universities, and seminaries. **Dr. Heather Burkard, President; Dr. Terrill Gilley, Provost and Chief Academic Officer; Ms. Archinya Ingram, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. Willie Williams, Vice President for Student Affairs; Mr. Herb Crump, Vice President for Institutional Advancement; and Ms. Karen Barker, Library Director**, each contribute to this important work. Their service reflects a strong commitment to academic quality, institutional integrity, and continuous improvement across higher education.

TRACS is recognized by both the United States Department of Education (ED) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as an institutional accrediting agency, affirming that accredited institutions meet established standards of quality and effectiveness. It is also a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the American Council on Education (ACE). Institutional accreditation plays a critical role in higher education by ensuring accountability, strengthening academic programs, and protecting the value of a student's degree. Through their work as evaluators, Carolina University's leaders support these standards nationally while bringing insight and best practices back to further strengthen the university's mission and impact.

The university is actively preparing for its upcoming TRACS five-year review, demonstrating a strong commitment to accountability, continuous improvement, and institutional integrity. In support of these goals, Carolina University has engaged **The Dysart Group** in an 18-month partnership to strengthen workflows and optimize departments connected to student enrollment and retention. An internal task force has been established to ensure these improvements are effectively implemented and sustained.

Significant investments are also being made across campus to **enhance the student experience**. Planned upgrades include roof repairs, HVAC improvements, updated flooring and paint, and expanded landscaping. Residence halls have already been improved with new, durable furnishings, including metal frame beds and waterproof mattresses, with additional upgrades planned to further enhance dorm life. The university is also advancing its technology infrastructure to support a modern learning environment ahead of the fall semester, ensuring a more secure, reliable, and connected campus.

These investments in infrastructure, technology, and student services are all aligned with a central goal: **increasing enrollment and improving retention** by creating an environment where students can thrive.



Over the past 10 months, Carolina University has made financial stewardship a central priority guided by disciplined management and strategic oversight. By closely monitoring cash flow and institutional spending, the university is operating within its means and positioning itself for long-term sustainability. These intentional efforts have established a strong trajectory for fiscal year 2025–2026, which is expected to mark CU's first full year of measurable financial progress under this renewed approach.

Efficiency through Restructuring

To enhance the student experience, the Business Services division has strategically realigned the Financial Aid and Student Accounts departments. This restructuring streamlines operations, increases accountability, and ensures a more seamless financial journey for our students and stakeholders.

The Business Services Team

This progress is driven by a strengthened team led by Archinya Ingram, a seasoned Chief Financial Officer with over 20 years of experience and the first female president of the Association of Business Administrators for Christian Colleges and Schools. Supporting her leadership is a dedicated staff committed to operational excellence:

- **Jan Barnes** (Controller): Provides structure and consistent operational oversight.
- **Samuel Blanco** (Staff Accountant): A May 2026 CU graduate and current master's student preparing for the CPA.
- **Gabriel Covarrubias** (Director of Student Financial Services): Leads the effort in student engagement and account resolution alongside **Hannah Paredes** and **Kristen Casey**.
- **Polly Withers** (Accounts Payable) & **Sharon Warren** (Accounts Receivable): Maintain the accuracy and accountability of the university's daily transactions.

Together, this team represents a vital investment in people and processes, reinforcing Carolina University's commitment to financial strength and institutional stability.



The Office of Institutional Advancement (IA) is the bridge between Carolina University and the world. With a restructured team and a renewed commitment to our city, the IA office is paving a bold new road for the future of the Bruins.

Visionary Leadership

In January 2026, the CU Cabinet welcomed **Herbert C. Crump Jr.** as the new Vice President of Institutional Advancement. Bringing a wealth of creative leadership and a reputation for "endless optimism," Herb has already begun transforming the department's culture. His focus is clear: pairing academic advancement with a deep, authentic care for the community.

Under Herb's leadership, the Office of IA now anchors 4 vital pillars: **Communications, Development & Fundraising, Alumni Relations, and Community Engagement.**

The Faces Behind the Voice

After 1 ½ years in the IT department as Project Coordinator, **Jared Eldridge** transitioned to spearhead the creation of a dedicated Communications department. Promoted to **Director of Communications** in December 2025, Jared works directly with VP Crump to bring President Burkard's outward-facing vision of Innovation, Connection and Transformation to life.

Moving from her role as an admissions counselor in March 2026, **Justine Weber** now brings her deep institutional knowledge, as well as her organizational and event planning skills to IA and Business Services as the **Executive Coordinator**. Her transition ensures that our advancement efforts remain organized and mission-driven.

CU in the Community: Strengthening Our Roots

Carolina University is more than a campus; we're a neighbor. We are doubling down on our local presence through values-driven partnerships.

We've renewed our membership with the city's premier business hub, **Greater Winston Salem Inc.**, ensuring CU remains a key player in local commerce, government, and education. This past December, the CU Cabinet joined **Santa's Helper**, a 40-year-old local tradition to wrap gifts and books for nearly 1,000 children in the Winston-Salem area. Our collaboration with the **Winston-Salem Dash** continues to hit home runs, most recently serving as a cornerstone of the Carolina University Career Fair.

UPCOMING EVENTS & NEWS



SAVE THE DATE

04/21/26 – Bruins Community Brunch

04/23/26 – CASE Science and Technology Symposium

05/02/26 – Class of 2026: 79th

Commencement at Two Cities Church

Week of 08/10/26 – Welcome Week Events

Week of 10/19/26 – Presidential Inauguration of Dr. Heather Burkard



NEWS

- On the 2nd Saturday of each month, The George M. Manuel Library is hosting a Community Literacy Event. This is fun for families with young children that get to come to story time in a University library.
- In honor of Dr. Heather Burkard's appointment as President of Carolina University, we will be hosting events, including events open to the community, during the week of 10/19/26–10/24/26.

