

Carleton

Endowed Professorships



Carleton College, with an enrollment of approximately 2,000 students, is consistently ranked as one of the top liberal arts colleges for undergraduate teaching by *US News & World Report*. While such success is influenced by many facets of the institution, from its administrative policies to its residential environment, one can easily connect this particular accomplishment with the faculty of the College. In the words of Carleton President Steven G. Poskanzer:

Carleton's professors are the ones who greet and guide the talented young people who come to this College. They are the ones who set the students on the path to becoming uniquely reflective, incisive and courageous adults. We sustain this because of the exemplary level of devotion, passion, and fiercely hard work by the faculty at the College.

Carleton's faculty comprises of 188 full-time professors instructing in 36 majors and 15 concentrations. Of these, 46 hold named professorships, representing 24% of the faculty as a whole. Compared to Carleton's peer college set, this is a relatively small number. To name an endowed chair at the College requires a minimum commitment of \$3,000,000.

What does it truly mean to earn a professorship? One chair holder, Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg, Broom Professor of Social Demography and Anthropology and Director of African/African American Studies, shares her perspective. Coming to Carleton in 1993, Feldman-Savelsberg was a full-time faculty member for 19 years prior to being named the Broom Professor of Social Demography and Anthropology. Her opinion of chair holders before she became one herself? "They were the 'special' people... I looked at them with admiration and mystique as peers who had done great things."

Upon the honor of being nominated for a chair herself, Feldman-Savelsberg admitted that some of the mystique was lost, in the "we all put on our pants one leg at a time" sort of way, but learned more about the particulars of perceived responsibilities that come with the designation. After 19 years, she felt renewed motivation towards her expertise area, so pointedly present in her new title. She now felt even more purposeful about what she'd been doing all along.

Interestingly, she also found an increased sense of belonging and loyalty to the College. Said in the words of a true sociologist: "A gift from someone increases your loyalty to them." The professorship has added "an edge" to her relationship with Carleton. And she has a new connection to the donor family that established the professorship—exhibited with a bit of tongue-in-cheek, but also gratefulness, by the small broom hanging inconspicuously on her office door.

Professorship Scholarship Profile:

Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg, Broom Professor of Social Demography and Anthropology

Feldman-Savelsberg, who earned a BA in anthropology at Indiana University, Bloomington and an MA and PhD in anthropology from Johns Hopkins University, specializes in “the M’s”: maternity, morbidity, and mortality and their effect on marriage and migration. In short, she studies how social networks—ties and connections with others—impact decision-making around these major life events and how these same decisions give a person identity. Her work, while concentrated in the sociology and anthropology department at Carleton, also finds her teaching courses in the women’s and gender studies and African/African American studies programs.

Each newly named chair holder enjoys the benefits of their new title, including additional financial support for academic projects and research. They also enjoy a professorship’s obligations. At Carleton College, new chairs are expected to deliver a public talk, sharing their particular expertise with the campus community.

During fall term her second year of holding the Broom Professor of Social Demography and Anthropology chair, Feldman-Savelsberg stood in front of a room of campus community members to explore “Reproducing Belonging in the Shadow of the Leviathan: African Migration, Legal Anthropology, and Social Demography.” Feldman-Savelsberg explained the research she conducted on the effects of immigration on the motherhood of Cameroonian immigrants. She received support from her professorship to travel to Berlin to conduct this research, which tied together her decades-long scholarship on the inclusion and exclusion of women through reproductive processes.

Carefully detailing her observations and conclusions for a general audience, Feldman-Savelsberg brought to life the important issue of women’s reproductive rights and processes. She passionately read aloud excerpts from interviews with Cameroonian women, showcasing the hardship of fashioning an identity in a foreign country and the universal issues with which mothers struggle. Although she had prepared a speech, she often spoke off the cuff, clarifying and explaining anthropological vocabulary and methods of research. After her presentation, Feldman-Savelsberg answered every student’s questions, engaging in lively dialogue about the connection between citizenship and identity. The lecture gave the broader Carleton community the opportunity to learn about a new topic, deepening their understanding of the world and calling into question assumptions about women and immigrants.

Professorships like the Broom Professor of Social Demography and Anthropology enable the College to attract, retain, and reward exemplary professors who share their passions with students and the broader Carleton community. Supported by donors’ gifts of professorships, Carleton’s continued benchmark of excellence endures.