



2026

Commencement
Ceremony

The Michigan Theater
Friday, May 1, 2026

PROCESSION OF FACULTY

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Professor Jan Van den Bulck, Department Chair

RECOGNITION OF THE 2026 SENIOR THESIS STUDENTS

**RECOGNITION OF MICHIGAN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA PROFESSIONALS
SENIOR OFFICERS**

STUDENT SPEAKER

Gabriel Paredes

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Kaitlin Urka

RECOGNITION OF THE GRADUATES

CLOSING REMARKS

RECESSION OF FACULTY

EVENT CONCLUDES

*Please join us for an outdoor reception immediately following
in the the North Quad Courtyard*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Kaitlin Urka



Kaitlin Urka is a 5-time Emmy Award winning producer for ESPN. Throughout her career she has helped broadcast some of television's biggest events including Olympic Games, Super Bowls, Tours de France, Stanley Cups, and the Triple Crown. A native of Ludington, Michigan - Kaitlin graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan.

Student Speaker Gabriel Parades



Gabriel Paredes (he/him) is a senior undergraduate in the Department of Communication and Media at the University of Michigan, an award-winning designer, and a researcher whose work sits at the intersection of race, queerness, and digital culture.

As a member of the Bodies, Identities, Intimacies, and Technology (BIIT) Lab, Gabe studies how queer-of-color bodies are constructed, valued, and commodified in digital spaces; particularly how platforms like dating apps shape desirability, masculinity, and self-worth. This past year, his work has focused on a series of related projects: his honors thesis, advised by Dr. Apryl Williams, examines how Latino men experience Grindr and the role the platform plays in mediating identity and self-presentation; in collaboration with Dr. Kyla Brathwaite, he investigates racial stereotypes and fat stigma among queer men on dating apps; and most recently, he contributed to a partnership with the dating app Feeld to build Reflections—an in-app self-discovery tool helping users understand and articulate their desires, boundaries, and relationship styles.

Gabe is also an experienced freelance designer who has led branding, user experience, and visual storytelling projects for Fortune 500 companies, politicians, nonprofits, and major cultural institutions. His work has appeared on Times Square billboards, in major news outlets, and on the social media accounts of U.S. Presidents. Following graduation, he will work at Goldman Sachs in New York as a Global Marketing Analyst.

UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

ANN ARBOR NEWS SCHOLARSHIP

Tomilade Akinyelu
Leyla Dumke

JOHN L. AND CLARA M. BRUMM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Anna Haf
Grace Park

THE JAMES P. CHAPMAN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Jake Frederick
Meghan Rogala

CAROLE SIMPSON MINORITY AID SCHOLARSHIP

Daisy Ruiz
Kaia Tolu

LELAND STOWE AWARD

Caleb Brown
Georgia McKay

CLAUDE SIFRITT UNDERGRADUATE AWARD

Demi Baston
Brooklyn Emuakhagbon
Elizabeth Le Febre
Alexis Mann
Allison Westmeyer
Meichi Wu

MARY LOU BUTCHER EQUALITY IN JOURNALISM AWARD

Gina Czochara
Valeria Jurado Plascencia
Isabella Puccio
Alyssa Tisch

THE J. EVENS CAMPBELL SCHOLARSHIP

Victoria Georgiev
Fiona Lacroix

SAKS FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

Chloe Pehote
Kaia Tolu

SENIOR THESIS PROGRAM

Emily Alberts
Tundi Gaspar
Rebecca Lewis
Zihan Li
Gabriel Paredes
Olivia Wimpari
Meichi Wu

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Congratulations to the class of 2026!

Best wishes on your next adventures!

