



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Emily Stack Davis
517-803-3745
PR@hillsdale.edu

Hillsdale College Commencement 2020: Health and Safety Precautions
Expressive, First Amendment activities scheduled for July 18

Hillsdale, Mich. — Hillsdale College will host its Commencement ceremonies on Saturday, July 18. Originally planned for May 9, the event was rescheduled due to COVID-19. To prepare for the celebration in a safe and deliberate way, the College has monitored state and national trends, complied with Michigan’s executive orders, consulted with highly qualified epidemiologists and legal experts, and is confident that proper protocols meet or exceed the relevant regulations.

Hillsdale College’s Commencement is an “expressive activity” protected by the First Amendment. It is a ceremony rich with symbolism and meaning. Since 1856, the College has exercised those rights by holding annual commencement exercises—including during the Civil War, World War I, the 1918 Pandemic, the Great Depression, and World War II. Despite the trauma of those times, which have been particularly severe on this campus, Hillsdale College has stood by the ceremony as the culminating meaning of the work of the College and as indispensable to its mission.

“Commencement is the most significant event in the life of a college,” said Larry P. Arnn, President of Hillsdale College. “As old as the first universities, this milestone represents the conclusion of the College’s labor and also inaugurates an even greater undertaking: each graduate’s commencing to live a good and happy life in accordance with the highest principles, a life for which they have spent four years preparing.”

In the time leading up to Commencement, the College communicated its plans not only with graduates and guests, but also with state officials. More than one month prior to the event, the College notified Governor Gretchen Whitmer and her team of its intention to hold Commencement ceremonies and related activities on campus during the week of July 12. The College also continued to work with local law enforcement and health officials; the state Attorney General’s office likewise suggested this was the appropriate and necessary step.

Hillsdale College has prepared many measures in order to conduct these events safely and lawfully. Preparations undertaken either meet or exceed those recommended by the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control. Some of these measures include:

- All attendees have been told not to attend if they have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in contact with those who have COVID-19.
- Those most susceptible to COVID-19 were directed not to attend.

- All Commencement attendees will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and their temperatures checked. In collaboration with Hillsdale Hospital, health stations will be located on-site and staffed by nurses who will help with any health concerns that arise.
- Masks are required in accordance with Governor Whitmer's directives, and signage directing mask usage is prominently displayed.
- The College will provide masks for those who do not have one.
- Seating at all events has been pre-set to maintain a physical distance of six feet from others.
- Ticketing will be contactless and handled electronically.
- Hand sanitizer stations are located prominently throughout the campus.
- Commencement will be held outdoors. Should the event be moved indoors, it will be held in a large facility where social distancing can be maintained.
- Restrooms will be cleaned and sanitized before and repeatedly throughout the event.

Additional measures beyond those typically recommended include:

- Needlepoint bipolar ionization technology to clean the air within buildings. This technology kills molds, bacteria, and viruses and has been installed in campus HVAC systems.
- Clorox sprayers will be used to sanitize seating and surfaces before events.
- To encourage attendees to spread out further, a Commencement livestream will be available in prepared venues across campus.

Lastly, health reminders were shared with attendees in advance and included:

- If you or anyone in your family have any COVID-19 symptoms, have tested positive, or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive within 14 days of your arrival, please do not come.
- If you are over 70 years old, or have medical complications that compromise your immune system, please do not attend.
- For those with health complications, it will be safest to stay home.

The event is closed to the public.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 5.3 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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