



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
July 16, 2020

**CONTACT:** Emily Stack Davis  
517-803-3745  
PR@hillsdale.edu

**Hillsdale College Holds Commencement in Partnership with Local Community**  
*Ceremonies scheduled for July 18*

Hillsdale, Mich. — Hillsdale College will host its Commencement ceremonies on Saturday, July 18. Originally planned for May 9, the events were rescheduled due to COVID-19.

“Commencement is the most significant event in the life of a college, and it is important that we recognize and celebrate this milestone in person with our seniors,” said Rich Péwé, Chief Administrative Officer at Hillsdale College. “Because our students’ safety is our first priority, such a ceremony is only possible through discussion and partnership with our community—including health officials, epidemiologists, city officials, state government, and law enforcement officials.”

Hillsdale College has monitored state and national trends, complied with Michigan’s executive orders, and made every appropriate effort to hold a safe commencement. The College has deemed its activities appropriate given the low number of COVID-19 cases in Hillsdale County, has consulted with highly qualified epidemiologists and legal experts, and is confident that proper protocols meet or exceed the relevant regulations.

“As the trusted, local healthcare leader, we want to keep our community safe, so we are committed to providing science-based information, support and expertise for large planned gatherings that require extra measures to minimize the risks associated with COVID-19,” JJ Hodshire, President and CEO of Hillsdale Hospital, said. “Hillsdale College engaged us, as well as other experts, early in the commencement planning process. We’ve provided guidance and support, like requiring masks and screening all attendees, establishing medical tents for triaging any health issues that arise and how to manage any attendees who don’t meet the screening criteria. We also provided training for the screeners in proper use of contactless thermometers and what questions to ask.”

The College also communicated with state officials more than a month prior to the event. On June 12, the College notified Governor Gretchen Whitmer and her team of the College’s intention to hold its Commencement ceremonies and related activities on campus during the week of July 12.

The College has also sought guidance from Prosecuting Attorney for Hillsdale County Neal Brady, who affirmed that Hillsdale College’s commencement activities were protected by the U.S. Constitution and Michigan Constitution. He stated that Governor Whitmer’s order “does not prohibit gatherings in excess of the otherwise-applicable numerical limits when those gatherings involve constitutionally protected conduct, as with

a commencement. Further, the College is respectful of the personal safety guidelines and has created measures to ensure those.”

“Ceremonies such as these are vitally important, and I applaud Hillsdale College for the courage to make sure its graduates don’t miss this important day in their lives,” said Adam Stockford, Mayor of Hillsdale. “We’re grateful for the College’s communication and partnership.”

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](http://hillsdale.edu).

###