



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2022

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

Hillsdale College’s 22nd Annual Everett Oratory Contest Contemplates Individual Rights and the Common Good in Education

The annual event featured original student orations

Hillsdale, Mich. — Hillsdale College’s Office of the Provost and Department of Rhetoric and Public Address hosted the 22nd annual Edward Everett Oratory Contest on March 8. Five student finalists presented classically modeled, original oratories on “Individual Rights and the Common Good in American Education.”

Emily O’Gara — a Spanish major from Lincoln, Nebraska — won the grand prize of \$3,000 for her argument that the definition of religion in the classroom must be reestablished on the local, state, and national levels in order to offer equal protection for all educators and students under the first amendment.

“I argued this point using one of the Merriam-Webster dictionary definitions of religion, which is ‘a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith,’” said O’Gara. “Within this modern definition of religion, an ardent climate-change activist can be considered as equally religious as a regularly practicing Christian.”

Find pull quotes from O’Gara’s oration [here](#).

Second place went to Caleb Sampson from Kansas. Mattis Belloncle won third place. Among the finalists were Jean-Luc Belloncle, Rachel Warren, and alternate Ethan Tong.

“The Everett prize allows students to practice putting forth ideas before an invested audience of the civic body, to engage in the potency of discourse on topics of contemporary import, and to do so eloquently,” said Kirstin Kiledal, professor and chair of rhetoric and public address.

Judges included 14-year veteran judge Don Tocco, Vice President and General Counsel Robert Norton, and Hillsdale College President Larry P. Arnn.

Edward Everett was a statesman, orator, and friend of Hillsdale College. The annual competition is endowed by the Saul N. Silbert Charitable Trust.

Photos of the event can be found [here](#).

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 6.2 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

###