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Hillsdale College Recognizes Outstanding Seniors and Top Academic Graduates

The top five academic graduates from the class of 2025 were announced during the college's annual Commencement Ceremony.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College recognized the top five academic graduates of the Class of 2025 as well as the outstanding senior man and woman during its 173rd Commencement Ceremony on May 10.

Faculty and staff voted for the outstanding seniors from among candidates nominated by the class of 2025. The winners addressed the graduating class at the President's Commencement Dinner on May 2.

Zachary Alexander Ponraj of Tacoma, Washington, was outstanding senior man. He graduated with a major in history. He belonged to the Phi Alpha Theta history honorary and the Society of St. Stephen. He served as the CEO of the GOAL volunteer program A Few Good Men, as a student ambassador, and as student director of events for the Academic Services Office. He spent multiple summer sessions abroad, studying at Oxford and in Turkey.

Michaela Grace Estruth of Mason, Ohio, was outstanding senior woman. She graduated with a major in history and a minor in journalism. She contributed to The Collegian and WRFH-Radio Free Hillsdale and served as the head resident assistant in her dormitory.

The top five academic graduates are as follows:

Nicole Annelise Marshall of Granger, Indiana, was class co-valedictorian. She graduated with a major in biochemistry. She competed on the Charger Track and Field Team, volunteered at Hillsdale Hospital, and worked on campus as a teaching assistant for the Chemistry and

Biochemistry departments. She was a member of the Sigma Zeta science and math honorary and the American Chemical Society.

Fiona Mary McIver Thibeault Mulley of Pennsylvania Furnace, Pennsylvania, was class co-valedictorian. She graduated with a major in theatre. She was a member of the Hillsdale College Tower Players and the Sigma Alpha Iota music honorary. She was involved in campus theatre productions every semester during her time at Hillsdale. She also worked in the Psychology Department.

Njomeza Ester Pema of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was class co-salutatorian. She graduated with a major in history and a minor in Spanish. She was a member of the Mock Trial team and the Collegiate Scholars Program. She worked as a coach in the Career Services Department, volunteered with Widows Connecting Point, and earned the Lamplighter Award for leadership. She spent summer sessions abroad studying Spanish and studying at Oxford.

Abigail Patricia Wagner of Fenton, Missouri, was class co-salutatorian. She graduated with a major in history and a minor in Spanish. She was a member of the Mock Trial Team, the College Choir, and the Collegiate Scholars Program. She worked in the Writing Center.

Lauren Elizabeth Smyth of Jackson, Michigan, graduated with a major in economics and a minor in journalism. She contributed to WRFH-Radio Free Hillsdale, worked for the Marketing Department as a blog writer, and volunteered with the Gier Reading/Journal Buddies program. She was a fellow of the Kehoe Family Initiative for Entrepreneurial Excellence and a member of Pi Delta Phi, the French honorary.

For photos of the outstanding senior man and woman, click [here](#). For photos of the top academic graduates, click [here](#). For photos from Commencement, click [here](#). For a video recording of Commencement, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian 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 6.8 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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