



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSUING TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

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Hillsdale College Grants Honorary Degrees at Commencement Ceremony

Charlie and Erika Kirk, Joseph A. Banach, and Stephen A. Batman received honorary degrees in public service.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College awarded honorary Doctor of Public Service degrees to Charlie and Erika Kirk, Joseph A. Banach, and Stephen “Tony” Batman at its 174th annual Commencement ceremony on May 9. Eleanor E. Flack received an honorary degree earlier this year in Washington, D.C. Hillsdale College President Larry P. Arnn conferred the degrees.

Charlie Kirk was the founder and president of Turning Point USA, a national student movement that promotes patriotism, the family, and the principles of free government. He was host of *The Charlie Kirk Show*, which is nationally syndicated and streamed by an audience of over one million people every day. His social media accounts reached over 100 million people per month. He was a regular guest on a variety of TV, radio, and online shows, and he wrote for numerous outlets, including *FOX News*, *The Washington Times*, *Breitbart*, *American Greatness*, the *Daily Caller*, and *The American Mind*. He was the author of four books, including *Right Wing Revolution: How to Beat the Woke and Save the West*. He was proud of the fact that he had completed 16 of Hillsdale’s online courses. A loving husband and devoted father of two children, he exemplified courage in defense of freedom and his Christian faith.

Erika Kirk is the CEO and chair of Turning Point USA, roles to which she was appointed following the assassination of her husband Charlie Kirk in September 2025. She received a bachelor’s degree in political science and international relations from Arizona State University and a juris master in American legal studies from Liberty University. Her professional activities involve nonprofit and entrepreneurial ventures and include hosting the *Midweek Rise Up* podcast and leading PROCLAIM x BIBLEin365, a clothing and lifestyle company that seeks to equip believers to live out their faith and to learn the word of God from cover to cover.

A resident of Henderson, Nevada, Joseph A. Banach first heard about Hillsdale College through a *Wall Street Journal* article advertising *Imprimis* in 1977. He became involved with Hillsdale in January 1992 when he attended his first CCA and began funding scholarships for students. He spent his career as an electrical engineer at Raytheon, while earning an MBA in finance and teaching himself to pass the Chartered Financial Analyst exams. In 2005, he retired from engineering and worked as a registered investment advisor for seven years before retiring a second time. Since 2014, he has served as a visiting professor of finance at the College, where he teaches a one-credit course in personal finance and investing every year during the fall semester.

Stephen “Tony” Batman is the founder and former chairman and CEO of 1st Global Inc., a national financial services firm, now part of Cetara Financial Services. He graduated from the University of Kansas and was honored as a distinguished alumnus by its School of Business. A certified public accountant, chartered financial analyst, and certified financial planner, he was voted one of the most influential accountants in America by *Accounting Today* for 13 years in a row, and his accomplishments were lauded by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. He has a lifelong interest in classical education that began as a child with his father’s copy of the 54-volume Great Books of the Western World. His collection of 90 rare first-edition books and manuscripts comprises some of the most important ideas and events that have shaped America. Tony and Vicki—his wife of 44 years—have significantly supported the College’s online learning efforts.

Mrs. Eleanor Flack, together with her husband, made their careers in the timber and forestry business in Alabama. She has two daughters, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. She is a devoted member of the Anglican Church in North America. Through the Flack Family Foundation, Mrs. Flack has provided generously for a number of causes in keeping with her and her family’s Christian faith, including Hillsdale’s Sacred Music program, two faculty chairs in theology, and the Chapel of Divine Providence at Hillsdale’s Washington, D.C., campus. Mrs. Flack received her honorary degree at the chapel’s dedication.

Past honorary degree recipients include poet Will Carleton (1876), cryptanalyst Elizebeth Smith Friedman (1939), entrepreneur Malcolm Forbes (1984), philosopher Roger Scruton (2012), and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas (2017).

For photos of the honorary degree recipients, click [here](#). For more photos from the Commencement ceremony, click [here](#). For photos from other Commencement weekend events, click [here](#). For a recording of the Commencement ceremony, 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 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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