

CLEARY UNIVERSITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cleary University graduates largest class in school history

(HOWELL, MI) On Saturday, May 4, Cleary honored 532 graduating students – the largest graduating class in the university’s history!

“It is our honor to help you achieve your dreams,” announced Alan Drimmer, PhD, Cleary president, to a crowd of more than 1,000 family members and friends who gathered at Lake Trust Stadium on Cleary’s campus to watch commencement ceremonies. “You have so much untapped potential, and you are ready to thrive and embrace the future ahead of you with passion and purpose.”

Cleary also awarded the following student honors:

- **President’s Award: Lance Wiltse**, for demonstrating overall excellence in teamwork, scholarship, communication and presentation skills, and integration and application of coursework into the business world. Wiltse also was on the Cleary baseball team and qualified for the international DECA awards competition in Texas last month after receiving first place at the state competition. He also received the DECA Stole for exceptional performances in DECA.
- **Graduate Leadership Award: Chelsea Hendra**, for demonstrating superior leadership in teamwork, scholarship, and communication and presentation skills in graduate level coursework. Hendra was one of 10 Cleary DECA students who qualified to compete in the international conference in Texas last month. She also received the DECA Stole at graduation for her exemplary performance in DECA. Hendra also was Campus Captain for The Catamount, a mental health group at Cleary designed to improve the mental wellbeing of students. She came to Cleary from Sydney, Australia, on a soccer scholarship.

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- **Business Innovation Award: Sean Parks**, for initiating or creating an improvement to a business process or product within an existing company, organization or nonprofit institution. He graduated Summa Cum Laude, the highest honor awarded (3.9 to 4.0 GPA).
- **Entrepreneurship Award: Rachel Hall** for creating or planning a new product or process or business venture, or one within an existing company, organization or nonprofit institution. She graduated Summa Cum Laude.
- **Community Service Award: Derek Ware** for exemplifying contributions to the community for the betterment of all.
- **DECA Stole: Sophia Coelho, Chelsea Hendra and Lance Wiltse**
- **DECA Honor Cord: Caleb Buda, Allison Davis and Julie Heslip**

In addition to student awards, Cleary extended two **honorary doctorate degrees** to individuals who demonstrate outstanding achievements in their profession; enrich the world with their knowledge, mentorship abilities and exemplary contributions; live the attributes of The Cleary Mind; and inspire graduates, students, families and the entire community to aspire to excellence.

“The life achievements of honorary degree recipients serve as an example of Cleary’s aspirations for its students and graduates as they begin their career journey,” Dr. Drimmer explains.

These two local business leaders received an honorary doctorate degree:

John O’Malley, president of Trinity Health Livingston

David Snodgrass, president and CEO of Lake Trust Credit Union

John O’Malley has served as President of Trinity Health Livingston since 2016. Prior to this position, he was CEO of Select Specialty Hospital, a St. Joseph Mercy facility in Ann Arbor, a critical illness recovery hospital located within Trinity Health Ann Arbor. O’Malley also worked as an operations leader at St. John Providence Health System for more than 25 years.

“When I was awarded this honorary doctorate in science degree from Cleary, I wholeheartedly

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accepted it, not just for myself, but for the physicians and leaders who work alongside me to help serve the community,” O’Malley says. “It takes a village to develop the depth of services and the high quality, compassionate care Trinity Health is known for through the state. Here in Livingston County, we are excited at the progress we are making on our new state-of-the-art hospital, and I am especially proud to deliver on our promise of keeping local care in our neighborhood for many generations to come.

“Working together with Cleary University has been a great opportunity for Trinity Health,” O’Malley adds. “We are bringing more jobs into this community, and Cleary is preparing its students for these positions in the business side of health care. The university focuses on effective communication, how to share ideas, how to problem solve and how to think as an entrepreneur, all the skills health care institutions need, and all of the attributes of The Cleary Mind,” he points out.

“Our world is changing and businesses are looking for employees who are prepared to contribute to the workforce; Cleary graduates are ready to roll up their sleeves and dive in. I don’t see that from other graduates. We are getting a great return on our investment with a Cleary graduate.

“There is so much we can do together with Cleary from a business perspective, and we look forward to our developing relationship,” O’Malley says. “This honorary degree is one I will truly treasure,” he adds.

David Snodgrass has been the President and CEO of Lake Trust Credit Union since 2011. Prior to this position, he served as Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at Affinity Federal Credit Union, a \$2 billion credit union in New Jersey. Snodgrass was named to the “Who’s Who of America’s Credit Unions” in 2008, and one of New Jersey’s “Top 40 Executives Under 40” in 2006 by NJBIZ Magazine.

“Lake Trust Credit Union and Cleary have been business partners for more than a decade,” reports Snodgrass. “We had a cohort of employees who completed their MBA at Cleary, we offer the Lake Trust scholarship to Cleary students, and we purchased the naming rights to Lake Trust Stadium. We are invested in our partnership with the university and see the potential of what it brings to our community,” he notes.

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Cleary has developed a positive placemaking in Livingston County. This is a place where you want to live, work and play, and Cleary has elevated the placemaking with offering quality education in our community,” Snodgrass finds.

“When Dr. Drimmer told me about the honorary doctorate degree I was to receive, I was more than flattered. The university always has been an important partner, and to be recognized for our investment in Cleary meant so much.

“Cleary provides a sandbox for students with its unique learning opportunities, internships and jobs waiting for students when they graduate. Lake Trust Credit Union is proud to be a partner with Cleary.

“Our dedication to making a true difference in Michigan communities continues at the heart of all we do at Lake Trust,” he notes. “Our partnership with Cleary is an integral part of this commitment. We look forward to a long, healthy and sustainable relationship with Cleary.”

Last year, Detroit Police Chief James White received Cleary’s honorary doctorate degree. Cleary began awarding this degree in 1949. More than 175 individuals have received this degree, considered the highest honor Cleary awards. Recipients represent the mission, values, philosophy and character of Cleary University since its inception in 1883. The Board of Trustees reviews all nominations and makes the final decision. They look for: excellence in community service and support, diversity enhancement and advancement, outstanding citizenship, pioneering achievements, integrity and a passion to help others, and selfless dedication to a lifetime of service. Nominations are accepted throughout the year.

Steve Hoeft was the keynote speaker at the Cleary commencement ceremony. Hoeft is President of the Bridgestone Americas Commercial Truck Group, and a proud graduate of Cleary University, along with his wife, Cindy. He and his wife were Howell High School graduates.

“Today, celebrate you, your degree, your effort and your commitment,” Hoeft announced.

“You’ve been equipped at Cleary with amazing tools to keep discovering yourself. And Cleary has provided you with the resources to face challenges head on and manage them effectively – communication, creative thinking, problem solving, ethical leadership – this construct is a part of you now and a tool you will use for the rest of your life,” he said.

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“Five traits have stayed with me throughout my career that have led to my success,” he added. “The first one is character. Be honest and transparent with yourself and others.

“The second trait is maintaining humility. As you move through life, you will get a lot more credit than you deserve when things go well, and a lot of criticism – more than you deserve – when things go bad. Take the credit and accept responsibility,” he asserted.

“The third trait is the price to pay for the journey you choose. The bigger the plans, the higher the sacrifices. Hard work comes with a price,” Hoeft pointed out. He emphasized the importance of work/life balance, aligning with your partner, understanding the price and embracing it.

The fourth trait is to “be relentless, but patient,” he said. “Stay pragmatic, be willing to comprise and keep moving forward all of the time.”

The last trait, and the one Hoeft found the most important, is maintaining and cherishing relationships. “I don’t mean networking and exchanging business cards; it is about getting to know people and growing a relationship with them. Take five to 10 minutes a day staying in touch with people,” he recommended.

“Always remember to enjoy the journey,” he concluded.

Dr. Drimmer shared these thoughts: “Through all of our curricular iterations, our institutional goal has remained constant – the future success of our students. As our graduates enter the workforce, build relationships and impact our communities, they will be fully equipped to drive change, innovation and success in all aspects of their lives.”

About Cleary University

Founded in 1883, Cleary University is a four-year, world-class accredited university, offering undergraduate and graduate degrees from a unique Business Arts curriculum, driven by a faculty of thought leaders with deep, practical experience in their industries. Providing on-campus and online education models, Cleary provides a robust athletic program and a rich residence life with nearly 200 students living on the quiet, rolling 50-acre campus. Cleary graduates tend to land jobs faster than their peers and with higher earning salaries at the start of their careers.

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Cleary University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission, a proud member of the HLC Standard Pathway, and an approved institution by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. A nonprofit university, Cleary's campus is located at 3750 Cleary Drive, Howell, MI 48843, (800) 686-1883 with an education center within the Durfee Innovation Society at 2470 Collingwood St., Detroit, MI 48206.

Cleary University:

- Ranked ninth best university in the US for its MBA online leadership degree program (OnlineMastersDegrees.org)
- Ranked #5 in the nation for best online business degree (University HQ)
- Ranked #3 in Michigan for best average starting salary two years post-graduation (US Department of Education)
- Ranked #5 in the entire country for its student debt ratio to starting salaries (*Wall Street Journal*)
- Ranked #9 in Michigan for its MBA online degree program (OnlineMastersDegrees.org)
- Ranked #15 in the US for its MBA online Human Resources program (OnlineMastersDegrees.org)
- Named "Best for Vets College in 2022" by *Military Times*
- Earned Gold Level Veteran-Friendly status two years in a row from The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) for continued excellence in serving military-connected students in Michigan

To learn more about Cleary University, visit its website: <https://cleary.edu>.

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