



April 7, 2026

Dear Saint Michael's Community,

We look forward to honoring the graduates of the Class of 2026 at the College's 119th Commencement in May — and I am pleased to share that we will also recognize three extraordinary individuals with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of their work and accomplishments. All three honorees reflect values deeply rooted in the Saint Michael's College tradition.

This year's Commencement speaker, Shabana Basij-Rasikh, is the co-founder and president of the [School of Leadership, Afghanistan \(SOLA\)](#). Basij-Rasikh courageously pursued her own education while growing up under Taliban rule in Afghanistan and has worked to make education available to Afghan girls worldwide through SOLA and her online educational platform SOLAx. Her unwavering belief in the power of education has made her an internationally recognized leader and advocate for girls' education.

Additionally, we will confer honorary degrees upon two distinguished alumni whose lives reflect extraordinary leadership, service, and commitment to Saint Michael's:

- Donald R. "Don" Dion, Jr., Esq. '76, investor, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and former trustee, whose visionary generosity — including the Dion Family Student Center and substantial scholarship support and varsity retreats at Saint Anne's Shrine — has profoundly shaped the student experience.
- Richard E. "Rich" Tarrant '65 (posthumously), pioneering entrepreneur, philanthropist, former trustee, and legendary Purple Knight, whose impact on healthcare innovation, philanthropy, athletics, and access to education continues to inspire our community.

We are thrilled to recognize the lasting influence all three of our honorees have had locally and globally as we celebrate our newest graduates.

This year's Commencement will be held at **10 a.m. on May 10, 2026, in the Ross Sports Center**. A more detailed announcement, including full biographies and additional Commencement information, is available at: [is available on our website](#)

I look forward to celebrating the many accomplishments of the Class of 2026 with the rest of our campus community soon.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Plumb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Plumb" clearly distinguishable.

Richard Plumb, Ph.D.
President