

[News](#)



by James Dearie

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

April 20, 2018

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

DALLAS, Texas — The University of Dallas board of trustees has decided to remove president Thomas Keefe at the end of the academic year and begin the process of finding a successor this summer.

"After careful consideration and prayer, the University of Dallas Board of Trustees has determined that the university would benefit from a change in leadership in order to continue to grow and maintain its position as one of the nation's leading Catholic universities," board president Thomas Zellers said in a April 16 [statement by the university](#).

No reason was given for the removal of Keefe, who had served as president for eight years.

In a subsequent [interview with the Dallas News](#), Keefe would not elaborate on the reason for his removal, but blamed a philosophical difference with the board.

"Eight years of me would get on anybody's nerves," he told the paper. "I can be a prima donna; I admit that."

NAPLES, Fla. — Controversy is flaring up at another Catholic university over its choice of commencement speaker.

Ave Maria University will welcome Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos as its commencement speaker this year, and a group of alumni are taking the university to task, according to an April 15 [report in the Naples Daily News](#).

In an open letter sent to the paper, 36 alumni, who graduated between 2006 and 2012, said that the university's choice of DeVos, who has attracted significant controversy during her tenure, "casts the University in a pointedly partisan light."

"Mrs. DeVos's policies are callous and unjust towards marginalized persons," the letter adds. Many of the signatories were especially upset about DeVos' "tacit approval of states that disenfranchise disabled children," after her comments about federal laws meant to protect education rights for disabled children during her confirmation hearings.

The university says it is standing by its choice. The commencement will take place May 5.

ST. JOSEPH, Minn. — Seton Hill University will honor the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill with its Presidential Medal of Distinction at this year's commencement, the university announced in an April 16 press release. This is only the third time the university has awarded the medal.

Charity Sr. Catherine Meinert, provincial superior and president of the U.S. Province of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, will accept the award.

The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill were founded by Mother Superior Aloysia Lowe, who oversaw the erection of the motherhouse for her sisters at Seton Hill in the late 19th century. The sisters went on to found multiple educational institutions there, culminating in the 1918 founding of the university.

Advertisement

"As Seton Hill celebrates its 100-year history, the Presidential Medal of Distinction recognizes our partnership with the Sisters of Charity and celebrates their pioneering vision to charter a four-year college and their inspiring leadership that continues to permeate and advance all we do at the university," university president Mary C. Finger said in the press release.

VATICAN CITY—Members of Villanova University's board of trustees, along with university officials and administrators, met with Pope Francis April 14, [the Arlington Catholic Herald reported April 16.](#)

The visit was somewhat unusual, featuring Jay Wright, the head coach of the Villanova Wildcats men's basketball team, presenting a basketball autographed by the members of this year's team, which [won the national championship](#) earlier in April.

While he apparently had nothing to say about basketball, the pope told those gathered that "It is my hope that in every aspect of its life and mission, Villanova University will persevere in its efforts to communicate the intellectual, spiritual and moral values that will enable young people to participate wisely and responsibly in the great debates shaping the future of society."

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J. — Seniors at Seton Hall University taking the environmental studies capstone have been working on several projects "focused on helping to revive the community and promote a cleaner environment," the university [said on its website](#) April 12.

"In his teaching on the environment, Pope Francis calls us to 'ecological citizenship,'" environmental studies professor Judith Stark said in the university's article,

The students undertook a range of different projects in partnership with different local organizations, and maintained blogs and websites where their work could be followed. Projects included dealing with contaminated soil, protection of native plant life, and supporting access to local food.

[James Dearie is an NCR Bertelsen intern. Contact him at jdearie@ncronline.org.]

This story appears in the **Campus Notebook** feature series. [View the full series.](#)