

Alpena Community College Names Donna Belusar as 2026 Distinguished Graduate

Alpena – (Insert Date) - Alpena Community College has named Dr. Donna Belusar as its 2026 Distinguished Graduate. She was honored during ACC's commencement ceremony held at Park Arena on the Alpena campus.

From Alpena to the Global Stage

Dr. Belusar's journey began in Northeast Michigan as a first-generation college student, one of seven children raised on a family farm. Facing both financial challenges and significant health obstacles early in life, she credits Alpena Community College as the turning point that made her future possible.

"ACC was a lifeline for me," Belusar said.

After being unable to afford a four-year university, she enrolled at ACC, and quickly found her footing. Through small class sizes, hands-on learning, and supportive faculty, she built the academic foundation and confidence that would carry her far beyond Alpena.

She later transferred to Michigan Technological University on a full scholarship, eventually earning her MBA and Ph.D., setting the stage for an extraordinary career.

Leadership at the Highest Level

Dr. Belusar went on to spend much of her professional career at IBM, where she rose rapidly through the organization and became one of the top leaders in a global company.

Starting in cost engineering as the first woman in her department, she moved into management within three years and was placed on an executive track early in her career. Over time, she held key leadership roles, including Vice President overseeing operations across the Americas and Asia.

Her work at IBM placed her at the center of high-level decision-making on a global scale. She managed billion-dollar budgets, led mergers and acquisitions, negotiated international deals, and worked directly with senior executives and world leaders.

She also testified before Congress and the Securities and Exchange Commission, contributing to major financial and regulatory discussions during pivotal moments in corporate governance.

"Every decision you make as a leader affects a family," she said. "It's never just about the business."

Impact Beyond the Corporate World

Following her time at IBM, Dr. Belusar continued to lead at the highest levels, serving as Chief Financial Officer at CTS Corporation, where she helped guide the company through a critical period of financial recovery.

She later transitioned into the nonprofit sector, serving as CEO of ADEC for 11 years, the largest organization of its kind in Northern Indiana supporting individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities.

Her impact earned her the Sagamore of the Wabash Award, one of the highest civilian honors in the state of Indiana.

A Lasting Connection to ACC

Despite a career that took her across the country and around the world, Dr. Belusar has always maintained a strong connection to Alpena.

She describes Northeast Michigan as her “roots” and a place she has always been able to return to. Today, she has come full circle, returning to the area and restoring her family’s farm.

“There is so much out there, students just have to be willing to go explore it.”

Distinguished Graduate Honor

Dr. Belusar becomes the 34th recipient of the Distinguished Graduate award, which is bestowed upon an ACC alumnus/ae who has made a significant impact in their profession or community. Established in 1998 by the ACC Foundation, the award recognizes alumni whose achievements reflect the value and opportunity created through an ACC education.

About ACC

Founded in 1954, Alpena Community College provides affordable higher education in Northeast Michigan to students with diverse backgrounds and academic goals. Each semester, ACC serves more than 2,000 students across its Alpena and Oscoda campuses, as well as through distance learning opportunities. The college offers over 75 programs of study, along with workforce training, continuing education, and transfer pathways.

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