

University of Delaware Honorary Degree

**HOWARD E.
COSGROVE**
DOCTOR OF BUSINESS
honoris causa

The practice of granting honorary degrees dates back to the medieval period. European universities began granting dispensations from particular academic requirements in the 15th century, with the first recorded honorary degree awarded at Oxford University in 1479 to Lionel Woodville, Dean of Exeter and brother-in-law of King Edward IV. Degrees granted “for the sake of honor” (*honoris causa*) from the 15th through the 17th centuries were largely settled upon members of the nobility and high-ranking clergy, though gradually, universities conferred degrees on certain scholars whose career achievements warranted such recognition as well. The first honorary degree awarded in America was a doctor of divinity degree awarded by Harvard University to its president, Increase Mather, in 1692.

The honorary degree is the highest honor bestowed by the University of Delaware. The University bestows honorary degrees to recognize those persons who have attained true distinction in intellectual, civic, industrial, or spiritual realms for the purpose of publically and dramatically affirming the values for which the University stands. These persons may have attained prominence at a local, regional, national, or international level and may or may not have a previous direct relationship with the University of Delaware.

Respected leader in the energy industry, you graduated from the University of Virginia with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering and went on to earn a master of business administration degree from the University of Delaware. You later completed an advanced management program at Harvard University.

You began your career in 1966 at Delmarva Power and Light, predecessor of Conectiv, and worked in several marketing positions before ascending to the position of vice president and then chief financial officer. You were elected executive vice president in 1985 and then to the role of chairman and chief executive officer in 1992. During your long and distinguished career with Conectiv, you helped the company to become a leader in the transmission, distribution, and supply of electrical services.

You served as chairman of NRG Energy for more than 15 years as the company grew into a leader in the generation and supply of energy. Under your tenure, NRG began an initiative to become a green energy producer, investing in wind power, solar thermal energy, photovoltaic and distributed solar power. NRG also launched a public car-charging station network for electric-powered vehicles.

Active citizen and advocate for education, you have used your financial and business expertise to serve your state, your country, and your fellow citizens as a member of the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Committee and as a director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia.

Your active support of education has included a long-standing commitment to the United Negro College Fund Annual Campaign of Delaware, for which you served as chairman, as well as a three-year term as a member of the Delaware State School Board.

Dedicated Blue Hen, you were a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Delaware for 24 years, serving for 10 of those years as Chairman of the Board. During your term as Board Chair, the University accomplished several major building projects, including the Laird Campus Residence Halls and the David and Louise Roselle Center for the Arts. Additionally, you were instrumental in the acquisition of the 272-acre former Chrysler plant, which has been transformed into the University’s Science, Technology, and Advanced Research Campus. In recognition of your dedicated and effective stewardship, you were named Trustee *Emeritus* when you completed your service on the Board last year.

Denise Morrison, president and CEO of the Campbell Soup Company, has said, “Leadership is service, and there is power in that giving: to help people, to inspire and motivate them to reach their fullest potential.”

Howard Cosgrove, throughout your life, whether on the job as CEO or chairman of a leading energy company, in your capacity as a financial advisor to government, or in your commitment to higher education, you have been a true leader—helping, inspiring, and motivating others to reach their highest potential.

Therefore, under the authority of the Board of Trustees of the University of Delaware, I have the pleasure and honor of conferring upon you, Howard E. Cosgrove, the degree of Doctor of Business *honoris causa* and do declare you entitled to all the rights, honors, and privileges to that degree appertaining throughout the world. In testimony thereof, I am pleased to present to you this diploma.

John R. Cochran
May 26, 2018