MSU’s advanced degree graduation ceremony will be held at 3:30 p.m. Dec. 15, where Michael VanRooyen, director of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, will speak. He will receive an honorary doctorate of humanities.

In addition, Carl Folke, director of the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, will receive an honorary doctorate of science.

Cynthia Pasky, founder and CEO of Strategic Staffing Solutions, will speak at the 10 a.m. Dec. 16 ceremony and will receive an honorary doctorate of business. She will address graduates from the colleges of Arts and Letters, Broad Business, Education, Music, Social Science, Residential College in the Arts and Humanities and James Madison.

Later that day, Priya Balasubramaniam, vice president of iPhone operations at Apple Inc., will speak at 2 p.m., and will receive an honorary doctorate of engineering. She will address graduates from the colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Communication Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Natural Science, Nursing and Lyman Briggs.

Also at that ceremony, Henry Regier, professor emeritus at University of Toronto, will receive an honorary doctorate of humanities.

Biographies of the speakers and honorary degree recipients follow.

Cynthia Pasky

Pasky is founder of Strategic Staffing Solutions, an international, woman-owned $300 million IT and business services corporation based in Detroit.

She is actively involved in civic and community organizations, serving as chairperson of the Detroit Downtown Partnership Board of Directors as well as co-chair of Mayor Mike Duggan’s Workforce Development Board. Pasky is also a member of the Business Leaders for Michigan Board of Directors and founding chairperson of the American-Lithuanian Business Council. In addition, she is past chairperson of the Detroit Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

For her leadership, Pasky was named Most Powerful Woman in Business by Business Magazine and she has been inducted into the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame.

With more than 3,600 consultants and 32 offices in the U.S. and Europe, S3 was named among the top 25 woman-owned businesses in the country by Women’s Enterprise USA Magazine.

Priya Balasubramaniam

Named one of most powerful female engineers by Business Insider this year, Balasubramaniam was instrumental in negotiating with the government and setting up production of Apple products in India.

Balasubramaniam is responsible for the organization that handles Apple’s supply chain and manufacturing for iPhones and most recently her organization played a critical role in bringing iPhone X to customers worldwide.

She quickly climbed the ranks at Apple, starting as procurement manager in 2001. Balasubramaniam launched her career after graduating from the Eli Broad College of Business MBA program.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Bangalore University in India.
Michael VanRooyen

In addition to his role at Harvard, VanRooyen is chairperson of Emergency Medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

He has worked for 25 years as an emergency physician with several relief organizations in countries affected by war, such as Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Iraq and Democratic Republic of Congo.

In addition, VanRooyen serves on the board of overseers for the International Rescue Committee and has been a policy adviser to the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

An MSU alumnus, VanRooyen received his medical degree from Wayne State University and a master’s in public health from University of Illinois. In 2009, he received the MSU Distinguished Alumni Award and in 2010 VanRooyen received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Harvard Medical School.

Carl Folke

A world-renowned environmental scientist, Folke has shaped the field of social-ecological systems and its application to environmental management and sustainability.

He is director of the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and of the Stockholm Resilience Center, which he cofounded. He’s also co-editor in chief of the journal Ecology and Society and serves on the editorial boards of 10 international journals.

In addition to authoring more than 200 articles, Folke has been cited by other authors 100,000 times - an indication of his respect among scholars.

He is a co-founder of the Resilience Alliance, an international research organization of scientists from many disciplines committed to studying the dynamics of social-ecological systems. Through his leadership, the center has had significant impacts on the field, from developing mathematical models of environmental and human systems to conducting deep ethnographic studies of human networks and their relationship to environmental stewardship.

Folke has been elected into the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and is a foreign member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He was elected as a Pew Scholar in Conservation and the Environment and has received the Sustainability Science Award of the Ecological Society of America and recently the Gunnerus Award in Sustainability Science.

Henry Regier

Regier retired from the University of Toronto in 1995, where he worked for 30 years, and later served as an adjunct professor at MSU and the University of Waterloo.

With MSU colleagues in transnational networks, Regier researched and advised on rehabilitating Great Lakes fish and their habitats, sustainable fishing for the world’s expanding populations and reducing practices that affect global climate. These networks have been effective with trans-boundary commissions and authorities that diminish conflict, such as the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.
Closer to home, Regier’s students have also served local and regional governments in protecting waters and valleys in the rapidly-urbanizing Toronto Area.

In 2008, he was appointed to membership in the Order of Canada, the country’s highest honor.

Regier received his bachelor’s degree from Queen’s University in Canada and his Ph.D. from Cornell University.

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