



## Class of 2024

**Colleen C. Barrett**

**President of Southwest Airlines**

From humble beginnings as a legal secretary to an inspirational rise as the first female President & Chief Operating Officer of a major commercial airline, Colleen Barrett’s story is as heartwarming as it is trail-blazing. Devoted to Southwest Airlines for over 50 years, Colleen brought equal parts kindness and cunning to her expansive responsibilities. Her servant leadership management style led her to being named president of SWA in 2001 where she served until 2008. She saw the airline through the tumultuous months following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and developed a People-First culture that became the gold standard for all airlines to follow. In 2021, Southwest Airlines launched the *Colleen C. Barrett Institute for Cultural Excellence and Customer Service* to share the transformative culture Barrett incorporated into the airline decades earlier. The late Herb Kelleher—Colleen’s career-long mentor and Founder of Southwest—when asked why he chose Colleen to succeed him as President, said “Because she knows how to love people to success.”