The College of Business & Management has hired Joseph Ofori-Dankwa as Harvey Randall Wickes Chair in International Business, a position that plays an important role in the development of international programs at SVSU and in the community.

Ofori-Dankwa joined the SVSU faculty in 1987 and has received many of SVSU’s leading honors. He was given the House Family Award for Teacher Impact in 2000, the Rush Distinguished Lectureship in 2004, the Warrick Award for Excellence in Research in 2005, the Braun Fellowship in 2009 and the Roosevelt Ruffin Award for Diversity in 2011. Active in the community, as well, Ofori-Dankwa is a founding member of the Bridge Center for Racial Harmony and the Saginaw County Minority Business Development Center.

A recognized scholar on modernization and democracy in Africa and diversity management, Ofori-Dankwa has authored four book chapters and more than 15 scholarly articles for academic journals and has given some 20 presentations at academic conferences.

Ofori-Dankwa completed degrees in Ghana and Wales before receiving his Ph.D. in labor and industrial relations from Michigan State University.

Students receive funds to study brain injuries, animal reproduction

Three students pursuing highly-scientific research projects are receiving grants from the Student Research & Creativity Institute.

Sarah Fluharty, a psychology major from Sandusky, will receive $9,968 for her research on traumatic brain injury in rats. Fluharty writes that “rats are the preferred model for testing brain injuries because of their similar brain structure and organization” compared to humans.

Nancy Lackey, a biology and Spanish major from Beaverton, will receive $4,500 to study the effects of three suspected endocrine-disrupting chemicals on sperm competition in rats. She will use the research to help understand the biomedical aspects of reproductive health and fitness, the ecological effects of pollutants in our environment and the processes inherent in the biology of life.

Matthew Wolf, a biology major from Frankenmuth, will receive $4,168 to research the use of crayfish urine as a signal of dominance among the species. Like other animals, crayfish compete for resources such as food, shelter, and mating preferences, but confrontations are not always physical. Wolf has collected some 250 male crayfish from the Cass River and has been compiling information for the project for six months.

Any SVSU student may submit a proposal to receive financial support for research or other creative endeavors. Each student project is eligible to receive up to $10,000. All student submissions must be sponsored by an SVSU faculty or staff member. Students serve as the primary researcher, author or creative agent for each project but are guided by SVSU faculty and staff.

Museum exhibits works by “Creative Cardinals”

Nearly 30 faculty and staff exhibited more than 60 pieces of original art in the first “Creative Cardinals” exhibition hosted by the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum. Paintings, photographs, ceramic work, stained glass, graphic design, poetry, quilts, wood guitar, and Kachina dolls comprise the exhibition, which ran Jan. 11-27. “Many SVSU faculty and staff are extremely talented outside their normal university responsibilities,” said Marilyn Wheaton, museum director. “We were ecstatic when 28 faculty members and staff submitted works.” Among the exhibits was a classical guitar that was created by Gerald B. Stevens, groundskeeper/assistant foreman, and stained glass by Michele Gunkelman, director of residential life. Music professor Eric Nisula submitted three examples of original poems for the show, and Craig Snook, assistant director of creative services, exhibited a mixed media piece titled “Chai Tea or Tai Chi?” that featured an arrangement of some 200 tea bags on a 48” x 24” canvas. The exhibition, which is expected to be an annual event, was made possible by a $1,000 contribution from Bill and Sue Vititoe. Sue is chair of the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum board of advisors.
The capability of the computers most of us use every day would have been almost unfathomable when Tai Chi Lee began teaching at SVSU in 1988. Shortly after arriving, he found that the one computer on campus capable of running the software his course required was lacking.

“It was so slow,” he recalled.

So Lee secured a grant of $35,000 from the National Science Foundation, and SVSU matched it to purchase a high-end graphic terminal. Ever since, he has been pushing himself and his students forward.

“I like to say it’s been the prime time of my teaching career,” he said.

The end of that career is in sight – Lee has gone to a reduced teaching load as he prepares to retire – but he is not sitting idle. He is the principal investigator for a recent NSF grant of $123,144. The project goal is to develop a custom computing platform that would support research that involves intense computation.

“We are trying to develop something to support faculty and student research,” Lee said. “All kinds of research nowadays is based on applications running on computers. The traditional computers cannot run fast enough to generate results. It takes a long time, hours, even days to get anything done.”

While there are highly advanced computers on the market, Lee’s plans call for interconnected chips that could be used to tackle chemistry research one day and physics the next. “It has to be customized to meet the need.”

One given is that Lee will involve students directly. That has been a career constant.

“All these years, it’s been my number one goal to promote undergraduate research. I like to challenge my students with research projects to stimulate their creative and analytical thinking. A young mind is a terrible thing to waste.”

The current project includes four students, and Lee says their participation will be enormously beneficial for their future plans, whether those be graduate school or entering the workforce. But they aren’t the only ones to benefit.

“I grow and learn myself by working with the students and mentoring students’ projects,” he said.

As Lee reflects on his years at SVSU, he is grateful for supportive colleagues. “I’m very happy the university has provided me such a good teaching and research environment to enhance my professional experience.”

Lee expects that experience to outlast himself. “I have only so many years for my teaching career. We cannot extend our individual life, but we can expand our life by providing opportunities to students and helping them to grow.”
The arts are important to Jan Poppe. That’s why she said it felt “natural” for her to step into the role of chairing the 2011 Theodore Roethke Poetry & Arts Festival.

“I’ve done a lot of volunteer work and board involvement in various arts and cultural organizations,” Poppe said. “My passion outside of the workplace has always been in the arts.”

From her prior experience on the planning committee, Poppe knew the group had an eye on going beyond the ceremony held for the winner of the SVSU Board of Fellows Triennial Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize.

“There were a few things we did in 2008 with the plans of 2011 in mind as the Great Lakes Bay Region concept really began to get some traction,” Poppe said. “In the back of our minds we really wanted to do more on a community-wide basis.”

The festival expanded to include nearly a week of events celebrating Roethke, including a poetry slam at SVSU, a poetry reading at Dow Gardens in Midland and a concert tribute in Bay City.

“We really did things to work with Saginaw, Bay and Midland counties,” Poppe said. “Even though Roethke is Saginaw’s favorite son, we really worked to have the region embrace him in this event. It was nice to be part of a group that was really passionate about bringing the name Theodore Roethke to a wider audience.”

Poppe says that her interest in the arts fits well with her position in University Communications.

“It’s really more about the creative aspect and the marketing aspect that ties whatever the event or the project and the planning all together. Our publications aren’t just to recruit students or just to engage donors, but we have a message to the greater community to consider SVSU as a cultural resource.”

As the editor for Reflections2013, Poppe is in the process of “bundling” the five issues between fall 2011 and fall 2013 in anticipation of the university’s 50th anniversary — “a way to communicate the growth and maturity of the university,” she said.

Poppe has worked at SVSU for nearly eight years, and enjoys being part of a growing university.

“I just look at the years I’ve been here and how the university has matured and morphed and evolved from a purely local commuter school to this full-service, engaged regional university,” she said. “It’s a privilege to tell those sometimes very emotional and moving stories about students with great opportunities or faculty scholarship or donors who are generous givers to university.”
Professional Profile

• Geoffrey V. Carter, assistant professor of English, showcased a video installation based on work stemming from his first-year writing classes at the 2012 Modern Language Association Conference in Seattle.

• Robert Tuttle, associate professor of mechanical engineering, had his paper titled “Effect of Rare Earth Additions on Grain Refinement of Plain Carbon Steels” accepted for publication in the summer issue of the International Journal of Metalcasting.

New Cardinals

• Jennifer Burk, manager of student financial services, announced the birth of a son, Kaden James Burk (6 lbs., 8 oz., 19.5 in.), Dec. 21.

• Mike Major, director of career services, announced the birth of a son, Gregory Michael Major (2 lbs., 15 oz., 14 in.), Dec. 26.

• Bill Stec, AV event specialist, announced the birth of a daughter, Makenzie Marian Stec (8 lbs., 8 oz., 21 in.), Dec. 24.

Read President Gilbertson’s 2012 State of the University presentation by clicking on the link under “Speeches” at svsu.edu/president.

Condolences

• To Susan Crane, assistant vice president for administration & business affairs/controller, whose father-in-law, Jack S. Crane, passed away Jan. 8.

• To the family of Daniel Inscho, groundskeeper, who passed away Jan. 24.

• To Jim Van Wormer, groundskeeper, whose mother-in-law, Esta Mae Talaga, passed away Jan. 9.

• To Judy Wojciechowski, senior secretary, whose father-in-law, Walter E. Wojciechowski, Jr., passed away Dec. 24.

Transitions

For complete directory information, including office numbers and telephone extensions, go to svsu.edu/lookup.

New Hires

• Denise Berry, Resident Director, Residential Life
• Katherine Cottrell-Donahue, Instructor (One Semester), Biology
• Stephen Daly, Data Analyst, IT
• Tracy Edwards, Instructor (One Semester), Philosophy
• Charles Liu, International Student Advisor, OIP
• William Mills, MAP Works Coordinator, Academic Advising
• Sherry Morgan, Coordinator KCP 4-S PASS Program, Academic Advising
• Debra Piotrowski, Secretary (Part-time), OLLI/CBED
• Alyse Revord, Resident Director, Residential Life
• Heather Sanders, Systems Administrator, IT
• Shawna Schumacher, Administrative Secretary, OIP
• Jane Smith, Custodian, Campus Facilities
• Jennifer Stephens, Personal Mental Health Counselor, Student Counseling Center
• Dylan Swartz, Open Source Programmer/Analyst, IT
• Meghan Wisniewski, Administrative Assistant, Multicultural Services

Resigned

• Neil Baumgartner, Assistant Football Coach, Athletics
• Heather Rising, Interim Assistant Director of Career Services, Career Services
• Jennifer Rushton, Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance and Academic Services, Athletics
• Jill Smith, Administrative Assistant, Foundation

Retired

• Angelita Torrez, Assistant Director, Academic Advisement Center, Academic Advisement Center

Transfer

• Cheryl Brow, Administrative Secretary, OIP

The Interior is published on the last Tuesday of each month for faculty and staff at SVSU. University departments sponsoring activities or events listed in the Interior will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities when contacted at least three days in advance.

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