Dow Corning CEO addresses graduates at December commencement

The December 2012 graduating class at SVSU heard a Commencement address given by Bob Hansen, president and CEO of Dow Corning. The ceremony was held Friday, Dec. 14 in O’Neill Arena.

Bob Hansen became president of the Dow Corning Corporation in 2010 and chief executive officer in 2011. He has risen through the ranks of the company, a global innovator and manufacturer headquartered in Midland with nearly 12,000 employees worldwide, and has held a number of positions in the U.S. and abroad. Hansen initially joined Dow Corning in 1982 as a cost accountant.

Hansen’s community involvement includes service on the board of directors of the Central Michigan chapter of Junior Achievement, and the United Way of Midland County. He also serves on the board of Valparaiso University, where he completed a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

In all, 549 students were expected to graduate; 445 earned bachelor’s degrees and 104 master’s or education specialist degrees. They joined the ranks of more than 38,000 alumni, 80 percent of whom continue to live and work in Michigan.

Board of Control approves $2.5 million investment in energy conservation

The Board of Control approved spending up to $2.5 million at its regular meeting Dec. 14 for a series of measures that will make the campus more energy-efficient.

The improvements include replacing exterior campus lighting with more energy-efficient LED bulbs. The campus also will see new plumbing, HVAC work, temperature controls, and electrical equipment installed during the next two years. When the projects are completed, SVSU expects utility savings of around $550,000 per year.

SVSU also expects to receive one-time energy rebates from Consumers Energy totaling around $100,000.

The Board also approved spending up to $450,000 to add a parking lot immediately north of the existing J-1 lot, located near Curtiss Hall. The new lot will add approximately 230 parking spaces to the more than 6,000 parking spaces currently available on campus.
Thanks to Brandon Haskett and one generous donation, SVSU is about to get a taste of the Caribbean. At this moment, a $28,000 set of steel pans — handmade drums whose ancestry threads back to Trinidadian slaves — are on their way to SVSU, due to arrive in January 2013.

The pans descend from customs on the isle off the coast of Venezuela, where slaves had nurtured a tradition of West African drumming. In time, British imperialists outlawed the practice, fearing its use for communication. So slaves began playing those beats by striking bamboo sticks against the ground, but even that was taken away, as those sticks are used in a kind of combat called kalinda fighting. By World War II, the U.S. military base on Trinidad had amassed hundreds of empty 55-gallon oil drums. And people discovered that by denting them, you could change the pitch they released when you struck them.

Thus was born the steel pan.

“Each instrument is handmade,” Haskett explained. “I can’t just go down to the music store and buy one. These are heated, pounded with a 10-pound hammer to sink in the bowls, and each note is isolated by hand. Then it’s tuned, chromed, re-tuned, and sent off.”

SVSU’s new collection comes as a gift from the Joseph and Karen Krantz Family Charitable Foundation, whose members had heard Haskett was looking for a funder. An assistant professor of music, Haskett studied steel pan music during his graduate studies at Arizona State University, and he continues to research its popularity across the United States.

SVSU’s new drums ship directly from Ellie Mannette Steel Drums Company. “Mannette is one of the Trinidadians who originally came up with many of the patterns we use today,” Haskett said. “So we went right to the source.”

Oddly enough, at a West Virginia conference this past July, the native of Hobart, Ind., was presenting several academic papers, when he met Mannette and took the chance to play alongside him for the Trinidadian ambassador to the U.S. “It was fantastic,” Haskett said. “He is still around, still active.” At 85, Mannette personally inspects every pan before it leaves his shop.

And the music in those pans is intriguing. “It always confounds audiences,” Haskett said. “They generally think that the instrument is electric. They ask, ‘How can you hit a piece of metal and get that sound?’”

Already Haskett has marshaled a student group — “it’s easy,” he quipped; “just do a Facebook post” — and he is searching for older musicians at SVSU and beyond who might like to try their hand at it, too. “It’s a good opportunity to extend the opportunities our students have,” Haskett said. “And it’s an outreach of my research, an outreach to the community.”
Amy Stepanski says the importance of her job can be summarized with a tale about beer and diapers.

Academic legend has it (in one of several variations) that a store’s marketing researchers were studying consumer purchasing habits when they spotted an unexpected pattern: Men running to the grocer for diapers often bought a pack of beer as well. Capitalizing on this, the store placed its coolers near the diaper aisle. And suddenly, beer sales skyrocketed.

“That’s data mining,” Stepanski said. “It’s all about finding connections you might not ordinarily see — making meaningful assumptions from the data.”

Stepanski works as an analyst in the Office of Institutional Research, located on Wickes Hall’s first floor. Sometimes her work is report-based. Every year, her office produces the first-majors report, compiling numbers on students’ chosen focus of study. They also create a semester credit hours report, pooling data about course enrollment patterns — “maybe the number of credit hours students are taking in the math department or in the whole College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences.”

But sometimes it’s quicker. Stepanski might get a phone call from Student Life about candidates rushing a fraternity, asking if she would check GPAs to ensure they meet club standards. Or she’ll get a call from Admissions to create a fact book — “all the applicants, sliced and diced,” listing each high school, ethnicity, county of origin, and for undergraduate transfers, the university of origin.

“Sometimes we get a few off-the-wall requests, and it gets really busy,” Stepanski said, “but I like being able to find out something interesting.”

In particular, universities want to understand the best ways to minister to students — past, present, and prospective. Technology has aided this, uncovering enrollment patterns showing where one group of admitted students might enroll instead or where another might transfer to. Tracking these paths is possible now, Stepanski said, thanks to the gradual improvement of nationwide databases.

“Before, you might send over a thousand people and get 18 matches. In recent years, the systems have gotten a lot better at matching them.”

On Stepanski’s office walls hang slips of paper, with data search codes, along with photos of a niece and nephew, of her boyfriend, Bryan, and her nine-year-old son, Trevor.

“I love my job,” Stepanski said. “I’m a numbers person, and I get to use my skills here. And when somebody comes up with a really good ‘Let’s investigate this’ — that I really like.

“It’s about sifting through the dirt to find the gem. Then you figure out how you take that data and better serve your customers.”
Condolences

SVSU lost one of its most longstanding friends when Dorothy “Honey” Arbury passed away Monday, Dec. 10, at age 91. She served on the Board of Control from SVSU’s founding in 1963 until 1986, and her generosity and advocacy are responsible for the building of the Arbury Fine Arts Center on campus and for the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum being located at SVSU. “She was one of those early heroes who imagined this place when there was nothing there,” said SVSU president Eric Gilbertson. “And then she and others created what we have had an opportunity to build upon. Her greatest contribution may have been bringing the arts to this nascent institution, understanding that the arts were vital to any college or university worthy of that name. We, and generations past and those yet to come, will always be in her debt.”

Others among the campus community who recently experienced the loss of a family member are:

- **Laine Blasch**, special assistant to the executive vice president for administration & business affairs, whose father, Melbourne “Mel” Bender, passed away Nov. 24.
- **Bob Bock**, custodian, whose mother, Marcel Bock, passed away Dec. 7.
- **Catherine Curtis**, reference librarian, whose mother-in-law, Marlene Louella Maxwell, passed away Nov. 27.
- **The family of Heidi Febert**, instructor of history, who passed away Dec. 7.
- **Lori Kranz**, faculty secretary, and **Kirker Kranz**, media services/interlibrary loan assistant, on the loss of Lori’s brother, David Miller, who worked for SVSU as a custodian; he passed away Dec. 2.
- **William Mills**, technology specialist, whose mother, Debba “Debbie” Mills, passed away Nov. 30.
- **The family of Garry Montle**, who passed away Dec. 10; Garry was a retired member of SVSU’s maintenance department.
- **Merchelle Weston**, administrative secretary, whose father, William Houston Weston, passed away Dec. 9.
- **To Cynthia Woiderski**, director of disability services, whose mother, Lois Barnett, passed away Dec. 8.

Professional Profile

- **James Bower**, assistant professor of criminal justice, presented a paper titled “Perceptions of Illegal Drug Use as a Group Factor” at the meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Nov. 16 in Chicago.
- **Fenobia Dallas**, associate professor of rhetoric & professional writing, presented “Fear of Writing or Writing in Fear?: African American Students Navigating Digital Composition” at the Michigan College English Association, Oct. 26 in Grand Rapids.
- **Monika Dix**, assistant professor of modern foreign languages, was elected to a two-year term as president of the Japanese Teachers Association of Michigan. She also received a grant from the Japan Foundation I.A. to purchase Japanese teaching materials that will benefit SVSU’s new Japanese minor.
- **Kathy Kalmar**, associate professor of teacher education, coauthored an article titled “A Basket of Books in Every Room: Learning Everywhere” which was published as the cover story in *Top: Tips on Parenting*.
- **Emily Kelley**, assistant professor of art, presented a paper titled “Where is the ‘Flemish’ in ‘Hispano-Flemish? A Case Study of Altarpieces from Late Medieval Burgos” at the Southeastern College Art Conference, Oct. 18-20 in Durham, N.C. Kelley also organized and chaired a session titled “The Absent Body in Medieval and Renaissance Art” at the same conference.
- **Kaustav Misra**, assistant professor in economics, coauthored a paper titled “Non-Family Managers, Family Firms, and the Winner’s Curse: The Influence of Non-Economic Goals and Bounded Rationality” for publication in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*.

New Cardinals

- **Bob Tuttle**, associate professor of mechanical engineering, announced the birth of a son, Liam Robert Tuttle, Dec. 11.

Prof selected for elite geography fellowship

An SVSU professor will travel to Africa to further her research after receiving a highly competitive fellowship from the American Geographical Society. Sara Beth Keough, associate professor of geography, has been selected to receive the 14th annual McColl Fellowship, given to only one scholar each year.

Keough will use the grant to cover travel costs to Niamey, the capital of Niger, in December 2013 to complete a project that will explore water consumption, storage, and transportation in the West African country.

Joining Keough on the trip and in the research will be Scott Youngstedt, SVSU professor of sociology. He specializes in anthropology and also speaks Hausa, Niger’s most common language; this will allow the pair to study the practices among the population more widely.

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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