Two deans bid SVSU adieu

As the 50th anniversary gets underway, two SVSU deans will take off for paths of their own.

Retiring this year are Susie Emond, interim dean of the College of Education, and Jill Wetmore, dean of the College of Business & Management.

“(Retiring) feels wonderful,” Emond said. “This is my 48th year as an educator. I started teaching in 1965 as an elementary teacher, in Indianapolis. I’ve taught in three different states, four different school districts, and six different grade levels.”

Emond completed her doctorate at the University of Florida in 1978, and joined the faculty at SVSU that year. She began her work as interim dean in 2010.

“Saginaw Valley’s been very good to me,” Emond said, “and I’ve worked very hard to do a good job for Saginaw Valley.”

It shows. In her 35 years at SVSU, Emond has received the Landee Outstanding Teaching Award, the House Award for Teacher Impact and the honor of giving the annual Rush Lecture.

“Susie Emond’s done a very good job under very difficult circumstances,” said Don Bachand, provost and vice president for academic affairs, mentioning how the college faced a drop in enrollment after the state reduced teachers’ requirements for continuing education. But Bachand says that hasn’t slowed Emond. “She puts in enormously long hours and, through it all, she has been such an advocate for students and faculty.”

As for Wetmore, after working here for 32 years, leaving is bittersweet. “I’ve enjoyed working here; it’s been very challenging. Each time I’ve switched positions, I’ve met a whole new set of challenges that I’ve had to learn from, working on what I call a very steep learning curve.”

First joining SVSU in 1981, Wetmore taught as an instructor while she earned her Ph.D. at Michigan State University, becoming an assistant professor when she completed it in 1985. She was appointed an associate professor in 1990 and a professor in 1995. She served as the assistant dean starting in 1994 and took the helm as dean of the college in 2010.

“She’s the archetype of the engaged, truly dedicated teacher and employee,” Bachand said. “There’s no day Jill Wetmore is short-changing this university — very hard worker and completely committed.”

In her career, Wetmore has won the Earl L. Warrick Award for Excellence in Research, the Faculty Achievement Award, and the Distinguished Professor Award from the Michigan Association of Governing Boards of State Universities.

“I think we’ve done some fun things here,” Wetmore said, “and created some new programs and initiatives that have been worthwhile. And this is what it’s all about.”

Their departure is the university’s loss, Bachand said. “We lose 67 years of experience there, and we care about these folks. These ladies are very decent, caring people. They have totally different personalities — Susie’s a K–12 educator and Jill’s in finance — but they certainly have a few things in common: their decency and their commitment to the students we serve. They’ll be very difficult to replace.”
Sure, Kim Lacey is an assistant professor of English. But that hasn’t kept her from dabbling in cognitive psychology.

“I’ve always thought about the sciences and the arts together,” Lacey said. “So I didn’t feel that choosing one meant leaving the other behind.”

That link comes through in some of the courses Lacey teaches: one was called “Memory in Theory and Practice”; another, “The Watchers and the Watched”—a study of the effect of surveillance on human behavior. She even taught a course called “How to Think About Weird Things,” named after a textbook and designed to help students think about the fallacies people stumble over when writing about controversial subjects.

In short, Lacey is fascinated with the way the human mind works. “But what interests me most is how the brain plays tricks on us,” she said. “We rely on it for everything, so we take it for granted. But all of a sudden it can fool us.”

In fact, before joining SVSU in fall 2011, Lacey had just defended a doctorate about the ways technology can manipulate our memories. In one study she likes to cite, researchers used photo-editing software to add participants into photos.

“Then, through a series of interviews, they tell them, ‘Don’t you remember when you went on that balloon ride?’ And they say, ‘No, . . . but I’m in (this photo). I must have done it.’ And over a series of conversations, they end up believing it: ‘Oh, that’s right—I remember that shirt; I remember that happening. I remember it being cold that day.’”

Lacey and her fiancé, Jeff, live in Holly with two dogs: a bichon named Barkley and a Brussels griffon named Jerome.

Outside work, Lacey also writes for Guru Magazine, a paper-free science lifestyle magazine—“It’s science without the lab coats,” she said. “Our mission is really to write about the sciences for the everyday reader. It goes back to bridging my passions for the sciences and humanities and seeing how the two disciplines can talk to each other.”

Those passions found a haven at SVSU, Lacey added. “I’m able to do fun things like those crazy courses I’ve designed, and not face any resistance.”

And in addition to the freedom, there’s the people. “There are so many smart, active researchers here, but they’re also wonderful teachers. So it’s been a great community to be a part of and thrive in, and it’s a lot of fun, too. That’s a very rare combination in a university.”
To Suzette Zimmerman, work is more than a job. “This is my extended family,” she said. “I work with awesome people.”

Zimmerman mans a desk in the Foundation Office, where staffers handle the business of gift-giving. Dollars come in from donors and scholarships go to students. And it’s apt, Zimmerman’s place on Wickes Hall’s third floor: At a port for goodness and gratitude, she seems a natural fit.

In an interview, she looked down at a notepad. “I feel privileged to support the university in the capacity that I do,” Zimmerman read aloud, before looking up from her words. “I get all emotional,” she said, a confession softened with laughter. “That’s why I did these notes.”

A skeptic might think Zimmerman was following some script, but through her glasses, the truth was clear. Tears welled.

In January 2000, Zimmerman started working as a fill-in secretary for the university, soon after her husband, Randy, became an assistant football coach.

She had stints in the athletic department, the bookstore and the nursing area before taking an assignment with the Foundation. There, a full-time job opening surfaced in late 2002.

“And I’ve been here ever since,” she said, a huge smile on her face. “I guess they like me.”

Along with receptionist work, Zimmerman’s days include processing donations and sending thank-you’s—“supporting Andy and Joe,” she said: Andy Bethune, executive director of the Foundation, and Joe Vogl, director of annual giving.

Notepad long since cast aside, she said, “I’m very excited about the 50th (anniversary) campaign. I hope everybody joins in supporting our students; they make our world go round.” She dabbed a Kleenex at her nose.

When weekends come with good weather, though, Zimmerman hits the interstate. “I love my road trips to the U.P. and Pennsylvania,” she said. “That’s where my family is.”

This part of her life, Zimmerman admits, is unconventional.

Six years ago, her husband took a job in Erie, Penn., and today her daughters Kadie and Kourtney live there, too. Meanwhile, her middle child, Kelsea, attends school in the Upper Peninsula.

“(The distance) is pretty crazy,” she said. “People probably don’t know how we do it. But we make it work.”

Aside from work and road trips, Zimmerman enjoys skiing, reading, gardening and exercise. But in the end, she says she owes so much to her SVSU family.

“They’re caring, everybody here. And that makes it wonderful to come to work.”
Professional Profile

- **Julie Foss**, assistant professor of modern foreign languages, presented a workshop titled “Tools for Building Oral Proficiency: Setting Goals with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the Oral Proficiency Interview” at the Bay-Arenac ISD World Languages Mini Conference held at SVSU Feb. 4.


- **Christopher Schilling**, Charles J. Strosacker Endowed Chair of Mechanical Engineering; **David Karpovich**, H.H. Dow Endowed Chair of Chemistry; and **P. Tomasik**, University of Agriculture, Krakow, Poland, all were recently awarded a U.S. Patent for “Biodegradable Plastics” (U.S. Patent No. 8,299,172 B2; Oct. 31, 2012).


New Cardinals

- **J.J. Boehm**, director of media & community relations, and **Jennifer Boehm**, women’s head tennis coach, announced the birth of a son, **Christian Joseph Boehm** (5 lbs., 12 oz., 19 in.), Feb. 15.

- **Jenna Briggs**, director of graduate admissions, announced the birth of a daughter, **Rile Ryanne Briggs-Lind**, Jan. 29.

- **David Nichols**, assistant professor of philosophy, announced the birth of a son, **Giorgios Konstantinos Nichols** (7.13 lbs., 20 in.), Jan. 19.

- **Todd Stepsis**, assistant football coach/defensive coordinator, and **Angie Stepsis**, assistant director of admissions, announced the birth of a daughter, **Addison Jean Stepsis** (6 lbs., 9 oz., 19 in.), Feb. 16.

Condolences

- **To Karen Brown-Fackler**, associate professor of nursing, whose husband, **David L. Fackler**, passed away Feb. 17.

- **To LaCreta Clark**, associate professor of educational leadership & services, whose father, Rev. **Albert W. Rutledge Sr.**, passed away Feb. 7.


- **To Aaron Maturen**, web programmer, whose mother, **Tamera Maturen**, passed away Feb. 22.

Briefly Speaking

- Faculty and staff may present the diploma cover to graduating members of their immediate family during the May 11 commencement ceremony. Call Suzette Zimmerman at ext. 4384 to make arrangements. Also, the last day for faculty and staff to order regalia is Wednesday, April 3 from 10a.m. until 6 p.m.

Board of Control approves renovations and upgrades to Ryder Center

The Board of Control approved moving forward with plans to renovate and upgrade the 24-year-old Ryder Center, which serves as SVSU’s primary indoor athletic facility. The board took the action during their regular meeting Monday, Feb. 11.

The $20 million project will consist of two phases. In May, construction will begin on a new field house that will include a 300-meter indoor track to replace the indoor and outdoor tracks SVSU currently uses. Attached to the north side of the current Ryder Center, the addition is scheduled to be completed in April 2014. The infield of the track will have a synthetic turf surface suitable for baseball, softball, football and soccer practice purposes.

In May 2014, work will begin on an extensive renovation of the current building, which opened in 1989 and includes academic classrooms and labs in addition to athletic facilities. Notable improvements include reducing seating capacity in O’Neill Arena for basketball to 2,400 seats from the current 3,500. Potential seating for other events, such as Commencement, will increase from 4,000 seats to around 4,700 seats. This construction phase is expected to be completed by November 2014.

Beyond SVSU purposes, the Ryder Center also hosts a number of community events, as well as high school athletic contests each year, including a number of swim meets since the 2012 renovation of the Gerstacker Regional Aquatics Center, funded in part by a grant from the Midland-based Gerstacker Foundation.

The Board authorized borrowing up to $13 million to finance the project. SVSU will supply the remaining funds from existing capital reserves.

In other action, the Board:

- Approved tenure for five faculty members: **Byungil Ahn**, assistant professor of history; **Daniel Gates**, assistant professor of English; **Jeremy Knous**, assistant professor of kinesiology; **Arthur Martin**, assistant professor of biology; and **Tami Sivy**, assistant professor of chemistry.

- Reappointed Andrews Hooper Pavlik as auditors for the 2013 fiscal year.

- Accepted the 2013 strategic plan. A copy can be read online at svsu.edu/missionstatement/strategicplan2013/.

- Appointed Dave Abbs, Leola Wilson and Jerome Yantz to the nominating committee for May board elections.

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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