

Retiring history faculty leave legacy of classroom excellence

When the academic year draws to a close, 130 years of professional history will depart a university preparing to celebrate its 50th anniversary, as Bob Braddock, Eric Petersen and Tom Renna retire from the faculty. The trio of history professors have made an indelible mark for the quality of their work even more than the duration.

“The defining characteristic of these three is their commitment to undergraduate teaching,” said Donald Bachand, provost and vice president for

academic affairs. “Even in the latter part of their careers, they are still excellent role models for junior faculty. Their quality and commitment in the classroom today is what it always has been; there hasn’t been a drop off.”

Each of them has received the Landee Award, SVSU’s highest honor for teaching, as well as the Rush Distinguished Lectureship. Bachand said the trio also have made a lasting impression on their history colleagues.

“They helped create the culture of the history department that lives on



Robert Braddock



Eric Petersen



Thomas Renna

today,” he said, “recruiting and socializing junior faculty, and setting a standard that required them to teach at a high level.”

Petersen arrived first in 1969 with a Ph.D. from UCLA.

When his colleagues selected who would deliver the first Hoffmann-Willertz Lecture in 2003—named for the late Bill Hoffman and John Willertz, who are credited as the founding members of the history department at SVSU—they chose him.

Braddock followed in 1970 with a Ph.D. from Northwestern. His contributions extended outside well beyond the classroom, earning him the Ishihara Co-curricular Involvement Award. Braddock accepted appointments as assistant to the vice president for academic affairs, director of international programs, and assistant dean of the College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences; he also coached the club soccer program for 15 years.

Renna also came in 1970 with a Ph.D. from Brown. Thought to be SVSU’s most published scholar for his extensive research on medieval history, he has received SVSU’s Warrick Award for Excellence in Research and was an inaugural recipient of the Braun Fellowship. Renna also has a House Family Award for Teacher Impact to his credit.

“They have served us well,” Bachand said. “We’re going to miss them.”



Celebrating a Golden Anniversary

SVSU is planning a wide range of events and activities during this, our 50th anniversary year. In addition to events on campus, SVSU also is hosting or sponsoring a number of activities in the Great Lakes Bay Region. Additional student events and other activities for the fall semester are still being finalized. A current list of confirmed events will be posted online at svsu.edu/50. A select list follows below.

May

- Friday, May 10: Marshall Fredericks Sculpture Museum holds groundbreaking for a new sculpture garden
- Wednesday, May 29: SVSU hosts Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger III for Matrix: Midland at the Midland Center for the Arts

July

- Monday, July 1: SVSU 50th anniversary exhibition opens in the Historical Society of Saginaw County at the Castle Museum
- July 11-14: SVSU hosts the “Build a Tall Ship Kit” activity during the Tall Ship Celebration in Bay City

August

- Friday, Aug. 9: SVSU joins with PRIDE in Saginaw to host Friday Night Live

September

- Tuesday, Sept. 24: Fall Focus Lecture Series opens; series to examine the 20th Century

October

- Friday, Oct. 4: Marshall Fredericks Sculpture Museum holds “Saints, Sinners + ‘63” gala
- Saturday, Oct. 12: Homecoming to include a variety of anniversary activities
- Saturday, Oct. 19: Saginaw Choral Society performance features SVSU alumni
- Friday, Oct. 25: SVSU’s Center for Business and Economic Development hosts a regional economic summit featuring Dow Chemical CEO Andrew Liveris
- Saturday, Oct. 26: Family Weekend to include a variety of anniversary activities

November

- Saturday, Nov. 9: 50th anniversary banquet
- November 20-23: Music and Theatre departments present the musical, “The Producers”

Becky Toth

Assistant Professor of Nursing

When you ask Becky Toth why she chose pediatrics—the coursework she teaches at SVSU—she'll tell you it was all about the diapers.

In her senior year of nursing school, Toth worked at a community hospital, where she helped a lot of nursing home patients.

"That's when I decided: When I became a nurse, I wanted to change diapers by myself," she said. "With kids, the diapers are smaller. That's why I applied for pediatrics," She laughed, "and I've loved it every second since."

Which says a lot, considering she's been a pediatric nurse for 22 years.

After graduating, Toth traveled to Arizona for a three-month nursing stint, before taking a job at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, where she worked from 1992 to 2012.

While working with nursing students there, one of them told her, "You know, you're really good at this teaching stuff."

"And two months later, I was enrolled in my master's program," she said.

Toth completed her master's degree in December 2009 at Indiana Wesleyan, still working at Mott and teaching clinicals for the University of Michigan–Flint. In September 2010, she joined SVSU.

"I love it here," she said. "The students are so great—they're used to working for what they get. The attitude is so much different."

A student herself, Toth is completing her doctorate at the University of Michigan–Flint, anticipating graduation in April 2015.

(Although SVSU now has a doctorate of nursing practice, "you can't take your doctorate where you teach," she said, laughing. "My fellow faculty would also be my instructors, and that's not right.")

So, life keeps her busy. Right now, Toth is taking four classes and teaching four more at SVSU. "If it weren't for my husband, Brian, I couldn't do all of this," she said. "He cooks and cleans, does laundry—all that good stuff. He takes good care of me."

The couple has been married for 20 years, and they have a 14-year-old daughter, Dani. And beyond work and her family life, Toth also teaches Sunday school.

So, with a crowded schedule and an hourlong commute to work, Toth loves listening to audiobooks in the car—sometimes with CDs of lectures for a little extra reviewing.

It's a love for learning that drives her.

"There is nothing better for me—especially in clinicals—when you watch a student trying to figure something out and you see that lightbulb go on, where they can put it all together for their patient. That's just the best thing in the world."



Kathy Pelkki

Biology Laboratory Coordinator • March 2013

With more than 1,500 students in and out of SVSU's biology labs every week, you have to wonder: Who's the architect behind it all?

Meet Kathy Pelkki, biology lab coordinator. She oversees the troop of students who prep the laboratories—procuring microscopes, mixing solutions—and tear them down for the next.

But that's just one piece of the job. "One of the things I like about this department," Pelkki said, "is that they let me work to my full potential." For instance, Pelkki—who completed her master's in biology at the University of Michigan—realized a few years ago that the lab manuals given to non-biology majors had a problem.

"Early on, a lot of these were watered-down versions of the lab manuals for majors," she said. "They just weren't very fun. I wanted something fresh that was written from the get-go for non-science people."

So with the department's blessing, Pelkki tried writing her own manual. And today, the book's been adopted by the whole department.

"There's so much opportunity here," she said. "And that's what makes it fun."

What's even more fun, she admitted, is watching students grow. "It's also the biggest heartbreak," she said. "You get to know the students, and they're always going to leave. But it's more of a joy to

see that freshman maturing into someone who's really going to go out on their own."

With an attitude like that, it's no surprise that Pelkki has another role: teaching. In fact, for her classroom work, she has won the Mary E. Anderson Adjunct Faculty Award.

"I very much love teaching," she said. "When you're in a lab or lecture and you can generate excitement about a subject you love, you think, 'Wow, this is incredible.'"

Pelkki first joined SVSU in March 1985 as a lab technician and research assistant. "I didn't see myself as the Ph.D. running the lab; I always knew I wanted to be the worker bee.

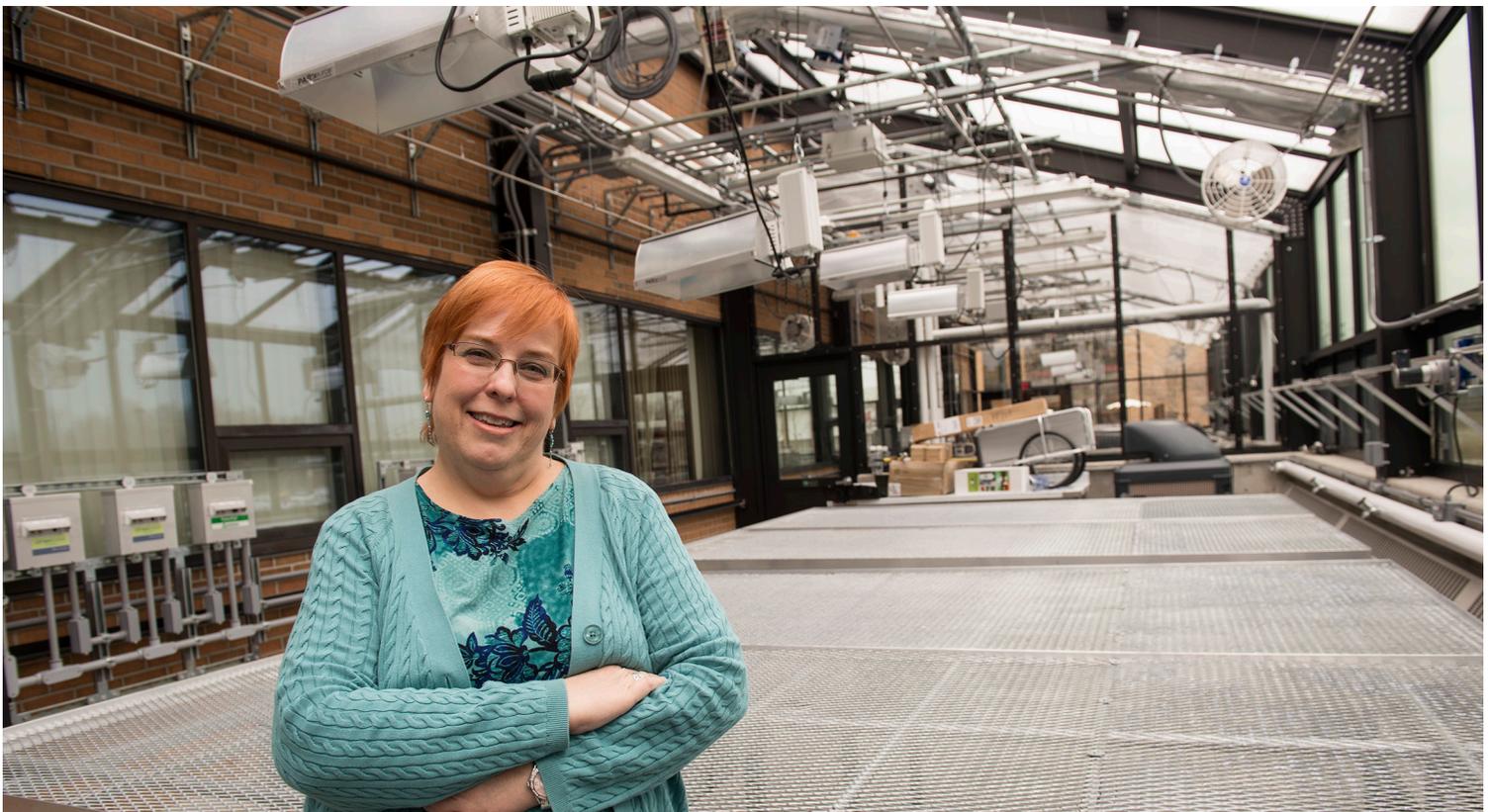
"Once I got here and learned that this job is so diverse in the work and the opportunities, and that the people I'd work with are so wonderful, I knew I'd be here a long time. And I'm glad to be here."

Since then, Pelkki has kept learning, seeking crisp ways to show students the beauty in biology.

In one course, for instance, she just gave an assignment she found in an academic journal: you give students a biology topic and ask them to create a project from their own focus of study. A music major came to her and said he'd like to write a song.

"But there's a problem," he said. "I really like hard rock."

Without hesitation, she responded, laughing, "That's not a problem at all."





In its 50th year, SVSU honors distinguished alumni

SVSU honored six of its leading graduates and one future graduate during the 2013 Alumni Celebration Friday, March 22. Traditionally, the SVSU Alumni Association has selected only one Distinguished Alumni Award recipient each year, recognizing distinguished service and accomplishment in any field of human endeavor that enhances the prestige of the university. In honor of SVSU's 50th anniversary, however, five Distinguished Alumni were recognized in 2013, one from each college. The award is the most prestigious honor SVSU bestows upon one of its graduates. In addition to the Distinguished Alumni awards, SVSU presented the Young Alumni Award and the Future Alumni Award, which honor the successes of younger graduates.

College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences

Paul Bridgewater, president and CEO of the Detroit Area Agency on Aging, B.A., 1975

College of Business & Management

Greg Grocholski, corporate auditor for The Dow Chemical Company, M.B.A, 1990

College of Education

Janet Greif, principal at Midland High School, B.A., 1994; M.Ed., 1998

College of Health & Human Services

Ellen Talbott, vice president of Patient Care Services at McLaren Medical Center, M.S.N., 1999.

College of Science, Engineering & Technology

Donald Whittington, vice president and chief information officer of Florida Crystals Corporation, B.S., 1978

Young Alumni Award

Darryn Crocker, B.S.N., 2008

Future Alumni Award

Elyse Ledy, a communication major from Perry

Professional Profile

- **David Berry**, associate professor of kinesiology, gave a presentation at the Sports Emergencies conference, March 25, at the Dow Event Center.

- **Kaustav Misra**, assistant professor of economics, had a paper titled "The Propensity to Use Non-family Managers' Incentive Compensation in Small- and Medium-size Family Firms" accepted for publication in the *Journal of Family Business Management*.

Misra, along with CBM faculty **Surender Reddy**, **Kylie Goggins** and **Hong Y. Park**, co-presented "Conflict and Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) in Family Firms: Another Perspective" at the Family Enterprise Research Conference, May 2013, in Santiago, Chile.

Also, Misra presented "The Impact of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) on Women's Entrepreneurship" (with Esra Mernili, Dianne Welsh and Hanqing Fang) at the Small Business Institute Conference, February 2013, in St. Pete Beach, Fla.

New Cardinals

- **Yu Liu**, assistant professor of management, announced the birth of a daughter, Michelle (4 lbs., 10 oz., 17.5 in.), Feb. 26.

Condolences

- To **George Eastland**, professor of chemistry, whose father-in-law, William J. Cronkhite, passed away March 10.

- To **Beth Mueller**, senior secretary, and **Cheryl Michalski**, faculty secretary, on the loss of Beth's father/Cheryl's father-in-law, Floyd Michalski, March 12.

- To **Pam Wegener**, special project coordinator, whose mother-in-law, Diane Wegener, passed away March 5.

- To **Judy Zietz**, administrative secretary, whose mother, Lillian Schrems, passed away March 14.

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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Submission Deadline:

**Noon on Wednesday before the publication date.
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