

## Retiring Dow V.P. delivers winter commencement address

David E. Kepler, executive vice president, chief sustainability officer and chief information officer at The Dow Chemical Company, gave the keynote address at commencement ceremonies last weekend.

This year, two winter ceremonies were held. Graduates from the colleges of Health & Human Services and Business & Management were recognized Friday, Dec. 12. Students from the colleges of Arts & Behavioral

Sciences; Education; and Science, Engineering & Technology walked Saturday, Dec. 13.

The graduating class of 521 students consisted of 399 who were expected to complete bachelor's degrees and 122

students expected to receive master's or education specialist degrees.

Kepler earlier this year announced he would retire after 39 years at Dow. He has been considered one of his industry's leaders in information technology deployment. Recognized for his influence in cyber security and risk management, Kepler was appointed to the U.S. National Infrastructure Advisory Council, a group that advises U.S. presidents on issues relating to the security of U.S. infrastructure sectors and their functional systems, physical assets and cyber networks.

Kepler has been responsible for environment, health and safety resources at Dow. He has served as chairman of the team that provided executive oversight for the company's sustainable performance. His responsibilities have involved leadership for Dow's Business Services Group; he also provided oversight for the company's Canadian region.

Kepler has been a member of the board of directors at Teradata Corporation, an analytical data solutions company; the Toronto-based TD Bank Group; the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and the National Safety Council. He also has served as board chairman of the MidMichigan Innovation Center, a nonprofit committed to growing Michigan small businesses.

Kepler resides in Midland with his wife, Patti.



# Rosina Hassoun

Assistant Professor of Sociology

For Rosina Hassoun, sometimes a love of anthropology takes you to your own backyard. Or a world away.

Hassoun, who joined SVSU's sociology faculty in August 2013, has several research projects in the works. The El Paso, Texas native's interest in cultural, medical and environmental anthropology — along with her family's worldly roots and her own fluency in “three-and-a-half” languages — has sent her to locations across the globe.

Her current medical anthropology research involves one of the first state-wide health surveys of Michigan's Arab-American population, designed to improve the health data for the population. She is working in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Community Health as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention while also teaming with colleagues from other institutions on the initiative. She plans to present on the subject at the 7th International Conference on Health Issues in Arab Communities in Muscat, Oman in March.

Hassoun also is developing a pilot survey involving SVSU students aimed at improving services for women refugees — largely from Middle East nations such as Iraq and Syria — seeking help at the ACCESS Community Health and Research Center in Dearborn.

She also recently submitted a grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities that would help her — along with six other academics from the U.S. and Ethiopia — tell the story of her

great uncle's role in the development of Ethiopia.

Now she hopes to learn more about her ancestor, Ibrahim Hassoun, who was commissioned by one of the planet's last emperors, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, to set the borders between Ethiopia and Somalia in the early 20th century. Rosina Hassoun's research would involve translating her great uncle's 900-page memoir and retracing his journeys across the region.

“What I hope to do is to give a missing piece of Ethiopia's history back to Ethiopia, and I hope to do some good anthropology at the same time,” she said.

By traveling through the region and studying the memoir, titled “Between the Spears and the Bayonets,” Hassoun hopes both to learn about how her relative became such a prominent player in Ethiopian history, as well as map the region's cultural changes.

“I'll be able to look at 100 years of development as we pass through those areas,” she said.

It all makes for a busy agenda that includes time for her love of teaching. This semester, she developed an e-learning game with a colleague that helps students learn some basics of statistics.

“I enjoy the challenges of teaching here,” said Hassoun, whose office décor includes a signed-and-framed portrait of students in her summer 2014 Arab Americans sociology class.

“It's very rewarding.”



# Heidi Lang

## Pre-Health Professions Advisor • December Staff Member of the Month

For a check-up on her professional importance, all Heidi Lang need do is schedule an appointment with her doctor.

That's because Lang, SVSU's pre-health professions advisor, once advised that physician when he was a college student pursuing the career he now inhabits.

"It's a true joy to welcome the incoming class each year and watch them grow, learn, and develop," said Lang, who has worked in a similar role for several higher education institutions and thousands of other students since 1995. "I'm thankful for the small part I get to play in their success, whatever that may be."

Lang's origins in her profession date back to her own undergraduate experience. She credits both the relationship with her own pre-health advisor and the satisfaction she felt as a resident assistant helping other students as influencing her own career choice.

Her approach to mentoring students includes giving them both the sort of "academic and non-academic guidance" that would steer them toward professional success. The academic guidance involves talk about class schedules and course requirements.

The other advice includes big picture conversation that could help her students decide which medical field to pursue — or whether they should pursue medicine at all. She also coordinates mock interviews between students and a panel of SVSU staff and faculty that simulate medical school interviews.

"In that way, I'm like a life coach," Lang said. "I'm helping them navigate the college world to the next step."

Lang's life experience and professional expertise stretches beyond the region.

While her family hails from Clarkston, she was "a Navy brat" who was born in Okinawa and lived overseas in locations such as Poland.

And she is president of the Central Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, an organization that includes health profession advisor peers from 12 states. The group is a wing of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, which has 1,200 members.

Lang often uses those connections across the nation to help her students. Other connections closer to home also come in handy. For instance, her physician, Dr. Scott Ross of Midland, will visit her students in the winter semester to offer them career advice.

She said that outside assistance — as well as the support she receives from SVSU colleagues who help guide her students forward — have given her a clear sense of place and purpose at the institution.

"I feel exceptionally fortunate that I have this job and opportunity to come to work each day and make a positive difference for my students," she said. "I cannot imagine myself doing anything else. I feel very blessed to be at SVSU surrounded by incredible colleagues who support me in my role."



## STEM expert and university president to keynote regional MLK event

Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, president at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and noted thought leader on STEM education, will be the keynote speaker for the Great Lakes Bay Regional Martin Luther King Jr. event at SVSU.

He will speak Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 7 p.m. in the Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts.

In addition to serving as president of UMBC since 1992, Hrabowski is a consultant on science and math education to national agencies, universities and school systems.

Recently, he was named by President Obama to chair the newly created President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

Time magazine named Hrabowski one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2012 and one of America's 10 Best College Presidents in 2008. He was awarded the Heinz Award in 2012 for

contributions to improving the "Human Condition," and holds honorary degrees from more than 20 institutions.

Born in Birmingham, Ala., Hrabowski was a child leader in the Civil Rights Movement. He completed his doctorate in higher education administration/statistics at age 24.

In addition to Hrabowski's talk, the program will include the presentation of regional scholarship awards by the Bay Area, Midland Area and Saginaw community foundations to high school seniors who have embodied Martin Luther King's ideals.

The event is free and open to the public. SVSU's partners include the Bay Area, Midland Area and Saginaw community foundations and chambers of commerce, as well as the Bridge Center for Racial Harmony and local chapter of the NAACP.

For more information, including a full list of sponsors, visit [svsu.edu/mlk](http://svsu.edu/mlk).

## Professional Profile

- **Julie Foss**, assistant professor of modern foreign languages, presented the session "Implementing Extensive Reading" at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' Annual Convention, Nov. 21-23 in San Antonio, Texas. Foss also represented the Michigan World Language Association at the ACTFL Assembly of Delegates.

- **Tim Kenyon**, lecturer of English, was the featured prose/graphic narrative writer at Millikin University's 7th annual LitFest, Nov. 7-8 in Decatur, Ill. Kenyon conducted a reading of his work, an undergraduate fiction and screenwriting workshop, and presented a craft lecture titled "The Reckoning of the Chaos."

- **Carlos Ramet**, executive assistant to the president/executive director of public affairs, published a book titled *Ken Follett and the Triumph of Suspense: A Popular Writer Transcends Genres* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014).

- **Ric Roberts**, professor of theatre, judged the participating production of the musical "She Loves Me" for the Region III Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Nov. 7 at the University of Michigan - Flint. Roberts, who is on the Region III Selection Committee, also serves as an executive board member for the region, which covers all universities and colleges in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan. He is in his final year as Region III vice-chair and will assume the role of regional chair in April.

## Condolences

- To **Denise Dedman**, whose mother, Helen Eileen Dedman, passed away Nov. 18.

- To the family of **Seth Thomas**, an SVSU student who passed away Dec. 2.

## Briefly Speaking

- The 2014-15 Faculty/Staff Directory will be delivered to campus offices by Dec. 19. Additional copies of the directory will be available after the university reopens in January following the holiday break.

## SVSU educator secures \$5K NEA Foundation grant to develop middle school Spanish language lessons

Marlena Bravender, assistant professor of educational leadership and services, received a \$5,000 grant from the NEA Foundation to research ways to integrate online virtual language simulations into Spanish foreign language lessons.



**Marlena Bravender**

She and co-applicant Virginia Martin, a Spanish teacher at Grand Blanc West Middle School in Grand Blanc, are designing and sharing lessons for middle school students. The lessons will help students understand authentic situations in which Spanish is spoken.

Topics including food, clothing, culture, common phrases and study tools will be explored. The impact of the virtual simulation will be tracked.

Bravender and Martin received \$5,000 of the \$168,000 in NEA Foundation grants recently awarded to 42 educators nationally. The NEA Foundation awards its grants to educators three times per year.

**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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