

SVSU names Wierda to lead STEM initiatives coordination

SVSU has assigned a highly respected educator to coordinate SVSU's focus on improving STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education in the region. Carolyn Wierda has been named executive director of STEM@



Carolyn Wierda "I'll be working with those involved in those programs on campus so

SVSU; in that position, she will convene those that are involved in STEM initiatives at SVSU.

we can collaborate and enhance our relationships with external partners," said Wierda, who has been serving as associate dean of the College of Education. "It's critically important for the university to take a lead in STEM because of the needed pipeline for the region's economy."

Recent exam results indicate a majority of local high school students are not considered college-ready in the STEM fields despite the growing emergence of job opportunities in related industries within the region.

Wierda also serves as chair of the Great Lakes Bay Regional

STEM@SVSU

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Alliance's education council and is one of three leaders for its STEM Impact Initiative.

She will continue in her role as co-director of the university's Gerstacker Fellowship program, a leadership development program for K-12 educators.

Prior to SVSU, Wierda was superintendent of Bay City Public Schools, a post she held for five years.

Wierda completed a bachelor's degree at Bucknell University, a master's degree at

Michigan State University, and additional graduate course work at SVSU.

In her new role, Wierda will work with STEM-gearred programs at SVSU. Those initiatives include the following:

- The Dow Corning Foundation/SVSU Community STEM Partnership, which provides professional development for K-12 STEM teachers.
- The Dow Science and Sustainability Education Center, a collaboration with Dow Chemical Co. to support increased educational outreach and research opportunities at SVSU.
- The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow STEM Scholar Network, a program promoting STEM-related research programs for middle school, high school and SVSU students.
- The STEM Program Manager office, which will connect the Dow Chemical Co. STEM ambassadors to area classroom teachers and students.
- The Consumers Energy Engineering Talent Development Program, which develops a pipeline of electrical engineers to meet the region's energy industry needs.
- The SVSU Regional Mathematics and Science Center, which provides leadership, curriculum support, professional development and student services to educators in local school districts.

Wierda's new appointment is effective immediately.

Douglas selected as dean of College of Education

Despite the challenges faced in education, Craig Douglas is optimistic about the profession as he prepares to become the next College of Education dean on July 1.

"Public education has taken many shots across the bow in recent years," said Douglas, currently serving as director of School and University Partnerships. "I think there's hope on the horizon though, and I want to communicate that to our students.

"Vacancies, expansions, retirements: I think you'll see



Craig Douglas

that," he said. "You may even see an increased level of interest in funding for programs from the state. For faculty, I think

there will be huge needs for school leaders."

Douglas spent 39 years as a teacher or administrator at the K-12 level, including nearly 18 years as superintendent of nearby Carrollton Public Schools, where he retired

in 2013. He also served as superintendent at Oscoda Area Schools from 1991 to 1995.

Douglas, who joined SVSU in July 2014, will replace Mary Harmon as the College of Education dean. Harmon, who began in that role in July 2013, plans to return to the faculty.

Douglas received a Ph.D. in educational leadership from Michigan State University in 1997. He also earned bachelor's, master's and educational specialist degrees from Central Michigan University.

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THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY IS INVITED TO ATTEND. A RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW THE ADDRESS.

Denise Berry

Director of Military Student Affairs and Special Assistant to the Associate Provost/Dean of Students • February Staff Member of the Month

At a young age, Denise Berry knew where she belonged.

The daughter of a sergeant first class in the Massachusetts National Guard, Berry as a child often would accompany her father to the armory in her native Boston. The experience instilled in her a desire to serve her country.

“I wanted to be part of something greater than myself,” she said.

So she earned a commission in the U.S. Army, serving out her career as an engineer officer before retiring with the rank of major in 2011. Berry still follows that calling today while serving as SVSU’s military student affairs director.

It was a job and an office she inhabited first in May 2013, when SVSU leadership decided to provide specific services to military service members, veterans and the dependents of service members and veterans. Berry likens her office to a “one-stop shop” where military-affiliated students can go for admissions, advising and orientation, to name just a few of the services.

“We help with just about everything they need. If my team can’t provide a solution, we find the person on campus that can,” Berry said.

She oversaw the operation from a desk inside Student Affairs until Military Student Affairs moved into its own office in 121 Curtiss Hall in January 2014. The military student lounge was formally opened

last Veterans Day. There, military-affiliated students show up to take advantage of the services while also studying and socializing with peers.

At SVSU, 379 students are currently eligible to take advantage of the office’s services, and in the fall semester, more than 600 visits were logged. Berry believes that number can be increased. She spends some of her time reaching out to eligible students who have not yet stepped into the office.

Berry said she’s very happy in her position — a role that found her in an almost random fashion.

When Berry retired from the military, “it was the first time in my adult life when I could decide where I wanted to live. My husband was willing to be adventurous.”

With no house and no job yet secured, three years ago they decided to move to Saginaw, where her brother — David Berry, professor of kinesiology — taught at SVSU.

Within a few weeks, she earned a job as a resident director at SVSU, and a year and a half later, the Military Student Affairs position.

“It’s been an overwhelming experience,” she said of her latest job. “It’s more than I could have hoped for and I’m very thankful for that.”



Keleen Marciniak

Assistant Director of Clinical Experiences • February Staff Member of the Month

Don't think Keleen Marciniak is odd because she's still catching up on "Seinfeld." Her hard work at SVSU is to blame for that.

Marciniak was pursuing her master's degree in business administration at SVSU in the 1990s when the hit comedy aired episodes on Thursday nights — the same nights Marciniak typically attended classes. Occasionally, Marciniak will see a re-run on television, and immediately call one of her former classmates at the time, Kristen Gregory, special assistant to the provost.

"I'll ask her, 'Did you see this one yet?'" Marciniak said.

Marciniak's dedication to SVSU — whether as student or staff member — stretches back further than the 1990s and involved more than sacrificing the experience of watching "Seinfeld." Her affiliation with the university dates back to 1983. She's met some of the institution's most influential figures and witnessed some of the school's most historic moments. "I have a lot of great memories here at SVSU," she said.

For the last dozen years, her role has involved data management for the College of Education.

"Everyone is requiring us to keep data, not just for the students, but also the teachers," she said. "We are required by the federal and state [governments] to keep records of all that, and pull out evidence that we're doing what we say we're doing."

Marciniak is a believer in her college's mission, its results and its future.

"When we moved here, we were bigger and our numbers were stronger," she said of the College of Education's move to Gilbertson Hall in 2003.

"Now we are smaller and more of a close-knit group. I have faith — we still need teachers — so our numbers will go up again at some point. We are turning out some great teachers for the state of Michigan."

Marciniak knows the ebbs and flows of higher education programs. At one time or another, she has worked alongside every academic school other than the College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences. Last summer, though, her office was moved from the first floor to the second floor, where some College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences faculty are located.

Marciniak doesn't keep herself secluded in Gilbertson Hall. She often ventures to the other buildings during lunch hours to meet with the many colleagues she once worked alongside.

"It's always nice to get out and see people you haven't seen in a while," she said. "It's part of what makes this place great. I've made a great network of friends."



Vetta Vratulis

Assistant Professor of Teacher Education

Vetta Vratulis has a teaching résumé that includes stints in South Africa, France, Canada, and now, the United States.

That worldly experience exposed her to students with a blend of backgrounds and kept her involved in curricula of all kinds.

Still, the joy she felt for teaching continued to come from the same source.

“Teaching has always been part of my spirit,” she said. “I’ve had a very wide, odd spectrum of teaching — and I love it.”

That spirit now resides at SVSU, where the assistant professor of teacher education has worked since 2010. The Greek Canadian from Vancouver was one month removed from earning her doctorate degree from The University of British Columbia when she spotted the job opening she eventually inhabited.

“Honestly, it was the field experience opportunities,” Vratulis said of what most attracted her to SVSU. “It’s important that as students are learning their content they can have that field experience.”

She has taken advantage of that opportunity. Vratulis is overseeing several research projects that team her graduate students with their K-12 counterparts in school districts across the region. Her initiatives also involve higher education institutions from across the world.

Her specialty is language and literacy learning, and many of her

studies explore strategies for how best to communicate language and literacy learning in the classroom. Her research largely tests language and literacy learning strategies, using mediums ranging from graphic novels to stop motion animation.

The work has her “knee deep in charts and numbers” as she prepares — among other things — to turn her findings into academic conference-ready presentation papers, as well as a book scheduled for release in September 2016.

The research includes endeavors she began during her Ph.D. studies as well as research started since arriving at SVSU.

Her work with words academically doesn’t prevent her from enjoying language on a leisurely level. Vratulis is an avid reader, one of her favorite books being C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*.

She makes room for recreational time in other arenas by attending symphonies, watching theater productions, or looking for new places to hike or ski. She’s grown fond of Saginaw in part because of its proximity to venues offering such entertainment.

She calls accepting her job at SVSU “the best decision ever.”

“It’s one of those hidden gems,” Vratulis said of the university. “I was told I would be supported in my research interests and we would have a voice in a program that would have a high impact. I’m really fortunate to be here.”



Faculty share ideas during Center for Academic Innovation symposium

About 100 faculty members gathered for the SVSU Center for Academic Innovation's inaugural teaching symposium Wednesday, Feb. 18, when colleagues shared ideas for improving their academic approach.

"It was a really nice way to introduce the new center," said Martin Arford, an associate professor of geography who attended the event. "It was a great way to get people together and start a conversation on how we can improve student outcomes. I'm looking forward to more conversations."

More conversations — as well as more symposiums —

are planned for the Center for Academic Innovation, said Poonam Kumar, the center's director.

The center was created to improve and create innovative practices promoting pedagogical excellence. Grant opportunities, year-round workshop sessions as well as annual symposiums — beginning with the Feb. 18 event — will serve that purpose, she said.

"We want to make sure we give faculty the chance to showcase all the wonderful work they've been doing," Kumar said.

The symposium featured keynote speaker Brian Coppola, the Arthur F. Thurnau professor

CENTER FOR ACADEMIC INNOVATION

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of chemistry at the University of Michigan and a recognized expert in effective instruction practices.

Among the SVSU faculty members who presented during the symposium were Christopher Nakamura, assistant professor of physics, and Marlena Bravender, assistant professor of teacher education.

Nakamura shared his practice of using in-class questioning and online quizzes to build

a feedback loop promoting interaction with his students. Bravender, meanwhile, spoke about the benefits of creating online games for students in an effort to elevate classroom material.

Both say the faculty interaction experienced at the symposium was invaluable.

"This is the kind of thing we want to be doing," Nakamura said. "It's important to provide institutionalized settings where people can go to get — or provide — resources and talk to each other about the professional practice."

Bravender said the presence of faculty in diverse disciplines added to the educational experience.

"It was really valuable for faculty to be able to listen to someone outside of their department, and hear what they are doing," Bravender said. "You're getting great ideas — the best practices of other teachers — that you can then take to your class. This is a perfect place to share ideas."

Videos of the symposium will be available on the center's website at svsu.edu/cai.

The website also provides details about the Center for Academic Innovation grants.

The deadline to apply for the estimated six grants — worth up to \$5,500 each — is Monday, March 16. Informational sessions about the grants are Tuesday, Feb. 24, from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.; and Wednesday, Feb. 25, from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., both in SE 213.



Brian Coppola gave the keynote address at the symposium.



Marlena Bravender, above, and Christopher Nakamura presented at the symposium.



Professional Profile

- **Martin Arford**, associate professor of geography, was presented the Osprey Award for Outstanding Conservation Volunteers by the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy for the work at the Frankenlust Township Park and the invasive species removal that he coordinated with the help of SVSU student volunteers.
- **James Bowers**, assistant professor of criminal justice, and **Poonam Kumar**, director of online/hybrid learning, co-authored an article titled “Students’ Perceptions of Teaching and Social Presence: A Comparative Analysis of Face-to-Face and Online Learning Environments” that was accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Webbased Learning and Teaching Technologies*, 10(1), 2845.
- **Ann Coburn Collins**, director of academic programs support, recently attended the Innovations for Adjunct Faculty Support conference in Phoenix, Ariz., where she gave three presentations: “Creating an Inclusive Orientation Process”; “Developing Adjunct Faculty for Improved Student Success”; and “Developing and Resourcing an Adjunct Faculty Support Center.”
- **Danilo Sirias**, professor of management, provided training for 112 math teachers on his Problem Solving Maps methodology in Manila, Philippines. He was sponsored by Theory of Constraints for Education and hosted by the Rotary Club of Makati Central. More than 1,000 Philippine teachers have been trained on this methodology.
- **Marilyn Skrocki**, associate professor of health sciences, and **Poonam Kumar**, director of online/hybrid learning, gave an invited session titled “Strategies to Support Student Retention in Online Courses” at the Transforming the Teaching & Learning Environment: the 2014 PASSHE virtual conference, organized by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.
- **Stephen Taber**, professor of biology, had a manuscript titled “The Previously Unknown Female of the Fungus Gnat genus Paratinia Mik (Diptera: Mycetophilidae) with Notes on Nearctic Males” accepted for publication in *Southwestern Entomologist* magazine.
- **Bob Tuttle**, professor of mechanical engineering, was selected by the American Foundry Society to receive its 2015 Applied Research Award for his “Ultrasonic Testing Gage R & R Study.” Tuttle’s research involves the ultrasonic testing of steel castings and has helped make advancements in testing standards. The project’s goal was to measure the repeatability and reproducibility of Xray and ultrasonic testing readings for castings, and to compare the results. This information is now being used in participating foundries as a way to work on permitting ultrasonic testing, as opposed to Xray standards.
- **Gardner Umbarger**, associate professor of teacher education, presented at the 16th International Conference for the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities-CEC in Clearwater Beach, Fla., in January. The topic of his presentation was “The Ethics of School Immunization Exemption Laws.”
- **Scott Youngstedt**, professor of anthropology, presented a paper titled “Water Vendors, Gender, and Islam in Niamey, Niger” at the 113th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association

Author and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist

Isabel Wilkerson

will speak at SVSU

at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 25,

in the Malcolm Field Theatre for the Performing Arts. Wilkerson’s talk is part of Black History Month events at SVSU; it is free and open to the public.

Wilkerson is author of the *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which tells the story of three black citizens who left the southern United States in search of a better life in the north. Immediately following her presentation, Wilkerson will sign copies of her book.

in Washington, D.C., in December. The paper was co-authored by **Sara Beth Keough**, associate professor of geography.

Also, Youngstedt’s book, *Surviving with Dignity: Hausa Communities of Niamey, Niger* (Lexington Press 2013), recently was given a review in *African Studies Review*. Paul Stoller (West Chester University), a leading anthropologist and expert on Niger and West Africa, was the author of the review.

Condolences

- To **Nick Badalamenti**, electrician/maintenance foreman, whose wife, Cheryl Ann Badalamenti, passed away Feb. 12.
- To **Joan Garant**, administrative secretary, whose father-in-law, James William Garant, passed away Jan. 19.
- To **Mike O’Hearn**, interim assistant athletic director of athletic facilities and events, and **Heather O’Hearn**, events coordinator, whose father/father-in-law, Leo O’Hearn, passed away Feb. 15.

Briefly Speaking

- The times for the 2015 All-University Awards Banquet on Friday, April 10, have been changed to: Reception at 5 p.m.; Dinner at 6 p.m. (Doors open at 5:30 p.m.); and Awards Program at 7 p.m.
- The campus community is invited to the dedication of the “Diane Boehm Writing Center” at 1 p.m., Friday, April 17, in the Roberta Allen Reading Room. A reception will immediately follow the program.

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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Please send items by email to: jjboehm@svsu.edu.**