

## SVSU professor receives grant for book on intersection of science and religion

Jeffrey Koperski, professor of philosophy, has received nearly \$90,000 from the John Templeton Foundation to fund his book project focused on science and religion.

Koperski describes the forthcoming book, "Laws, Determinism, and Divine Action," as a way to discuss issues from both science and religion.

"A lot of what I do is at the intersection of science and religion," he said.

"Theologians and philosophers of religion

sometimes appeal to science, especially physics, but that is not their training."

Other times, there are scientists interested in matters of religion, but they don't have training in religion or theology, Koperski explained.

"A lot of the fights that you see in the context of science and religion are actually matters of philosophy and the philosophy of science, which neither scientists nor theologians have expertise in," he said.

"I am trying to straighten out

what I think are misperceptions and misapplications of matters of science and physics as they apply to certain matters of religion."

His expertise in two very different disciplines aided his interest in the research. Koperski has a Ph.D. in philosophy from Ohio State University, as well as a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Dayton.

"Philosophy is a big field. My area of specialization is a philosophy of science,



Jeffrey Koperski

## SVSU Board Chair to Deliver Address at Commencement

The executive director of The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation will deliver the keynote address to graduates during commencement exercises.

Jenée Velasquez, who also serves as chair of SVSU's Board of Control, will speak at both ceremonies: Friday, Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 15 at 11 a.m. in O'Neill Arena of the Ryder Center.

The graduating class totals 623 individuals expected to complete degree requirements, including 553 graduating students who plan to don regalia and march in their respective ceremonies.

Commencement exercises for graduates in the colleges of Business & Management, and Health & Human Services will be held Friday evening. Students completing degrees in the colleges of Arts & Behavioral Sciences; Education; and Science, Engineering & Technology will take part in the ceremony scheduled for Saturday morning.

Velasquez has served as executive director for the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation since 2005. Prior to appointment, she served Midland County's economic development corporation in two capacities: first as manager of economic development services and then as its chief executive officer.

Velasquez has maintained strong ties to the community. Beyond her board service at SVSU, she served as campaign co-chair for SVSU's *Talent. Opportunity. Promise.* private fundraising campaign, which raised \$28 million, including a



Jenée L. Velasquez

\$5 million gift from the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation to create the STEM Scholars Network, which provides funding to support SVSU student and faculty research, as well as outreach efforts.

In addition, Velasquez serves as a board member of the Michigan Non-Profit Association, MidMichigan Health, Michigan Municipal League Foundation, Chemical Bank Advisory, and many others.

In 2018, she was inducted into Junior Achievement of North Central Michigan's Hall of Fame. In 2016, she was named by *Crain's Detroit Business* to its 100 Most Influential Women in Michigan. In 2013, she received the YWCA Women of Achievement Award for Community Leadership, and in 2012, she received the Great Women of the Great Lakes Bay Region Award and Margaret Ann "Ranny" Riecker Meritorious Service Award.

Velasquez completed a bachelor's degree in business administration from Kansas State University and a master's degree in business administration from Michigan State University. She also completed an executive education course at Harvard University's John. F. Kennedy School of Government.

so I've been able to use my engineering degree to understand issues in science that some philosophers might be intimidated by," Koperski said.

"I would not be able to do philosophy of science as well, especially philosophy of physics, if I didn't know about differential equations that I learned as an engineer."

The John Templeton Foundation typically funds projects on matters of science and religion. They awarded Koperski a \$89,787 grant.

"They're not dictating any particular conclusion. They will support grants that don't necessarily agree with what their board thinks, and they do support a lot of proposals, but usually not books. Mine is kind of unusual in that they would give a grant to one person and the main project is a book," Koperski said.

"I feel very fortunate that they chose this one."

Koperski joined the SVSU philosophy faculty in 1997. He has previously authored or co-authored at least 15 scholarly articles that have appeared in academic journals or books.

# Christine Noller

## *Assistant Professor of Health Sciences*

For Christine Noller, great expectations were met with great demand when she saw the fall enrollment numbers for the inaugural cohort of the Master of Public Health program.

"The response was overwhelming," said Noller, an assistant professor of health sciences who helped create the public health program she now coordinates. "We were planning for 25 students originally — 50 enrolled."

Noller and her colleagues spent about three years collecting information and laying the groundwork for the new academic program that the SVSU Board of Control approved in May. An undergraduate public health degree program was greenlit in tandem with its graduate companion.

Noller, a former attorney who worked in the health care sector before joining SVSU in 2015, said the high enrollment was the result of community demand as well as good networking.

In public health, the focus is on health promotion as well as disease and injury prevention, in contrast to the medical model of care which focuses more on diagnosing and treating ailments after they occur. The national opioid epidemic, Flint water crisis, the implementation of Affordable Care Act policies, and the impacts both of climate change and infectious diseases all have contributed to a rising demand for public health-trained professionals in all types of industries. Public health professionals are employed as health educators, epidemiologists, nutrition

consultants, environmental specialists, community health analysts, research specialists, public health policymakers and administrators. Graduates are prepared for careers in a variety of organizations.

For the MPH program, Noller tapped into a valuable resource to recruit the first cohort. Jim Dwyer, executive director of Alumni Relations, helped her recruit potential students for the program in part by using the social media network largely marketed to alumni, SVSU Connect.

"We saw a lot of alumni express interest — and from very diverse backgrounds," she said. "There were recent graduates but also individuals who have been out of school now for three to five years, all interested in pursuing a new career path."

While the fall 2018 semester offered introductory courses to the programs' first enrollees, those students will receive more specific training as they advance through the curriculum. Students will ultimately complete fieldwork placements that will connect students with community partners. Next semester, for instance, students will begin grant and proposal writing for local public health partners.

"A week doesn't go by where one of us hasn't identified a new opportunity for students in public health," she said. "There's a real need for this."



# Brooke Murray

## *Catering & Concessions Manager • November Staff Member of the Month*

Brooke Murray speaks highly of the love she has for her job, her student employees and SVSU. She puts forth that care into every event that her catering and concessions office hosts.

As the catering and concessions manager, she is in charge of both the catering for events held on campus and the concessions sold during athletic events. Murray's compassionate attitude and work ethic prepares her for these various events.

"I consider myself kind of like a professional party-crasher," she said. "I am the eyes and ears of the parties that happen. I make sure that people get what they need before they even know they need it.

"With concessions, it's more about keeping up with that same game day energy. It's a pretty cool juxtaposition of the two jobs. Sometimes I'm handling someone's dream wedding day, and sometimes it's game day with hot dogs and brats."

Whether they are providing concessions for football games or catering high school proms and wedding days, Murray and her staff show their Cardinal pride by demonstrating her personal motto that she tells to all of her student employees.

"I always tell them, 'I want you to think of everyone you're taking care of like your grandma.' How would you want your grandma to be treated?" Murray said.

Murray puts her heart into everything she does, including going out of her way to make her customers' days better.

"For me, it's really important to be in a position where I can help people," she said. "I try to do little behind-the-scenes things that hopefully no one realizes is being done to help someone have a better day."

Not only does she give all of her customers the best possible experience at their events, she always wants to make sure that her student employees feel at home as well.

"I love my students more than anything," she said. "Sometimes I am like their surrogate sister figure or mother figure. It is really important for me to make sure that they are comfortable, happy and content."

When speaking about what SVSU means to her, Murray's excitement and love for the university shines brightly.

"I think that we're home. We're home to the people who have parties, and we're home for our students," she said. "I really like to get students as freshmen and sophomores and watch them grow and graduate and move on.

"We form a really big family, and I think that's more than just in my department, that's university wide."





A new group of K-12 education leaders committed to professional growth are participants in the SVSU Gerstacker Fellowship program for 2018-19. As part of the initiative, 11 teachers, principals, and program administrators from across Michigan will receive concentrated leadership training over a one-year period. The experience will include an international trip to Finland and Germany in March.

In the photo in the front row from left are: Tiela Schurman, Kymberli Wregglesworth, Marilyn Benn, Nicole Rethman, Jill Waliczek and Kathy Dardas. Back row from left: Jake Voisine, Lori Lee, Ann Sheffer, Neil Deluca and Kevin Champagne.

## Professional Profile

- **Barb Cohen**, senior ESL specialist, and **Melody Curry**, ESL specialist, presented “Developing a Course Pack as a Replacement for Traditional ESL Textbooks” at the MITESOL conference Oct. 26 at Eastern Michigan University. Also, Cohen presented “What the Flip? Using Flipped Classroom Techniques to Reach All Learners” at the same conference.
- **Amy Cook**, assistant director of the English Language Program, presented “Single-Point Rubrics: Combing the Best of Analytic and Holistic Rubrics” at the regional Classroom Assessment for Language Teaching conference Oct. 27 in Athens, Ohio.
- **Roberto Garcia**, director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, received the Adelante Education Award by the nonprofit La Union Civica Mexicana at the 9th Annual Adelante Awards Nov. 3. The Adelante Awards — “adelante” meaning “forward” in Spanish — celebrate contributions made by Hispanic individuals in the Great Lakes Bay Region.
- **Eric Gardner**, professor of English, presented a paper titled “Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s Civil War and Militant Intersectionality” at the triennial conference of the Society for the Study of American Women Writers Nov. 7-11 in Denver. Gardner was also named to a three-year term on the Society’s advisory board.
- **Mark Giesler**, professor of social work, had a paper titled “The Collaboration Between Homeless Shelters and Public Libraries in Addressing Homelessness: A Multiple Case Study” accepted for publication in the *Journal of Library Administration*.
- **Vanessa Brooks Herd** and **Catherine Macomber**, professor and associate professor, respectively, of social work, have joined the board of the nonprofit Saginaw Collaborative Inc., which was established by Rev. Jim Williams and other community leaders to turn the Warren Avenue Presbyterian Church building in downtown Saginaw into a space for various community organizations and other nonprofits. Brooks Herd will serve as vice chair and Macomber as secretary.
- **Susan Hillman**, professor of teacher education, co-authored an article titled “Exploring Mathematics Teacher Educator Questioning as a Relational Practice: Acknowledging Imbalances” that has been published in *Studying Teacher Education*. Hillman’s research group included Signe E. Kastberg from Purdue University and Alyson E. Lischka from Middle Tennessee State University.
- **Jeannine Lorenger**, senior ESL specialist, presented “Designing a Speaking Placement Test” at a conference held by the Michigan Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Oct. 27 in Ypsilanti.

- **Jason Pagano**, associate professor of chemistry, presented at the NASA/Jet Propulsion Laboratory-California Institute of Technology to the Origins and Habitability Laboratory in Pasadena, California, Oct. 29. The topic of his talk was “Experimental approaches to the synthesis of macroscopic silica tubes.”
- **Hong Y. Park**, **Kaustav Misra** and **Kylie Jaber**, economics faculty, and **Surender Reddy**, professor of management, collaborated on a paper titled “Family Firms’ Innovation Drivers and Performance: A Dynamic Capabilities Approach,” which was published in the *Journal of Family Business Management*. The research was funded by an SVSU Family Business Research Grant.

## Condolences

- To **James Maher**, executive director of Information Technology Services, whose mother-in-law, Betty Headrick, passed away Nov. 13.
- To **Connie Schweitzer**, director of Business Services, whose mother, Julia Evelyn (Jezowski) Gwizdala, passed away Oct. 30.

## Briefly Speaking

- Governor Rick Snyder appointed **Lindsay Eggers** of Linwood to the Saginaw Valley State University Board of Control Friday, Oct. 26. She replaces Luis Canales, who resigned from the Board over the summer, due to relocating out of state. Eggers is the president and chief operating officer for Stevens Worldwide Van Lines in Saginaw. She completed a bachelor’s degree in business at the University of Colorado and an M.B.A. at the University of Michigan. She serves as a board member for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the READ Association of Saginaw, the Bay Area Community Foundation Women’s Philanthropy Circle and on the Chemical Bank Advisory Board. The remainder of her eight-year term with the SVSU board expires July 21, 2025.

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