

## SVSU one of eight institutions to participate in HLC Student Success Academy

SVSU remains committed to student success via an exclusive program offered by one of the nation's leading higher education accreditors.

SVSU was selected as one of eight institutions nationally to participate in the Higher Learning Commission's Student Success Academy, a three-year initiative that will connect university staff and faculty with industry experts and resources aimed at impacting student success.

"Everyone on our campus has a role in student success; it's at the core of everything we do at SVSU," said Deborah Huntley, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

"Participation in the Student Success Academy is a way

### A committee of faculty and staff members participated in the academy:

- **Jenna Briggs**, senior director of Advanced Studies and International Student Services
- **Sidney Childs**, associate provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students
- **Rachel Florence-Spaetzel**, director of orientation programs
- **Dawn Hinton**, professor of sociology
- **Poonam Kumar**, director of the Center for Academic Innovation and Online Learning
- **Josh Ode**, associate provost
- **Erik Trump**, professor of political science
- **Nick Wagner**, executive director of institutional effectiveness

to systematically assess our initiatives and to enhance the services and supports that we provide to our students from their first engagement with the university through their post-graduation success. This benefits our students, it benefits our university, and it benefits all the communities SVSU serves."

The Student Success Academy will pair SVSU

representatives with higher education scholars. Together, they will examine the university's existing programs affecting student success and later identify opportunities to implement additional initiatives to impact outcomes. The data-based analysis will involve examining the student population, how SVSU policies and practices impact student outcomes, and what kind of

actions may generate more success.

The three-year program kicked off when SVSU representatives and their Student Success Academy peer institutions met for a roundtable conference Oct. 10-11 in St. Charles, Illinois, just outside Chicago.

The gathering included Higher Learning Commission staff and members — including renowned experts in higher education-related issues — providing an overview of the academy objectives.

The conference introduced attendees to the year-by-year goals of the academy. The first-year goal involves reviewing SVSU student data and identifying gaps that exist in the student success initiatives at the university.

The second-year goal includes identifying opportunities for closing those gaps. The goal for the final year involves designing an action plan to eliminate those gaps.

The conference also provided national data points — relating to topics such as rates of student retention and course completion — aimed at helping academy members measure their respective universities against peer institutions.

The Higher Learning Commission accredits SVSU. The university most recently received a 10-year reaccreditation from the agency in June 2014.

## For empowering peers, SVSU student named statewide "Tutor of the Year"

Aranya "Ron" Biswas, an economics major from Dhaka, Bangladesh, recently was selected as the recipient of the Michigan Tutorial Association "Tutor of the Year" award.

Biswas has served as a tutor at SVSU's Center for Academic Achievement for three years. There, he helps students enrolled in accounting, economics and statistics courses.

"I wanted to be a tutor to improve my skill as an effective communicator as well as to build my interpersonal skills," Biswas said.

Elaine Hunyadi, director of Social Sciences & Business Tutoring Services in the center, nominated Biswas in part because of his leadership during tutor training meetings, she said. With the help of faculty and fellow student-tutors specializing in economics, Biswas devised and shared specific strategies for tutoring an especially-challenging economics course.

"His outreach to faculty in the economics department helped us to create an online learning space for all of our tutors who tutor this course, which we have now been using successfully for over two years," Hunyadi said.

Biswas also takes the time to connect and mentor less-experienced tutors at the Center for Academic Achievement, Hunyadi said.

"His calm and patient persona draws people



**Aranya "Ron" Biswas recognized as "Tutor of the Year" by Michigan Tutorial Association.**

to him," she said. "They openly seek his advice and expertise."

With plans to attend graduate school to obtain a Ph.D. in either economics or data sciences, Biswas said serving as a tutor helped him gain skills that are useful when pursuing such academic degrees.

"Tutoring is a great résumé builder for someone who wants to go to grad school and potentially would search for teaching assistantships," he said.

Biswas will be recognized Friday, Nov. 1 at Michigan State University during the annual Michigan Tutorial Association conference. He will receive \$500 and a plaque.

# Tommy Wedge

*Assistant Professor of Theatre*

Never one to back down from a theatrical challenge, Tommy Wedge will trade musicals for murders on stage this spring when he directs SVSU's production of "Macbeth."

The assistant professor of theatre will take on the dark William Shakespeare tragedy just months after directing an ambitious-in-scale production of "Mamma Mia!"

Produced by the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance, the beloved musical-comedy featuring ABBA's disco-era hits was a massive undertaking that involved multiple sets and a huge cast of 38 actors during its September-to-October run.

Wedge said he's excited to bring stage combat to SVSU theatre. He described his version of "Macbeth" as "'Braveheart' meets 'Game of Thrones' meets 'Vikings.'"

"It's going to be a complete tonal shift for me," he said of moving from "Mamma Mia!" to "Macbeth," which is set for production in April.

"While directing 'Mamma Mia!,' I'd get questions about 'Macbeth,' but my mind was still on sequins and disco balls. Now I'm switching to blood and broadswords."

For the South Dakota native, "Mamma Mia!" was more than a musical performance. It was an exercise in the power of community. The effort involved collaboration between three theaters from three communities: Bay City Players, the Midland Center for the Arts, and Pit & Balcony in Saginaw.

"We have been on this path of opening doors between the three theaters for a while, and that led us to where we are today," Wedge said.

A good chunk of the talent he showcased in "Mamma Mia!" had SVSU ties. Seventeen alumni and current Cardinals were involved. That lineup included nine alumni, five students and three educators serving in both on- and off-stage roles.

Holly Booth, who portrayed the lead role of Donna, is an alumna. The Midland County Educational Service Agency teacher who received a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education at SVSU in 1997 as well as learning disabilities and emotional impairment education endorsements from the university.

SVSU students also were critical to "Mamma Mia!" For instance, Melanie Frasca, a theatre major from Waterford, served as stage manager. That was no small task for the dynamic, fast-moving musical with a large cast performing on multiple stages, Wedge said.

"In class, we talk about how the university is part of the community," he said. "It's thrilling to see students experience that in real time. They see the class work we do on campus and then can turn around and be that stage manager in our show while working with alumni who graduated from our program."



# Megan Will

## *Aquatic Manager • October Staff Member of the Month*

Swimming is second nature for Megan Will.

SVSU's aquatic manager has spent her entire life with a pool nearby, whether it was the 8-foot-deep in-ground model at her childhood home or the Olympic-sized giant she now oversees.

"Swimming has always been something that felt natural for me," she said.

Growing up in Saginaw, the neighborhood kids often gravitated toward her family's 32-by-16-foot pool in the summer. The sounds of family and friends jumping from the diving board and splashing into the water was common, especially on the year's hottest days.

"Our house was the place for everyone in the neighborhood to hang out because of that pool," Will said.

As a student at North Intermediate School in the mid-1980s, Will began to swim competitively. She was a regular in the breaststroke and butterfly contests, extending through her time attending Arthur Hill High School.

Around that same age, she became certified by the local American Red Cross as a lifeguard and water safety instructor. By her sophomore year of high school, she began teaching swimming lessons across the region.

After graduating from Central Michigan University, she joined the local American Red Cross office, where she served as its health and safety director from 1998-2003. In that role, she oversaw programs including training in swimming, CPR and First Aid use.

Will was first hired at SVSU as an adjunct faculty member in the Kinesiology Department in 2003, when she began teaching swimming and lifeguard lessons.

While she continues to teach classes, Will's role expanded exponentially when she was hired as SVSU's aquatic manager in 2009.

The responsibility included managing operations the Gerstacker Regional Aquatic Center, where the Olympic-sized pool is the only one in the Great Lakes Bay Region.

"We are unique to the area in that respect," she said of the 50-meter pool. "Our Aquatic Center is an impressive place."

It became even more impressive in 2011, when a major renovation effort added a portable bulkhead, new starting blocks and expanded lighting that allowed the university to host competitions for the first time in about 15 years.

This academic year, 27 swim meets — largely high school teams — are scheduled to compete in the facility, including home contests for the SVSU swimming & diving programs established in 2014.

Managing operations for the huge facility is a large feat for Will. Still, she manages to find opportunities while at work to dive into an environment that makes her feel at home.

"I don't get in the pool as much as I'd like to, but when I can, I like to swim laps," she said.



## Professional Profile

• **LaCreta Clark**, professor of educational leadership & services, chaired the International Education Forum at the World Education Day Assembly 2019, at the Dalian International Conference Center, in Dalian, China, Sept. 26-30, where she also presented "S.M.I.L.E. — Supporting Models of International Learning Experiences." This presentation was focused on Clark's three years of traveling with students to Kittur, India, Rani Channamma Residential Sanik School for Girls.

Also, Clark presented "Culturally Competent Educational Leaders: What's in Your Cultural Backpack?" at the Bay Arenac Intermediate School District Professional Development Conference, Oct. 10 at Standish Sterling Community High School.

• **Sara Beth Keough**, professor of geography, and **Scott M. Youngstedt**, professor of anthropology, published a book titled *Water, Life, and Profit: Fluid Economies and Cultures of Niamey, Niger* (Berghahn Books). The book offers a holistic analysis of the people, economies, cultural symbolism and material culture involved in the management, production, distribution and consumption of drinking water in the urban context of Niamey, Niger.

• **Sandun Kuruppu**, assistant professor of electrical engineering, published two papers at the IEEE UEMCON 2019 conference at Columbia University in New York. "Clock Variation Impact on Digital Control System Performance" was co-authored by SVSU electrical engineering alumnus Alexander Shibilski and won the Best Paper Award at the conference. The second paper, titled "Stability of Current Control Drives with Delay in Feedback Path," was co-authored by SVSU electrical engineering students Amina Shrestha and Rhishav Mahaju.

• **Melojeane Zawilinski**, adjunct English instructor, presented "Achieving Nexus Between Old and New Knowledge" and "Critical Inclusive Teaching for Nonnative Speakers of English" at the Quad-Pod Consortium Teaching Symposium, Oct. 11 at the University of Michigan-Flint.

• **Matthew Zivich**, professor of art, is displaying two artworks in the 58th Annual Greater Michigan Art Exhibition at the Midland Center for the Arts. Juror Valeris Jenkins, a northeastern Minnesota artist, selected Zivich's "Helter Skelter" (acrylic on canvas) and "A Prairie Home Companion" (wallpaper collage) for the show, which runs through Nov. 3.

## New Cardinals

• **Rachel Florence-Spaetzel**, director of orientation programs, announced the birth of twin boys, Cody James and Alex John, Sept. 24.

• **Michael O'Neil**, head women's soccer coach, announced the birth of a daughter, Ava Rose O'Neill (4 lbs., 2 oz., 17.9 in.), Oct. 14.

• **Khandaker Abir Rahman**, associate professor of computer science & information systems, announced the birth of a daughter, Umayma Afsheen, Oct. 9.

• **Kate Scott**, director of the English Language Program, announced the birth of a son, Noah Matthew Scott (8 lbs., 1 oz., 20.5 in.), Sept. 25 (also Kate's birthday!).

## 2019 ALUMNI AWARDS CELEBRATION

Friday, Nov. 8 • Curtiss Hall Banquet Room  
5:30 p.m. Reception • 6:15 p.m. Dinner • 7:30 p.m. Program

### YOUNG ALUMNI AWARDS

College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences  
Darrin Flowers '07

College of Science, Engineering & Technology  
Emily Short '16

### U.S. VETERAN ALUMNI AWARD

College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences  
Tony Goble '89

### DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences  
Ricky Brown '85

Scott L. Carmona College of Business  
Greg Wischmeyer '84

College of Education  
Jean LaClair '90

Crystal M. Lange College of Health & Human Services  
Mary Kay Smith '85

College of Science, Engineering & Technology  
Jill Dralle '93

## Condolences

- To **Vanessa Brooks Herd**, professor of social work, whose mother, Eva B. Barker, passed away Sept. 11 and whose sister, DeVonia Robinson, passed away Aug. 25.
- To **Eric Kinne**, HVAC assistant, whose mother, Jeanette A. Kinne, passed away Oct. 6.
- To **Jerry Stevens**, groundskeeper/assistant foreman, whose mother-in-law, Aileen V. Beyett, passed away Oct. 8.
- To **Frana Sommer**, administrative secretary, whose father-in-law, Arthur Sommer, passed away Oct. 16.
- To **Bruce Zimmerman**, head men's & women's swimming & diving coach, whose father, Seymour Zimmerman, passed away Oct. 4.

**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**  
**Please email submissions to: jjboehm@svsu.edu**