

# BOYER BULLETIN

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# DEAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

This has been an exciting year in the Boyer School, and I am pleased to share with you some of the accomplishments and achievements of our programs, students, alumni, and faculty.

This issue begins with news that we have started a new Bachelor of Science in Nursing program under the guidance of Dr. Helen Burns, the Rev. Owen Roth, O.S.B., Inaugural Chair of the Department of Nursing at Saint Vincent College. The first cohort is currently being recruited and will begin classes this fall of 2024.

This academic year also brought the wonderful news that our Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering is now ABET accredited. This was a tremendous amount of work for our faculty, and we are proud of their accomplishment and the leadership of Dr. Stacy Birmingham, professor of engineering and the James F. Will Endowed Chair of Engineering.

Next are articles that feature a student spotlight, alumni spotlight, and faculty/student research. These include environmental science major and biology minor, Bridgette Gorg; recent cybersecurity

graduate Cameron Klos, C'23; Dr. Michael Rhodes (Biological Sciences) and his summer research team; and alumnus Mr. Theodore Chavez, C'08 (physics, mathematics).

We close this issue with several articles highlighting awards that members of the Boyer School have received in the past year, and an article on a very interesting topic that one of our faculty members authored. Dr. Jennifer Koehl (Biological Sciences) received the 2023 Boniface Wimmer Faculty Award; Dr. Stacy Birmingham (Engineering) received the 2023 Projektenmacher Award; Dr. Helen Burns (Nursing) received the University of Pittsburgh Distinguished Practice Award; I was elected to the Executive Committee of the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET; and Rev. Michael Antonacci, O.S.B., C'07, S'14, (Physics), and Dr. Anis Maize, professor emeritus of physics, recently published the article "Physics writing in the era of artificial intelligence."

May God bless you and your families this Easter Season and in the coming months.

Steve



**Dr. Stephen Jodis**

*Dean of the Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Computing*

# Saint Vincent College launches Bachelor of Science in Nursing program

Saint Vincent College announced that it has received approval from the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing to offer a new Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program starting in the fall of 2024. The BSN program will prepare students to provide comprehensive care in a variety of acute, community and rehabilitative settings, as well as to assume leadership roles in the nursing profession.

The BSN program will be offered in a traditional four-year format, with students taking general education, science and nursing courses concurrently. The program also will include clinical experiences in diverse healthcare settings, such as hospitals, ambulatory settings, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities and schools.

“The BSN program is a significant addition to our academic offerings and reflects our commitment to providing our students with relevant and rigorous programs that prepare them for successful careers and meaningful lives,” added Rev. Paul R. Taylor, O.S.B., president of the College. “We are grateful to the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing for their approval and support, and we look forward to welcoming our first cohort of BSN students in fall of 2024.”

The program will apply for accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the national accrediting agency for baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs.



Dr. Helen K. Burns, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, the Rev. Owen Roth, O.S.B., Inaugural Chair of the Department of Nursing at Saint Vincent College, will lead the program. “We are very excited to launch this new program that will provide our students with a high-quality education that integrates the Benedictine values of community, hospitality, respect and love of learning,” remarked Dr. Burns. “Our graduates will be well-prepared as professionals, clinicians and leaders to meet the future demands and challenges of the ever-evolving healthcare industry and to serve their patients with compassion and excellence.”

Dr. Stephen Jodis, Dean of the Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computing, expressed excitement over the program’s addition to the College’s current offerings. “We are thrilled to welcome the Department of Nursing and Dr. Burns to the Boyer School. The addition of this program builds upon and enhances our longstanding tradition of student preparation for careers in health and medical fields.”

Saint Vincent College is now accepting applications for the BSN program for the fall 2024 semester.

Interested students can visit the college website or contact the Office of Admission at (724) 532-6600 or [admission@stvincent.edu](mailto:admission@stvincent.edu) for more information.

# SVC engineering program receives ABET accreditation

Saint Vincent College's bachelor's degree program in engineering has been accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET, the global accreditor of college and university programs in applied and natural science, computing, engineering and engineering technology.

ABET accreditation assures that programs meet standards to produce graduates ready to enter critical technical fields that are leading the way in innovation and emerging technologies and anticipating the welfare and safety needs of the public.

"Receiving ABET accreditation affirms the quality of our engineering program," stated Dr. Stacy Birmingham, Professor of Engineering and current James F. Will Endowed Chair of Engineering in the Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Computing. "Our engineering program, which offers concentrations in chemical engineering, environmental engineering, materials engineering and mechanical engineering, provides students with significant project and design opportunities starting with the first-year courses. Our graduates are well-prepared to launch their engineering careers or to attend a top-ranked graduate school, as evidenced by the 98% placement rate. Grounded in the

Catholic, Benedictine and liberal arts heritage of Saint Vincent College, our engineering program instills students with innovation, leadership and a commitment to the greater good."

"This is very exciting news," commented Dr. Stephen Jodis, Dean of the Boyer School. "ABET accreditation requires a significant amount of work, and I am very thankful for all the efforts of our engineering faculty and especially Dr. Stacy Birmingham. This recognition is a testament to the quality of their work with our students in our classrooms and laboratories and also reflects the support for Engineering at the College."

Rev. Paul R. Taylor, O.S.B., President of Saint Vincent College, has worked alongside Drs. Birmingham and Jodis as they moved through the accreditation process. "The achievement of ABET accreditation is one more signal of the ongoing progress at Saint Vincent to enhance our program offerings at the highest quality," he remarked. "We appreciate this objective, peer-reviewed affirmation of academic excellence at Saint Vincent College. I am grateful to the faculty and staff for their work to secure accreditation and am excited for all our engineering students."

Sought worldwide, ABET's voluntary peer-review process is highly respected because it adds critical value to academic programs in the technical disciplines, where quality, precision and safety are of the utmost importance.

Developed by technical professionals from ABET's member societies, ABET criteria focus on what students experience and learn. ABET accreditation reviews look at program

curricula, faculty, facilities and institutional support and are conducted by teams of highly-skilled professionals from industry, academia and government, with expertise in the ABET disciplines.

ABET is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization with ISO 9001:2015 certification. It currently accredits 4,564 programs at 895 colleges and universities in 40 countries and areas.

More information about ABET, its member societies and the accreditation criteria used to evaluate programs can be found at [www.abet.org](http://www.abet.org).

For more information about Saint Vincent College's bachelor's degree program in engineering, visit <https://www.stvincent.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/programs/engineering.html>.



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-Rev. Paul R. Taylor, O.S.B.

# Student Spotlight: Bridgette Gorg



After working all of last summer on an internship in the Alaskan wilderness, Bridgette Gorg, C 24, wasn't eager to return to civilization.

"It was very peaceful to be away from everything," Gorg said. "I really felt connected to nature and in tune with a lot of things. It was very hard to leave and go back to responding to emails and driving a car and buying groceries and things like that. Gorg, an Environ-

mental Science major and Biology minor, spent 12 weeks counting salmon in the watershed at Lake Clark National Park, about 100 miles west of Anchorage, AK. Most of her work stations were so remote, they were accessible only by floatplane. "It was a lot of living in tents, backpacking, cooking over fires and driving boats," she said.

Last December, Gorg won two awards for work related to her internship at the 16th annual Student Symposium on the Environment at Westminster College. Gorg took first place for her environmental project on the Alaskan fisheries internship and first place for her photo, "Historic Kijik Village as Viewed from Floatplane."

The symposium featured environmental-based projects, research, service work, internships and artwork and had more than 130 attendees from Saint Vincent College, Westminster College, Chatham University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Thiel College, the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg and four regional high schools.

"I was really excited to tell other people about this beautiful and peaceful place I visited," Gorg said. "I wanted to share how those salmon are actually a conservation success story. A lot of times you hear about different species that are in decline, but this is a species that's doing really well."

Originally, Gorg didn't plan on trekking in Alaska. When her initial plans

for an internship fell through at the last minute, she found this job through the Student Conservation Association and got some funding from AmeriCorps. Gorg had done some backpacking and camping before, but nothing like this. The most difficult adjustment was the Midnight Sun — because of the Earth's axial tilt, the sun doesn't dip below the horizon from late April to late August.

Gorg counted salmon while perched atop a scaffolding tower and also in the water at a gate placed across a river. Comparing the data against numbers compiled over the past 80 years, she and the other counters found a significant increase in the amount of salmon. "That was surprising," she said. "But it means that the salmon fisheries are healthy — or, at least, it means the two I counted are healthy."

There are no cell towers in the thick Alaskan woods, so Gorg's primary connection to the outside world was via a satellite phone. All of her groceries, mostly canned goods, had to be flown in before she arrived in Alaska. To spice up her dinners of dry beans and rice, Gorg fished for salmon. Some days, she'd come across more bears than humans.

"The bears were all very friendly, very peaceful—mostly, I think, because they were much more interested in salmon than they were in me at the time," Gorg said with a laugh. "It was really cool to see them up close, and see how big and powerful they are."

The internship taught Gorg a lot about environmental research techniques, and gave her a unexpected chance to experience backcountry living. It also set her firmly on a path toward life after college.

"It really solidified a decision I'd already sort of made about how I'd love to make a career of environmental research," Gorg said. "Getting in there and staying out in the woods for three months, I really loved it. I'd love to do something like that again."

Gorg already is dreaming about going back to Alaska for something more than just a 12-week stint.

"They have a lot of jobs out there," she said. "I'm looking into them."

# Alumni Spotlight: Cameron Klos

Cameron Klos graduated in spring 2023 with a degree in Cybersecurity. He has pursued his interests all the way from childhood through college, using his time at Saint Vincent College to further his education and his passions.

When asked why he chose to attend SVC, he explained that it was because it's "a well-known school, close to home and on the smaller side."

"I really [liked] the idea of getting to know my professors and not just being a number in the classroom," he said. "Plus, my cousin graduated from [SVC] a few years before I went, and he had a great experience."

On campus, Klos was involved with the Computer Science Club and the Cybersecurity Club. But he also kept busy with another of his interests—karate.

Klos began his karate career at the age of four. He earned his first degree black belt when he was twelve and his second degree black belt four years later. He has excelled in numerous circuits, such as the North American Sport Karate Association (NASKA), the World Karate and Kickboxing Commission (WKC), the USA National Karate Federation (USANKF), the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and the World Karate Federation (WKF). Klos trains under Bill Viola of Team Kumite and under Ariel Torres, a bronze medalist in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Klos competes for Team Revolution, which is sponsored by Century Martial Arts, the world's largest martial arts equipment distributor.

"I have received multiple world titles in NASKA, including an Overall World Grand Champion title in 2022 and a gold [medal] in 2021 at

WKC World Games," Klos said. "I am now pursuing more USANKF and WKF achievements. These would be considered the highest level of competition, [as] WKF is what the Olympics followed for the 2020 Games."

After finishing an internship at U.S. Steel at the end of his senior year, Klos took the summer off to focus on karate before beginning his career search. Ideally, he'd like to find a job that also allows him to continue with karate. When he's not competing, he enjoys skiing and scuba diving.



# SVC biology professor leads study on connection between alcohol and nicotine addictions

Associate professor of biology Dr. Michael Rhodes and five Saint Vincent College (SVC) students spent six weeks last summer serving nicotine and beer to mice. It wasn't merely happy hour for a bunch of lab mice. The data from this research project might foster a better understanding of nicotine and alcohol addictions in humans.

The student group consisted of Mei Jenkins-Andrews, C 24; Celia Monroy, C 25; Julianna Lott, C 25; Victoria Sarver, C 25; and Stefanie Livelsberger, C 25. Also helping was Sara Bollinger, a student at River Valley High School, whose mom is SVC senior lecturer of chemistry Beth Bollinger.

In humans, there is a high rate of co-occurrence between alcohol and nicotine addictions. The students studied how nicotine injections and nicotine withdrawal affected the mice's alcohol consumption and stress hormone concentrations.

"We want, hopefully, to see some sort of correlation between alcohol and nicotine [consumption] and how people often abuse those two substances together," Sarver said. "We're hoping that's the same with the mice. So, when we withdraw [the substances from the mice], we hope it will lead to some sort of change in their behavior."

The mice's daily beer consumption per body weight was comparable to, or in some cases greater than, that of human alcoholics. After receiving daily nicotine injections for two weeks, the mice began withdrawing from nicotine. Behaviors were assessed with swim tests and marble burying tests.

"For a while, I had some hang-ups about using mice [with] nicotine and alcohol," Monroy said. "I felt bad

much animal experience and research experience as I could, especially because I'll be working with a variety of animals," Lott said.

"This project aligned with my [psychology] minor and pre-med [track] because I'm trying to see how people try to quit addictions," said Jenkins-Andrews, a biology major.

This spring, the team will dive into its data analysis. According to Dr.

Rhodes, initial results suggest that mice who were experiencing withdrawal from nicotine had increased depressive behaviors and may have consumed more beer than the control mice.

"It also appears there were interesting sex differences in the depressive behaviors, with male animals showing more depressive behaviors than female animals during the withdrawal period," Dr. Rhodes said.

"We will need to correlate

the anxiety and depressive behaviors with the amount of alcohol consumed to determine if any interesting patterns emerge."

Dr. Rhodes hopes to present the project's conclusions at the annual Society for Neuroscience convention in 2024 in Chicago or in 2025 in San Diego. The students who were fully invested in the project will be invited to attend and participate in the presentation.



for them. But now I see how much research we're getting out of this project, what the data and the trends look like, and it's becoming really interesting. We can say, 'Oh, wow, this is correlated by science and data, and we can use this going forward in other projects.'"

Lott is interested in animal behavior and plans to apply to veterinary school, so she was keen to join Dr. Rhodes' internship group. "I wanted to get as

# Boyer students and faculty recognized at 2023 Honors Convocation

Saint Vincent College presented awards to faculty and students at the Spring Honors Convocation, which took place on Wednesday, April 26, at 1:00 pm in the historic Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica.

Thodore J. Chavez, C'08, forensic examiner and quality assurance program manager at the FBI Laboratory in the Firearms/Toolmarks unit, delivered the convocation address.

Father Paul R. Taylor, O.S.B., Saint Vincent College President, presented Haoyu "Leonard" Wang with the President's Award, the College's highest student honor, which is awarded to the member of the graduating class who best embodies the college's Catholic, Benedictine, liberal arts values—outstanding academic achievement, student leadership and community service.

Finalists for the award included Emily P. Bosche, a mathematics and psychology double major, of Harrisburg; Jessica L. Persin, a biology major minoring in Spanish and biological psychology, of Greensburg; Julia E. Sarnowski, an accounting major minoring in finance, of Bridgeville; and Anna Shields, a biology major minoring in biological psychology and public health, of Allison Park.

Honored faculty included Dr. Jen Koehl, Associate Professor of Biology and Chair of the Biological

Sciences Department, who was presented with the Boniface Wimmer Faculty Award, and Dr. Justin Petrovich, Assistant Professor of Statistics and Business Analytics and Chair of the Marketing, Analytics, and Global Commerce Department, was presented with both the Quentin Schaut Junior Faculty Award and the Student Government Association Faculty Award. Father Maximillian Maxwell, O.S.B., Director of Campus Ministry, was presented with the Student Government Association Administration Award.

Olivia Persin, a junior mathematics major and President of the Student Government Association (SGA), presented the SGA awards to Petrovich and Father Max as well as the Senior Awards to Olivia M. Emmonds, a biology major from Ford Cliff; Cameron J. Hyde, an accounting major from Breezewood; Andrew M. Kunz, a corporate finance major from Cranberry Township; Jessica L. Persin; and Georgeann C. Volna, a marketing major from Meadville.

Dr. Anthony Kane, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, presented Brenda Flores, a junior marketing major from Youngwood, with the Class of 1968 Father Ronald R. Gorka Scholarship Award.



# Theodore Chavez, C'08 delivers 2023 Honors Convocation Address

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**T**heodore Chavez, C'08, served as the principal speaker at the 2023 Saint Vincent College Spring Honors Convocation, held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 26, in the historic Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica.

Chavez received his Bachelor of Science degree in physics and mathematics. A year prior to his graduation from Saint Vincent College, he received an honors internship with the FBI, and, after graduating, he joined the FBI as a fulltime employee, where he has served for more than 12 years. Sharing the title of Saint Vincent College Graduate with his uncle and nephew, Chavez and his family remain connected with the College, specifically through the Challenge Program, a STEM-based academic summer program for students from PreK to grade 12, which many of his nieces and nephews attended.

Emphasizing the importance of community and the strength of it at Saint Vincent College, Chavez shared his journey being a first-year student on campus feeling welcomed and appreciated by the faculty, staff and monks. Leading up to a “lucky business suit” loaned to him by a friend at Saint Vincent at the beginning of his junior year, the community’s generosity and care helped to set him up for his future with the Bureau.

“Our daily acts of community and caring should be lifelong,” said Chavez. “Saint Vincent will remain as our foundation for building something durable and true.”

Currently, Chavez works as a Forensic Examiner and Quality Assurance Program Manager in the Firearms/ Toolmarks Unit of the FBI Laboratory; however, he initially joined the Bureau as an Intake Specialist in the Muskogee Office in Oklahoma City, OK. Chavez is also a member of the Diversity Advisory Committee in the FBI Office of Diversity & Inclusion, a position that allows him

to promote awareness of the impact of Native cultures and contributions, as well as provide a formal

channel to champion issues, solutions and topics that affect underrepresented communities within the FBI workforce. Additionally, he is a member of the Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners and is an affiliate of the OSAC Firearms and Toolmarks Subcommittee, which is part of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

As a member of the Pueblo of Acoma in New Mexico, Chavez serves on the Fort Ligonier Board of Trustees. In his free time, he enjoys cycling and exercising on the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, gardening and spending time outdoors.

Chavez is a proud uncle and mentor residing in Virginia.





# Dr. Jennifer Koehl receives Boniface Wimmer Faculty Award



**D**r. Jennifer Koehl, Associate Professor of Biology, was awarded the 2023 Boniface Wimmer Faculty Award at Saint Vincent College's Honors Convocation, held on April 26 at 1:00 p.m. in the historic Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica.

Named in honor of the founder of Saint Vincent College and Archabbey and pioneer of Benedictine monasticism in the U.S., the Wimmer Faculty Award recognizes a senior faculty member who has demonstrated sustained excellence in teaching, service and scholarship.

"[Dr. Koehl] has been a generous mentor, based on the number of her students who have achieved substantial graduate school success," said Dr. John Delaney, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean. "What I've noticed most about her is that she has maintained a positive attitude no matter what."

Early in her teaching career, in 2005, Koehl also received the Quentin Schaut Faculty Award, which recognizes the contributions, leadership and achievements of a junior faculty member to the curriculum and life of the College. She also won the Thoburn Award in 2013, an award given by alumni of the previous five to seven years who nominate one faculty member who made a significant impact on students through their teaching and personal interactions.

"I think it's an appropriate time to thank her for the time and effort that she has made through her entire career at Saint Vincent," said Delaney.

Koehl expressed her gratitude and thanks for the many

students and family members who impacted her teaching career and shared lessons learned along the way.

"Own and be proud of who you are," said Koehl before sharing a laugh with the crowd over her competitiveness during the faculty Jeopardy game recently held between the Biology and Chemistry Departments. "Being proud of who you are helps build your community. That community is your support system throughout life, and that's one of the best parts of Saint Vincent College."

Sharing her own academic journey, Koehl gave the advice to "do what you love and persevere." From aspiring to win a Nobel Prize in Genetics to finding the fascinating aspects of bacteria and immunology, Koehl eventually discovered her love for teaching. As of 2017, Koehl has served as the chairperson of the Biology and Health Sciences Department, now known as the Biological Sciences Department.

Koehl aided in the addition of several majors and minors under the new department title since her appointment as Chair. "That is something that I am very proud of and has kept me moving forward," said Koehl.

Koehl focuses her scholarly work on "anything that is involving bacteria, especially antibiotic resistance and biofilms." She has involved students in her research and helped guide them through presentations at local microbiology conferences. Koehl received a grant worth over \$600,000 from the National Science Foundation in 2016 to bring scholarship and advanced mentoring to Saint Vincent College biology students.

Through the three-semester capstone project that she teaches and for which she advises students, Koehl has mentored 112 students, with 82% of them continuing to work in the field of microbiology, 72% continuing their education in graduate or professional schools, and 10 receiving doctoral graduates from prestigious programs.

"Be kind and be a good mentor," said Koehl as a final thought.

Koehl has been a member of the Saint Vincent College faculty since 2002 after earning her Ph.D. in biological sciences from Illinois State University. As a faculty member in the Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computing, she currently teaches General Biology I and Lab; Microbiology and Medical Microbiology and Lab; Killer Germs; Bacteria, Friend or Foe?; Junior Research Thesis, and Research Thesis.

# SVC physics professors publish article regarding AI Writing in a classroom setting

**R**ev. Michael Antonacci, O.S.B., C'07, S'14, assistant professor of physics at Saint Vincent College, and Dr. Anis Maize, professor emeritus of physics, recently published an article in "The American Journal of Physics." The article, "Physics writing in the era of artificial intelligence," discusses how Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have impacted a professor's ability to teach physics and physics writing.

After noticing the increase in student use of the ChatGPT and other publicly available AI large language models, Fr. Michael and Dr. Maize decided to begin the conversation of AI utilized in physics writing. With a sufficient lack of dialogue on the topic within the physics department, they implemented their own observations and concerns on the topic to write their article.

"Neither Dr. Maize nor I are at the point of enthusiastically embracing AI large language models as general educational tools in physics because it is not clear to us how student use of these tools will impact their education," Fr. Michael replied when asked if either had to alter their own classroom settings in response to new AI writing. "At the same time, strictly forbidding the use of AI tools will be very difficult to enforce with the current text classifiers—AI models trained to identify human vs AI-written text—so I think professors will be forced to design assignments that cannot be easily done with AI alone."

While Fr. Michael has allowed his students to use AI as a brainstorming tool, so long as they submit proper citations, he still believes AI usage to be in poor taste.

"In physics writing," Fr. Michael

continued, "students often have to analyze the results of a particular experiment they did during lab. An AI model cannot perform such an analysis because it does not have the data, the experience of doing the experiment or the ability to reflect on what was done." With a sufficient lack of information, the AI would be left making up details to fit the parameters provided, leading to inaccurate results and a student without the ability to properly analyze the experiment they performed.

"Since AI tools are already being used in professional scientific settings," he explained, "I think it is better that students learn about their limitations and responsible use earlier than risk making a career-damaging mistake later."

The article was published on August 1, 2023 in Volume 91, Issue 8 of the American Journal of Physics. The article can also be found at <https://doi.org/10.1119/5.0159871>.

"The American Journal of Physics" (AJP) is a journal that publishes papers that meet the needs and intellectual interests of college and university physics teachers and students. AJP was founded in 1933 under the name The American Physics Teacher before it was changed in 1940 after covering the first 7 volumes. AJP intends on publishing articles that push the educational and cultural aspects of physics that [prove] useful, interesting, and accessible to a diverse audience of physics students, educators, and researchers.

Fr. Michael has released a number of works in the past few years, including a more recent article published on August 26, 2022. His paper was published in "The Physics Teacher" in an issue that

was released in September of 2022. The journal focuses on publishing "peer-reviewed papers on the teaching of introductory physics and on topics such as contemporary physics, applied physics, and the history of physics. To learn more about Fr. Michael's previous work, visit <https://doi.org/10.1119/5.0064035>.

Fr. Michael is a Benedictine monk and priest in Saint Vincent's monastery and an assistant physics professor at the college. He graduated with a Ph. D from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and he received his B.S from Saint Vincent College.

**"I THINK IT IS BETTER THAT STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THEIR LIMITATIONS AND RESPONSIBLE USE EARLIER THAN RISK MAKING A CAREER-DAMAGING MISTAKE LATER."**

-Rev. Michael Antonacci, O.S.B.

# Dr. Stacy Birmingham presented with 2023 Projektenmacher Award

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**D**r. Stacy Birmingham, Professor of Engineering and James F. Will Endowed Chair of Engineering in the Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Computing was presented with the 13th annual Projektenmacher Award in recognition of initiatives that, in the spirit of founder Archabbot Boniface Wimmer, “brought vision to reality through hard work and perseverance.”

Saint Vincent College’s president Rev. Paul R. Taylor, O.S.B, presented Dr. Birmingham with the award at the Founders’ Day Honors Convocation on Thursday, Nov. 16, in the Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica.

Prior to presenting her with the award, Fr. Paul lauded Dr. Birmingham’s “hard work, leadership, grit and grace” in working to get the College’s engineering program accredited by ABET, an international accrediting organization that accredits programs in applied and natural science, computing, engineering and engineering technology. Saint Vincent’s engineering program received formal accreditation from ABET on Sept. 23, 2023.

“For your dreams, Dr. Stacy Birmingham, dreams that you have brought to reality, we congratulate you,” said Fr. Paul. “Saint Vincent College is honored to present to you the 2023 Projektenmacher Award.”

“I’m very humbled and honored to receive [the Projektenmacher Award], and I have been blessed to lead the effort to grow and accredit the engineering program,” explained Dr. Birmingham before expressing her thanks to Dr. Stephen Jodis, Dean of the Boyer School, her fellow engineering professors, supporters of the engineering program and those who laid the foundation for beginning the accreditation process before she came to Saint Vincent.



Dr. Birmingham went on to explain that she had spent many hours over the past five years working on ABET-related tasks and that she was grateful to her family for their support during that time. “During those last five years,” said Dr. Birmingham, “my family coined a new verb: ‘ABETting,’ as in, ‘Mom is ABETting right now, and she can’t answer the phone.’”

## About Dr. Birmingham

Dr. Stacy G. Birmingham is the James F. Will Professor of Engineering and the Chair of the Engineering Department at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, PA. She was previously the Dean of the Albert A. Hopeman, Jr., School of Science, Engineering and Mathematics at Grove City College and a Professor of Mechanical Engineering. She began her academic career at The University of Michigan, where she held tenured positions in both the Chemical Engineering and Macromolecular Science & Engineering Departments. She received her B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering

from Carnegie Mellon University. Notable awards include the Presidential Young Investigator Award from the National Science Foundation and the 38E Award for Teaching and Service from the University of Michigan. As Dean at Grove City College, she more than doubled the STEM major and minor offerings of the college and developed numerous P-12 STEM outreach programs for local schools. As Chair at Saint Vincent College, she is engaged in building a new four-year engineering program. Research interests include issues central to the work-life balance of women engineering and technology faculty and developing and assessing innovative pedagogies for engineering instruction.

# Dr. Helen Burns receives Pitt Distinguished Practice Award



**D**r. Helen Burns, who has recently been appointed as the Rev. Owen Roth, O.S.B., Inaugural Director of Nursing and chair of the Department of Nursing at Saint Vincent College, has been presented with a Distinguished Practice Award from the University of Pittsburgh.

The award is in recognition of the triumphs achieved by University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing alumni and their profound influence on the nursing vocation.

Since 2011, Dr. Burns has served as senior vice president and chief nursing officer with Excelsa Health, for which she led and grew the nursing programs across the system. Dr. Burns also previously served as deputy secretary for health planning and assessment for the Pennsylvania Department of Health. In that position, she was responsible for oversight of the Office of Public Health Preparedness; Office of Emergency Medical Services; and the Bureaus of Epidemiology, Laboratories, Health Planning and Community Health Systems.

Previously an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, where she held the position as associate dean for clinical education and professor in the Department of Health and Community Systems, Dr. Burns has engaged in an active service role within healthcare and the nursing field, exhibited through various positions, including serving on the Board of Directors for the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association and

Pennsylvania Organization of Nurse Leaders, as co-chair of the Nursing Committee of the PA Center for Health Careers, and on the steering committee of the PA Action Coalition. Dr. Burns was a member of the Board of Trustees at Excelsa Health System and Armstrong County Memorial Hospital and is a current board member of St. Anne Home.

Dr. Burns has been honored as an elected fellow in the American Academy of Nursing. She received the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing International Evidence-Based Practice Award and the Nurse Excellence Award. She is also the recipient of the Provost's Innovation in Education Award and President's Medal of Service from the University of Pittsburgh and has been honored as a Distinguished Alumni by both the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing.

A graduate of the Latrobe Area Hospital School of Nursing, Dr. Burns received her BSN from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She then attended the University of Pittsburgh, earning her master's degree in medical-surgical nursing as a pulmonary clinical nurse specialist and a Ph.D. in nursing.

Under the leadership of Dr. Burns, Saint Vincent students will be able to begin enrolling in the Nursing Program in Fall 2024, when construction of a new nursing education and lab facility will begin on campus.

# Dr. Stephen Jodis appointed to Executive Committee of ABET Computing Accreditation Commission

**D**r. Stephen Jodis, Dean of the Herbert W. Boyer School of Natural Science, Mathematics and Computing at Saint Vincent College, will serve a three-year term as a member of the Executive Committee of the Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC) of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET).

ABET is a non-profit organization that accredits programs within colleges and universities across the globe in fields of study including engineering, engineering technology, computing, applied science and natural science programs. ABET currently accredits 4,564 programs at 895 colleges and universities in 40 countries. It is recognized as the educational standard for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs.

"It is an honor to be nominated and elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET," expressed Dr. Jodis. "Each year that I am involved

with ABET I gain so much personally and in learning about ABET's aim and efforts to improve education in technical fields."

A volunteer with ABET since 2007, Dr. Jodis began his ABET service as a program evaluator on a team conducting an on-site visit to review a computer science program for continued accreditation. He served as a program evaluator for four years before being nominated to serve as a commissioner of the Computing Accreditation Commission and team chair.

Dr. Jodis served two five-year terms as a commissioner of the Computing Accreditation Commission before his nomination and election as a member of the Executive Committee. Since his first year as a commissioner in 2010, he has served as a visiting team chair each year. He has also served on the Consistency Committee of the Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC) in 2021 and 2022 and as co-chair of the Policy and Documents since the 2022-2023 academic year.

He also served on the Nominations Committee in 2014-15.

Before serving ABET as a volunteer in the roles of program evaluator, team chair and member of the CAC Executive Committee, Dr. Jodis was involved in ABET accreditation for the Computer Science program that he belonged to when he was a computer science faculty member at Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, GA. Armstrong applied for computer science accreditation from what was then the Computer Science Accreditation Commission in his first year as a faculty member there. The college was successful in its initial accreditation review and at the time were the second computer science accredited program in the state of Georgia after only Georgia Tech. In his 21 years at Armstrong, Dr. Jodis was involved in CSAC and then ABET accreditation for the department as a faculty member, assistant department head, interim department head and acting dean.