

Gorka Scholarship: Class of '68 gives back

Anthony Caporale, Staff Writer



David D. Stephen receives the Fr. Ronald Gorka Scholarship Award at the Honors Convocation in spring of 2019. (SOURCE: SVC FLICKR)

Each year, a committee of 12 handpicks three juniors at Saint Vincent College to receive the Class of 1968 Fr. Ronald R. Gorka Scholarship Award. The awards vary in amount. This year, the first-place winner will receive a \$15,000 prize, while the second and third winners will receive a \$5,000 prize.

Ed Heinrichs, an alumnus of the class of 1968, serves as spokesperson for the scholarship committee.

“Due to the effort of a group of about 12 friends from the class of

1968, the Fr. Ronald Gorka Scholarship was founded 20 years ago,” Heinrichs said, adding that he and the other members of the committee have worked hard to support the community at Saint Vincent.

Rich Schulte, also an alumnus of the class of 1968 and a committee member for the scholarship, described the various projects that the class of 1968 has supported, including the fountain outside the entrance to Placid Hall, as well as an upcoming

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Professors respond to new core

Sean Callahan, Arts & Culture Editor

Saint Vincent College finished final revisions of a new core curriculum over the summer of 2020. Dr. Jason King, professor of theology and Director of Core, hopes that the new core will result in a more rewarding learning experience for future students. The curriculum had gone nearly untouched for more than 20 years, something that King, does not want to see happen again.

“There was never any mechanism to refine the core over time. A process we added for this is an assessment and feedback loop,” King said. “This will refine the core over time.”

He explained that the new core structure will not affect any current students, who will continue with the old core. Incoming freshman will begin utilizing the new structure.

King said that disciplines from the old core, such as theology, science and foreign languages could apply to the new core under specific categories, called “Student Learning Outcomes” (SLOs). This creates less of a focus on departments and more on individual faculty and areas of learning. There are only three universally required courses are in SLO 4: the Listening Seminar taken by freshman, the Learning Seminar taken by sophomores and juniors and the Loving Seminar taken by seniors. These will be taken throughout a student’s typical four years at SVC, and are meant to
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NEWS

Awards for three juniors

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landscaping project in Melvin Platz.

A “history sheet” explains the background behind the Fr. Ronald Gorka Scholarship. This document is usually received by the faculty, staff and the last seven students in final consideration for the award. The scholarship takes its name from Fr. Ronald Gorka, O.S.B., Ph.D., who was a professor at SVC in the 1960s. He was the academic dean and a pivotal role model to the students of the class of 1968. The history sheet explains that he was known for having “a gift for identifying unfulfilled potential in his students,” and for his philosophy that “a student’s value goes beyond the textbook.” To continue Gorka’s legacy, 12 members of the class of 1968 established a scholarship in his name.

The winners will be awarded the scholarship during the Honors Convocation and Undergraduate Conference on May 5, 2021. All classes will be canceled during the event, which takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. However, last year’s Honors Convocation was disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak, which moved the in-person event to online. This year, the event will most likely be a hybrid of the two formats.

From France to Pennsylvania

Kyra Lipetzky, Staff Writer

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a dent in international exchange programs, but some are still running. Elisa Fontaine, a junior from France, managed to study in America this spring despite the restrictions.

The inspiration to travel abroad came from her mom, Fontaine said.

“My mom went to Cambridge for a year in her third year of studies. It’s an experience that stayed with her and she talks about it a lot, and she really got a lot out of it. And so I wanted to do it too,” Fontaine explained.

Fontaine thought about studying in England, too, but decided against it after Brexit. That’s when she heard about an opportunity to go to America.

“The program is called ISEP (international student exchange program), and it gives you a choice of a lot of universities in America,” she said.

In France, Fontaine studies law at the University of Lille, so she wanted to find a university that would mesh well with her previous academic credits. At first she planned to go to Saint Peter’s University in New Jersey; Saint Vincent was her second choice. But she has found ways to take the courses she needs.

“I tried to take classes that would be like the ones I had in France. I didn’t find them but I still found some law classes. I have two constitutional law classes,” Fontaine said. “I have a class with Dr. Facil that I really enjoy. All of my teachers are so interesting and they tried to help me get into the groove and everything. I don’t really have the background and culture that you need to understand everything, so it was a bit hard for me at first and that’s okay.”

Her French university experience was very different, though.

“My home university is much bigger than Saint Vincent, and so we are usually in auditoriums, like 300 students listening to one teacher all taking notes. The teachers don’t really want to have an exchange with the students, they just take the notes, read them out, and you listen and you take notes. Here we have such a closer connection with the teacher, and it’s not a lecture, it’s more like a discussion,” Fontaine explained.

In other ways, though, her home region was not so different from living in a small town outside Pittsburgh.

Fontaine doesn’t actually live in the city of Lille—she hails from a town called Hem, in the suburbs, with about 20,000 inhabitants.

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Core and foreign languages

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integrate their major with the core. Students may choose their preferred courses in other SLO sections.

Dr. Doreen Blandino, professor of modern and classical languages, said that she is concerned about the removal of department-specific requirements, especially for small departments at SVC with few students who are majors, like philosophy and theology.

“I’m worried about the longevity of our department. We offer six different languages. This is a point of pride, because such robust offerings are not typical at a college of our size. It’s helped us recruit students,” Blandino said.

Blandino said scheduling in the old core has been easy because of the core foreign language requirement. Now she feels the new core leaves the future uncertain in terms of which languages and the number of sections to offer.

Fr. Brian Boosel, O.S.B., assistant professor of history and director of the honors program, said the honors program wanted to help Blandino determine what languages students are interested in to help anticipate class offerings. So Boosel had the honors students answer a survey. As of Mar. 17, 40 honors students had responded. Half of the respondents expressed plans to take a foreign language, including less-popular ones such as Chinese, Italian and Latin, in fall of 2021. All except one respondent took a foreign language in high school.

“We want to gather information and bring this gift of foreign languages with us along this journey, as we’re building new courses and a new curriculum,” Boosel said.

King acknowledged the worries small department instructors like Blandino have. But he is confident that the new core structure will not result in lower enrollment for small departments,

referring to the feedback loop system and the fact that several classes must be taken in each SLO category.

“If everybody in one SLO is taking history classes and nothing else, that’s a problem,” King said. “That would show up on our assessment, and we would go back and fix that by adjusting the class offerings.”

Blandino, despite her reservations about the core, said she does see positive aspects in it, even for her own department. She feels the flexibility of the SLOs could be beneficial because it allows all departments, including foreign languages, to propose courses for the core.

“One would assume students have enrolled in particular classes because they have an interest in learning about the subject. The hope would be that students are more engaged with the material and there would be a more positive learning environment,” Blandino said.

In addition, Blandino appreciates the seminars and stronger focus on writing, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with other instructors on future courses. She already has some planned.

“Tom Octave and I are going to team up and teach a course called ‘French Duet: Music and Language of France,’ for spring 2022, if approved,” Blandino said.

Blandino added that her department was proposing courses appealing to other majors, including Spanish for business or health professions, to better serve students pursuing careers in which a grasp of the Spanish language could be helpful.

Likewise, Boosel praised the new core’s creativity and flexibility it created for students, as well as its strong focus on writing. He said that the honors program is beginning to embrace the new core curriculum.

“In a couple of years, we’d like to offer a class in the philosophy and history of friendship, taught in French,” Boosel said.

However, he explained that prior semesters of intermediate French would be important for students, both for communication and the culture they will explore in this potential new course.

Blandino said that her department plans to further adjust to the new core structure by offering intermediate foreign language courses at lower tier SLOs, while placing two upper-level courses at a higher tier. But she is worried most students may not attempt a foreign language, since course requirements will no longer be department-based. She recounted stories of former and current students who claimed they would not have taken foreign language classes if they had not been required to take them.

“There is value in students customizing their core, but will they choose courses judiciously, and make the most of their liberal arts education? My fear is that students may not explore and challenge themselves and will take what they excel in or what they perceive to be easy,” Blandino said. “If students aren’t made to take it, the question becomes: are we going to be able maintain the foreign language minor for those who want to add value to their degrees?”

King is aware of this concern. Other departments have similar ones about their programs. However, King is confident that SVC has many great professors who will adapt to the changes of the core with time.

“All departments have to ensure that what they are offering in the core is focused on the SLOs. This often requires adapting what was previously taught to the demands of the new core,” he said.

SPORTS

Football team ready for shortened, more competitive season

Luke Mich, Sports Editor



Running back Mike Stasko gets a carry against Waynesburg in a game from last season, which the Bearcats won 21-17. (SOURCE: ATHLETICS.STVINCENT.EDU)

On March 17, the football team traveled to play Grove City in its 2021 season opener, the team's first game in over 16 months. Before the game, I was able to talk to a player and the head coach about the unusual circumstances this season in regard to the schedule, COVID-19 testing, and practices.

"I feel as if training never stops," said Isaiah R. McElroy, linebacker and sophomore communication major. Even when the season was pushed to the spring, the team regularly practiced last fall. "It's an all-year round situation," McElroy said.

The team, McElroy said, started practice on Feb. 20 and have had practice six days a week ever since, with Monday usually being the day off. In addition, weekly COVID-19 testing is required.

This season has had its share of challenges and obstacles to practice: "The

whole mask thing is definitely a difficulty," McElroy stated. "It's definitely hard to breathe wearing those while playing."

Another issue is the potential of someone contracting the COVID-19 virus.

"If one of our teammates tests positive for COVID-19, contact tracing [is done] and anyone that was around that person or had contact with them for a long period of time on the field must quarantine, which could potentially hurt us on the field," McElroy explained.

However, McElroy added that the team has been preparing to adjust to this "next man up mentality" that could take place if someone tests positive.

Head Coach Aaron Smetanka also explained some aspects of training that have had to be adjusted this season because of COVID-19.

"The biggest challenges are having all of our meetings on Zoom and only having a locker room to use on Game

Day," Smetanka said.

Just like nearly every other sport played this spring, the football season too will be shortened. Whereas last season the Bearcats played 10 games, Smetanka said the team will play 5 games this season, yet the team only knows who its first four opponents will be.

"The [fifth game will be] a President Athletic Conference Crossover Opponent depending on how we seed in the south division," Smetanka said.

The season schedule changed earlier this spring when two PAC schools opted out of playing football this year.

"When Case Western Reserve University and Thiel College opted out of the spring season our season changed by moving Carnegie Mellon University to the north division," Smetanka explained.

So instead of playing their opening game against Carnegie Mellon, the Bearcats played Grove City. Because of this abbreviated schedule, each football game is even more important this season than in prior seasons.

"Each and every game is important," McElroy said. "Our record will ultimately determine whether or not we have the chance to play for a PAC Championship."

As the season begins, the key to the team's success this year will be how they focus on what's in front of them instead of what's at the finish line.

"We have to focus on each game at a time and never look [too far] ahead," McElroy concluded.

The Bearcat football team's next game is Friday, March 26 at 7 p.m. at Bethany. Their home opener is Saturday, April 10 at 1 p.m. against Washington & Jefferson.

Team Standings

Men's Basketball

Team	W	L	Streak
Westminster	11	1	W8
Geneva	8	3	L1
W&J	7	3	L1
Grove City	8	4	W2
Chatham	5	5	L1
Thiel	4	7	L1
Waynesburg	3	7	L3
Franciscan	3	8	L1
Saint Vincent	3	8	L1
Bethany	2	8	L2

Results: PAC Quarterfinals: L 62-94

Women's Basketball

Team	W	L	Streak
Saint Vincent	10	0	W10
W&J	8	1	L1
Grove City	8	2	L1
Westminster	6	5	L1
Chatham	4	5	L1
Bethany	5	6	L1
Geneva	4	6	L1
Waynesburg	3	8	L1
Thiel	1	8	L4
Franciscan	1	9	L6

Results: 2020 PAC Champions. end of season

Women's Volleyball

Team	W	L	Streak
Westminster	6	1	W3
Geneva	9	1	W6
Grove City	5	2	W2
Chatham	3	3	W1
Bethany	2	3	W1
Franciscan	2	3	L1
W&J	2	4	L3
Thiel	2	5	L5
Waynesburg	1	6	L4
Saint Vincent	0	5	L5

Schedule: Bethany 3/25 7 PM, Waynesburg 3/30 7 PM, @Franciscan 4/6 7 PM

Men's Volleyball

Team	W	L	Streak
Hiram	4	1	W3
Geneva	6	5	W4
Penn St. Behrend	3	3	L1
Medaille	2	3	W1
Hilbert	0	0	-
Penn St. Altoona	0	2	L2
Saint Vincent	0	4	L4
Thiel	0	4	L4

Schedule: Geneva 3/24 7 PM, @Hilbert 3/27 2 PM, @Altoona 3/31 7 PM

Men's Lacrosse

Team	W	L	Streak
Thiel	2	0	W2
Saint Vincent	4	1	W2
Grove City	3	1	W2
Westminster	3	1	W3
Chatham	2	2	L2
Bethany	1	4	L4
W&J	0	2	L2
Franciscan	0	4	L4

Schedule: Chatham 3/27 12 PM, Grove City 3/31 4 PM, @Bethany 4/10 1 PM

Women's Lacrosse

Team	W	L	Streak
W&J	2	0	W2
Chatham	1	0	W1
Franciscan	1	0	W1
Thiel	1	0	W1
Saint Vincent	1	2	L2
Waynesburg	0	1	L1
Westminster	0	1	L1
Bethany	0	2	L2

Schedule: Chatham 3/28 3 PM, Waynesburg 4/1 4 PM, @Franciscan 4/8 4 PM

Baseball

Team	W	L	Streak
W&J	6	0	W6
Franciscan	4	2	W2
Grove City	4	2	L2
Saint Vincent	4	2	W1
Geneva	2	3	L2
Westminster	3	3	L1
Thiel	2	3	W1
Waynesburg	2	4	W2
Bethany	1	5	L1
Chatham	1	5	L4

Schedule: @Grove City 3/26 1 & 3 PM, Grove City 3/27 1 & 4 PM, @Franciscan 3/30 1 & 3 PM

Men's Cross Country

Results: 2nd at PAC Championships

Softball

Team	W	L	Streak
Waynesburg	8	5	W3
Westminster	10	0	W10
Geneva	9	3	W5
W&J	6	3	W2
Chatham	4	6	L2
Franciscan	4	6	W1
Grove City	3	5	L3
Bethany	4	4	L1
Saint Vincent	2	6	L3
Thiel	0	8	L8

Schedule: Bethany 3/27 3:30 & 5:30 PM, Thiel 3/30 3:30 & 5:30 PM, Grove City 4/1 3:30 & 5:30 PM

Women's Cross Country

Results: 6th at PAC Championships

Men's Soccer

Schedule: Franciscan 3/25 3 PM, @Bethany 3/31 5 PM, Geneva 4/7 1 PM

Men's Tennis

Schedule: Waynesburg 3/27 3 PM, @Westminster 4/1 4:30 PM

Football

Schedule: @Bethany 3/26 TBA, W&J 4/10 TBA

Women's Soccer

Schedule: Franciscan 3/25 1 PM, @Bethany 3/31 2 PM, Geneva 4/7 3 PM

Women's Tennis

Schedule: Waynesburg 3/27 12 PM, @Grove City 4/6 2:30 PM

Adjusting to life in the US

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Elisa Fontaine sitting in the library. (SOURCE: LEVENTE KISS)

“It’s a bit rural, since we have fields, a lake and the countryside just out of town. But we also live 15 minutes away from Lille, with all the infrastructure of a big city,” Fontaine said.

In her free time in France, Fontaine loves theatre and dance.

“My true passion is theater,” she said. “I’m in a group, we have a professional director. Every year we do a different play. Two years ago was a play about the war in Leb-

anon; it was really powerful. Last year was a Shakespeare play translated into French.”

She also enjoys Latin dancing and salsa. Fontaine hoped to join the Swing Dance Club at SVC, but that proved impossible due to COVID-19 restrictions. Now, she says, she only goes to the gym, but that isn’t so bad because her home university doesn’t have a free, public gym like Saint Vincent.

Fontaine has a sister in France,

two years younger than she is.

“We’re really close and she’s studying to go into med school,” Fontaine said.

But she also misses her cat.

“I have a black cat called Indie, like Indiana Jones because he’s a little adventurer. And, yeah, I miss him. I think he’s 8 now.”

Still, Fontaine has felt welcomed in America.

“I didn’t think people would be so welcoming. I feel like people are so much nicer than in France. Everyone smiles and everyone would just talk to me so nicely and I feel like in such a small amount of time I really fit in,” she said.

Getting used to American life has required adjustment, though. Mealtimes in France are very different.

“You eat dinner at 5:30 or 6 like in France, that’s [like] nursing homes. We eat dinner at 8, so that was weird.”

She was also surprised by America’s multicultural environment.

“Everyone talks about their Italian grandpa, their Irish grandma, and it’s really important to them because it’s their roots. And it’s not the same in Europe because we don’t really have roots. My country’s been the same for like 400 years, in the same place,” she said.

Saint Vincent is only one small college in a huge country, of course. Before she returns to France, she hopes to visit Niagara Falls, Washington, D.C., and maybe even a Florida beach—if the pandemic allows! But she has beat the odds so far, and hopes to do it again.

OPINION

The Rise and Fall of Cuomo

Kevin Martin, *Opinion Editor*

Just over a year ago, the COVID-19 pandemic struck America. The state of New York was hardest hit in the initial viral wave. The crisis propelled New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to the national spotlight. Through his daily press conferences he appeared to give a stern and honest account of the crisis that the state and country faced. Many in the media hailed him as a hero. MSNBC's Nicolle Wallace said that Cuomo was "everything Trump isn't: honest, direct, brave." MSNBC's Rachel Maddow hailed him as a "national leader." And, of course, CNN's Chris Cuomo asked his brother if he was thinking of running for the U.S. presidency. Governor Cuomo seemed to be thriving on the national stage.

In July, the severity of the pandemic seemed to have lessened in New York, and the governor began to celebrate his state's apparent victory over the virus. A poster depicting New Yorkers' "victory" began to be sold on the governor's website for a mere \$11.50. Many things can be seen in the poster, including a plane of Europeans coming to New York, Mask Mandates, subway disinfectant policies, and, to top it all off, a rainbow crowned with a banner that reads, "LOVE WINS." In October, Cuomo even released a book titled, "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," in which he told the story of his leading role during the crisis.

At the time this seemed a bit arrogant to me, but Cuomo remained popular in the state. The pandemic was far from over, and the second wave, which was well known to be a certainty, had yet to come. Even more striking was the fact that Andrew Cuomo's actions during the pandemic had been seriously mistaken. The biggest example of this was his executive order compelling nursing homes across New York to accept recovering COVID-19-positive patients. That order resulted in the spread of COVID-19 among thousands in New York's most vulnerable population. Ultimately, this policy decision caused thousands of deaths in nursing homes, deaths that very well could have been avoided had sounder judgment prevailed. Yet the people of New York overwhelmingly supported him, according to a NBC/Marist poll.

Then, in January of this year, New York Attorney General Letitia James, a democrat, released a report that estimated that the nursing home death toll in New York had been undercounted by about 40%—nearly 4,000 deaths. These deaths had previously been attributed to hospitals. The truth of the matter is that these people had been transferred to those hospitals from nursing homes—nursing homes that had been granted civil and criminal immunity by the Emergency Disaster Treatment Protection Act. The bill, alleged Democratic Assembly Mem-

ber Ron Kim, had been aggressively pushed by Cuomo. Pairing this information with a report from The Guardian showing a last-minute donation from the Greater New York Hospital Association to Cuomo's campaign during a challenging 2018 primary, one might see this situation as morally conflicted or possibly even corrupt. Nonetheless, Cuomo's political prowess in New York seemed to be only slightly hindered. That is, until allegations of sexual harassment came to light.

In December of 2020, Lindsey Boylan, a former economic advisor, accused the governor of sexual harassment on Twitter. However, it wasn't until Feb. 24 that her accusations were published on Medium and the pressure on Cuomo began to mount. That same month, Charlotte Bennett, a former aide to the governor, accused him of inappropriate behavior. On March 1, Anna Ruch accused Cuomo of touching her cheeks and trying to kiss her during a wedding reception that took place in 2019. On March 6, another former aide accused the governor of inappropriate behavior similar to the previous accusations. And finally, on March 8, a fourth female aide accused the governor of touching her inappropriately. The governor has denied all four of these allegations as either never taking place or being a misunderstanding. In response to these allegations, *Continued on page 8*

The Rise and Fall of Cuomo

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the New York Assembly has begun an investigation into Cuomo's actions. New York's federal senators, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), called for Cuomo to resign due to his "sexual harassment and misconduct allegations." This joint statement did not mention the nursing home scandal as a reason for him to resign. To their credit, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Congressman Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) released a joint statement calling for his resignation due to both his misconduct and mishandling of New York nursing homes. But overwhelmingly, the calls from his party for the governor to resign have been focused upon the allegations of misconduct as opposed to his handling of the pandemic.

Why might this be the case? Perhaps, in this post-MeToo era, allegations of sexual harassment are more politically devastating than the likes of the nursing home scandal. If this were the case, it would be a tragedy. It is difficult to contend that these accusations, though extremely serious and worthy of causing Cuomo's resignation or impeachment, are more important than the unnecessary death of thousands of New York's most vulnerable. Another reason may be that these allegations were simply the last straw for Cuomo's political allies. Goodwill only goes so far in politics, and after a point, it was likely easier and politically expedient to turn on Cuomo than to continue to defend him every time a crisis occurred. Or perhaps it is because New York was not the only state that forced nursing homes to take in COVID-19-positive patients. New Jersey, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania all had similar rules in place during the early days of the pandemic. I do not mean to claim any of these state governments or governors have manipulated the data on nursing home deaths. My only contention is that these states have elevated nursing home deaths due to their public policy decisions and, critically, they are run by Democratic governors. This may be, in my opinion, the reason behind why most Democrats are calling for Cuomo's resignation after

the sexual harassment allegations as opposed to the mishandling of the New York nursing homes.

Andrew Cuomo should resign, and if he fails to do so, I hope that the New York legislators impeach him for his heinous actions. The primary motivator for this impeachment ought to be the thousands of unnecessary nursing home deaths that his administration later partially hid. Sexual harassment allegations are serious and are themselves sufficient to warrant impeachment, and I am glad that the governor's own party has begun to hold him accountable. But I hope it is now abundantly clear that Cuomo's actions warranted impeachment even before these allegations came to light.



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The Review office is located
next to the Wimmer Bridge.
Office Number:
724-805-2513

Contributions, Comments,
Questions, Advertising:
review@stvincent.edu

Website:
stvincentreview.com

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