

NEW-ON-NEWS

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

(SSS-TRIO & Act 101)

Saint Vincent College • Latrobe, PA 15650

November 2025

Summer Bridge Program 2025

--by Briana Turner, freshman Biology major



My name is Briana Turner, and I am a freshman Biology major. Compared to most of the class of '29, I'd say I've had a different college experience since it started for me in the summer. This is

thanks to the Summer Bridge Program.

To be honest, I didn't completely understand what the Summer Bridge Program was besides it being a program that cut my summer short a bit. Upon arriving, however, I learned that the Summer Bridge Program was an initiative that not only prepares incoming freshmen for what being a Saint Vincent College student will be like, but also allows for friendships to form, connections to be made, and a better understanding of what college life will be like before school even starts up.



Within these three weeks, I took two classes, one of which was a class taught by Mrs. Tayia Karpinski called Emerging Adulthood.

Though the name alone can give you an idea of what the class was about, she taught more than that. We learned about the resources at Saint Vincent, met monks and faculty members, and even learned our way

around campus via a scavenger hunt. Overall, this class proposed the idea that college life will be nothing like high school. As a person who came from a small Catholic high school, coming to a small Catholic college does not seem that different to me. The one major difference I see is the freedom we now have. We are free to choose our classes and professors, free to leave campus whenever, and just free to simply be adults for the first time in our lives.



In addition to taking classes, we also got to participate in some fun activities, which helped us form friendships. We had a comedian come in, we had a mentor dinner, we went to a cat café, and best of all, we got to play BINGO, which is how I

developed my love for the game, honestly. Without the Summer Bridge Program, I would've been terrified of meeting new people or walking around campus, having no idea where I was going.

Thankfully, by the time fall classes started, I felt comfortable, as if I had done this before. I wasn't scared of meeting new people, but rather excited, and I was fairly familiar with the campus. Throughout the three weeks I spent between Alfred, Wimmer, and DiPavoda, I managed to make friends and get to know the familiar faces I still see on a day-to-day basis!



Being a Summer Bridge Mentor

--by Vincent DeRosa, junior Management major



Being a mentor for the Summer Bridge Program is something special. It gives you a chance to mentor younger students by helping to guide them to successful ideals when beginning college life. I have been part of the 3-week Summer Bridge Program since I started here at SVC.

When becoming a mentor, you must find a middle ground. Yes, we hold an authoritative position, but it is also the start of new connections and friendships. I find that once you become a mentor, the job is never over. We become a person that can always guide, help, and provide support for those that may need it.



During the program we make sure the incoming freshmen attend their classes or scheduled programming on time and don't get lost in the

Hogwarts-like hallways of Saint Vincent. But we also make sure they are comfortable. Most of these students are away from home and living mostly on their own for the first time. I may exaggerate a little, but during those three weeks the mentors are on call for any situation that may arise no matter how small or big. We have many jobs all filled into one, but the most important, I find, is we become a little support boat that follows behind them as their college journey begins.



Throughout those short three weeks, we have a lot of fun with the mentees, as well. We come up with stress-free activities for them, such

as movie nights, going to the pool during the weekends, and playing kickball on the turf field, which can get competitive at times. We also find giving the mentees some free time is important, replicating what the normal semester would be like and having them learn time management with a little help from us. I find letting certain things happen naturally; forming friend groups or learning how to study at a college level is also important.



The mentees learn how college works, but with a little more structure and understanding. This is where the special side of being a mentor starts to take hold. Once the fall semester begins, it isn't possible to be there

for the new freshmen every step of the way, as we are students ourselves. So as the three weeks progress, our strictness starts to soften, and it allows the students to slowly understand that their college journey comes down to their own decisions and behaviors.

Guiding these incoming freshmen to make the most responsible decisions is key. As they sail into the vast ocean of higher education, we tag behind them in the little support boat, cheering for them, and we make sure they know we are only a text or call away if they need us.

Mission Trip to Brazil

--by Kayla McClucas, junior Psychology major



My name is Kayla McClucas, and I am a junior Psychology major with a Biological Psychology minor. I remember one day getting an email from my academic coach that I needed to meet with her. So

many thoughts about what I could possibly have done wrong went through my head. I was not prepared to be asked if I would like to go to Brazil on a mission trip. My academic coach went on this trip years prior when she was a student here, so she was able to tell me about all the fun and impactful things that I would be doing. Of course, I said yes and cried tears of joy when I left her office that day. It was a no-brainer for me to go, and I immediately called my grandma to tell her that I got a scholarship to go to Brazil in the summer.

It took me a long time to process what a blessing had just been given to me, but as they say hindsight is 20/20. I had never been out of the country before, and I never really went on many vacations, so the nerves were definitely present. However, going on this trip would mean that I would get to be the light in poverty-stricken areas in Sao Paulo, Brazil for a little over a week. Being on the plane for over nine hours (without a neck pillow) gave me plenty of time to think about what I hoped to gain from the trip. The answer was to feel “full”: full of love, kindness, and God’s grace. Little did I know that I would get much more from this trip.

Meeting the sisters at the convent we would be staying at was life changing. They welcomed complete strangers from a different country right



into their space and made sure that we were comfortable. They made us fresh bread daily and always made sure we were full. That was one thing that Brazil had that I miss daily--their hospitality. Going to the favelas (low-income informal settlements) to immerse ourselves into the culture and bless homes was eye-opening, too. The people there had very little but made sure that we were not hungry. A lovely family made us a cake and even taught me how to rollerblade! Those people were not poor in a spiritual way, which brought out the beauty from the dirty streets.



Although the sisters and the favelas were impactful, the biggest impact on me during the trip was the children I met. I had brought gifts from my house for the children, which I did not

feel was a lot at the time, but I soon realized that the stuffed animals I no longer needed changed the world for these kids. I was so moved by this that instead of buying souvenirs for myself, we went to the toy store and bought the children toys. When we delivered the toys, it was like the whole room was illuminated with God’s light and that was the moment I knew that I had gotten the fullness I wanted.

This fullness repeated itself when it was time to say goodbye. A boy who was my best friend on the trip hugged me. He told me in English that he loved me and would miss me and then looked up at me and cried. I cried with him in an embrace and told him that I would be back. This moment, while sad, was the moment I knew that I made the impact I wanted to, and I now had a lifelong memory.

A bonus experience that I got on the trip was seeing orchids in their natural habitat. I am an avid orchid lover, so this was the cherry on top for me.

Brazil changed my life, and I am forever grateful for this opportunity to be the light, spread God's love, and make new friends along the way. If anyone has an opportunity to go on a trip, do not hesitate. Sometimes taking the leap can be scary, but I promise that the rewards will be abundant and fruitful.

My Experience on the Saint Vincent Men's Soccer Team

--by Javier Tinoco, junior Business Administration major



Hello, my name is Javier Tinoco. I am currently a junior majoring in Business Administration with a minor in Entrepreneurship. I am also on the men's soccer team here at Saint Vincent, and I am originally from Salt Lake City, Utah. Moving all the way to Pennsylvania

was a big move for me; however, it was a sacrifice I chose to make to pursue an education and be the first in my family to attend college.

My first two seasons playing for the men's soccer team were very rough because I was always feeling far from home. However, I found a family within

the team. Being away from my family was the hardest thing I had to go through, but having my teammates by my side and forming a brotherhood amongst our team was key for me to staying here at Saint Vincent.



This team has grown so much since I've been here, and it was beautiful to see how our season went. We all worked so hard to get to the play-offs, and believe me, we struggled to get where we are today. Despite all the setbacks our team has had, we never gave up on each other. You could see the hunger in the team to fight for what we always knew we were capable of doing.

Our team has a lot of depth, which means there is always competition in training to earn a starting spot. However, our team has been able to balance and understand our roles. Whether we play the whole game or go on for only 10 minutes, we all know we are expected to give more than 100% during the time we play.

Soccer has always been a huge part of my life. Since I was very young, my father taught me to play this beautiful game. Not only that, but *futbol* (the Spanish word for soccer) is a huge part of our identity as Peruvians. Coming from Peru, my father even played semiprofessional *futbol* when he lived there.

I'm glad I can play the game I love and pursue an education at the same time. We had a strong season due to our high ambitions to make this season one to remember. This program will only continue to

grow with all the values and beliefs we are bringing to this team.

Planning for Graduate School

--by Kayla Sharman, senior Psychology major



I am a senior Psychology major, and I am planning to attend graduate school in physical therapy. Researching grad schools is not as scary as most people think. The process is definitely not easy, but if you are willing to do the work, it can go smoothly.

The first step in researching grad schools is determining what type of program you want to go into. Once that's done, you will need to research the application process that is required for that type of program and then start looking into schools that have your desired program. Things to consider when you look at schools are exam pass rates (if applicable), graduation rate, all prerequisite requirements (schooling and observation hours), and what type of learning curriculum it uses. The application process is semi-costly, so taking the time to research can save you a lot of money in the end.

For physical therapy, almost every school requires the use of PTCAS (Physical Therapist Centralized Application Services) to apply for their program. Some also required an additional application specific to their school - which is good information to know because they will not review your application without it. PTCAS has four separate sections, including personal information, schooling, and experience. It also keeps a list of the schools that you save to your profile. Once all of these

sections are completed, you will be able to fill out individual applications.

Make sure you have access to your transcripts, a general personal statement, and observation hours. When you get into the individual programs, there could be additional essays to write, and you will have to match the classes you want with the prerequisites required for the program. Once that's done, you're all set to submit. I cannot speak for other programs, but if I had to guess it would be very similar and step-by-step oriented.

Although my experience is limited to physical therapy programs, applying to any graduate program is going to take work, time, and money. So, being able to sit down and thoroughly record everything so that schools can see who you are on paper will help get you into an interview. Make sure to create a list of your top three to five schools, make a pro and con list, and then apply. You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain. Good luck to those applying to graduate school!

Editor's Note: Be sure to consult with your faculty advisor, your academic coach, and the Career and Professional Development Center for further assistance with planning for and applying to graduate and professional schools.

Camp Counselor Internship

--by Madison Scola, senior Psychology major



My name is Madison Scola, and I am a senior Psychology major with a minor in Children's Studies. After Saint Vincent, I plan to attend graduate school in Clinical or School Psychology. This summer I had the opportunity to intern as

a Camp Counselor at the Independence Behavioral Health Summer Camp.

Throughout the course of my internship, I worked with a team of school-based therapists and two other camp counselors. Some of my duties included helping with games and activities, supervision, swimming, and setting up things like lunch and crafts. Beyond these tasks, I was able to gain experience with group therapy sessions and different approaches to counseling. I was also able to see the knowledge I learned in my psychology coursework come to life. Each day, I strived to serve as a role model for the campers and hoped to leave a positive impact on the lives of the campers I worked with.

On the last day of camp, I was able to plan and lead the daily group therapy session under my supervisor's guidance. Just being asked to do this meant so much to me, especially knowing that someone I looked up to had faith and trust in me. It became even more meaningful when the campers and therapists cheered me on. Looking around the room at the smiling faces looking up to me was a feeling I will never forget. It reminded me of the "why" behind what I was doing and want to continue to do in the future.

My internship taught me more about myself professionally, academically, and personally. I learned how to interact with a team, and I acquired some skills in report writing and therapeutic practices. Personally, my internship allowed me to enhance my communication skills, reinforce my strengths, and recognize areas for improvement. Most importantly, I was able to gain meaningful experience working with children of various ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Overall, this experience affirmed my goal of working with children and adolescents in the future.

My Experience with an IT Internship

--by Kaiden Danekas, sophomore Information Systems major



This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work with the Ridgway Area High School's IT Department.

Throughout the couple of months I was there, I gained valuable experience providing

Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 help desk support, maintaining and imaging computer labs and Chromebooks, and learning the basics of how Active Directory, Google Admin, JAMF, MDT, and server systems operate.

One of the highlights of my internship was working alongside the assistant director during his first summer in the district. I shared my insights on how summer IT operations ran, as I had a minor role the previous summer. I also acquired additional skills, including leadership, management styles, and industry experience. This experience has been a significant step forward in my professional growth.

SVC Singers

--by Mallory Keffer, sophomore Middle Grade Education major with a concentration in Mathematics



My name is Mallory Keffer, and I am a sophomore Middle Grade Education major with a concentration in Mathematics and a minor in Theology at Saint Vincent. For extracurriculars, I help

lead the Rooted Discipleship group, and I sing in the SVC Singers group.

The SVC Singers is an excellent group to be a part of. We get to share our love for singing and express it to the community. We sing the music of older composers like Haydn and Handel, as well as newer compositions. In my time in the choir, we have sung in Latin, French, and German. We meet every Tuesday around 4:00-5:30 p.m., and we are always looking for new members to join! Like myself, you do not have to be a music major to take this class! No auditions take place, but there is an option to test out your voice part with Dr. Very, if needed, to see where you best fit! If you are interested in joining the SVC Singers, please email Dr. Laura Very at laura.very@stvincent.edu.

We will be singing for the Founders Day Vespers and Honors Convocation in the Basilica on November 20th. In addition, this winter, we will have a concert on Tuesday December 2nd in the Performing Arts Center at 7 p.m. The Christmas concert is a bit different this year, not only highlighting the chorus, but also performing an abbreviated version of the family opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors." This is about an encounter between a poor family and the three Kings on their way to the newly born Christ. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

Dental Mission Trip to the Dominican Republic

--by Bethany Smith, senior Biology major



Over spring break, I had the honor of traveling to the Dominican Republic to serve the people of Villa Hermosa, a borough of La Romana. The journey began when we left campus on March 1st to catch our flights. After two plane rides, we arrived in the Dominican Republic

around midnight, where a lime green school bus awaited us. That's when we met our mission trip advisors, Ally and Will, along with our translators for the upcoming week. We were immediately immersed in a new environment with speakers blaring Spanish music and everyone dancing as we rode along streets packed with cars and motorcycles not using turn signals.

At the mission house, all the girls stayed together in a large room with multiple bunk beds. We learned that there would be no hot water for showers and that toilet paper couldn't be flushed due to the old plumbing systems. Each day, the kitchen staff prepared three meals for us, many of which were dishes we had never tried before. They quickly realized how much we enjoyed their empanadas, a fried pastry filled with meat, cheese, and vegetables, so they made them for us at least once a day.

When we arrived at the school for the first time, all the children were screaming and jumping, ecstatic about meeting us. They gathered around us in groups, all speaking Spanish, eager to tell us who they were and ask countless questions about the United States. They were especially fascinated by my blue eyes and blonde hair. The girls gave me a new hairstyle each day because of it.



Throughout the week, we went back to the school and were able to provide cleanings and fluoride treatments for every student. Many of the children had never received professional dental care before. It was extremely rewarding to see how these small preventive measures could have a lasting impact. Every individual we treated thanked us for the care they received.

One of the most memorable experiences of the trip was visiting the homes of community members. Despite not even having enough for themselves, they welcomed us in with open arms and offered us a place to stay if we ever returned. We prayed with each family as they told us stories about their childhood, how they came to the village, and what everyday life looks like for them. It was extremely eye-opening to see the gratitude they have for the things we often take for granted.

Though my time in Villa Hermosa was brief, the experiences and people I met left a meaningful impact on me. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of Dr. DiCuccio, an SVC alum whose support made this trip possible, and the organization, World Servants, who provided Saint Vincent students with an incredible opportunity to serve others.

Stepping Up to the Challenge Is Half of the Battle; The Rest Is History

--Logan Johnson, senior Communication major



Throughout my years at Saint Vincent College, I've used my time wisely and gone to places I never imagined I would go. I will graduate a semester early in December with a major in

Communication and Media Studies, a minor in Marketing, and a certificate in Organizational Leadership. Originally, I was just a Communication and Media Studies major; however, by challenging myself, I discovered new opportunities to take advantage of and added the minor and certificate.

For one, I never had any experience working in development or fundraising, but an opportunity



Logan Johnson and Staff from the Office of Strategic Engagement and Mission

came up to work in the Office of Strategic Engagement and Mission, where I get to be involved with development and fundraising. At first, I wasn't sure about working in this area, but now I love it and have found a new possible career field I

enjoy. I am also so thankful for the support and mentorship of my team in the office. Without my job in this office, I would never have been named as the inaugural beneficiary of the Margaret F. and Paul A. Murray Jr. Memorial Scholarship for 2025. This scholarship was given to me in recognition of my assistance in the Office of Philanthropy and Alumni Relations, which works closely with the Office of Strategic Engagement and Mission.

Another challenge I accepted was establishing a Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter at Saint Vincent. This idea first came to me after I saw how beneficial it was to be a member of PRSA (Public Relations Society of America). Luckily for me, when I accepted this challenge, I found a lot of support from Dr. Harvey and Dr. Farrington in the Communication Department, who helped establish this chapter at the college. Now, students studying communication and/or marketing can benefit from PRSSA because they have access to free networking events, scholarships and awards specific to public relations and marketing, case studies, webinars, the PRSA Job Center, and the PRSA Internship Center. These benefits are free to PRSSA members and can help advance someone's career rather quickly.

On top of establishing a PRSSA chapter at the college, PRSA Pittsburgh chose to do a panel at Saint Vincent, which I helped organize, along with Mr. Tom Julian, Programming Chair for PRSA



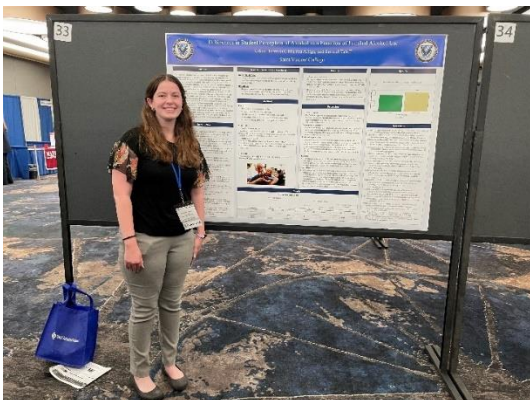
Mr. Tom Julian and Logan Johnson

Pittsburgh. The panel was entitled, “Bridging Counties, Building Community: How Communications Drives Community,” and it featured several local business people from Westmoreland County, along with SVC’s own Dr. Farrington. For more information on joining or getting involved with the student chapter of PRSSA at the college, please reach out to Logan Karvoski, president of SVC PRSSA at logan.karvoski@stvincent.edu or Dr. Melinda Farrington, faculty advisor for SVC PRSSA at melinda.farrington@stvincent.edu.

Stepping up to the challenge has allowed me to do things I didn’t think I could do, and it has allowed me to help others out along the way. So if there’s one thing to do while you’re at Saint Vincent, make sure to step up to whatever challenges you face. You never know what opportunities will come your way or how you could help or inspire someone else while accepting a challenge.

Conference Presentation

--by Kelcie Herrmann, senior Psychology major



Over spring break, I was blessed with the opportunity to attend the Eastern Psychological

Association (EPA) annual conference in New York City. This conference serves as a space for students and professionals to present research and share new advances in the field of psychology. I had the chance to present my research methods project, which I conducted with other students in my Research Methods class.

Our study focused on how family alcohol use influences an individual’s perception of alcohol. We found that people who came from families with moderate to high alcohol use held more positive perceptions of alcohol than those from families with little to no alcohol use. In addition to presenting, I was able to attend other poster sessions and learn about fellow students’ projects and findings. When I was not at poster presentations, I listened to keynote speakers.

Overall, it was an incredible experience, and I hope to return to the annual EPA conference this spring to present my senior thesis!

My Kidney Donation Journey

--by Christina Andrae, Academic Coach



I started my journey to become a kidney donor in January of this year and just had my surgery to donate in October. It was a very rewarding experience! The first steps in the process for me to donate included submitting many online forms through the National Kidney Registry (NKR) and completing preliminary lab work shortly after.

Once all my forms and labs were approved, I was connected with the transplant center at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. Over the next

several months, I had to complete many medical tests, a psychological evaluation, interviews, forms, etc. I was finally told on July 30 that I qualified to become a donor! I was delighted, but it would still take some time for the surgery to be scheduled. I finally had the surgery on October 2, and it went very well!

I was advised that my left kidney was flown to the Philadelphia area and implanted in the recipient, a stranger, later that day. I hope to learn more about how the recipient is doing and even connect directly with that person if he or she is willing. On the other hand, if that does not happen, it still brings me great joy to know that my kidney was successfully implanted.

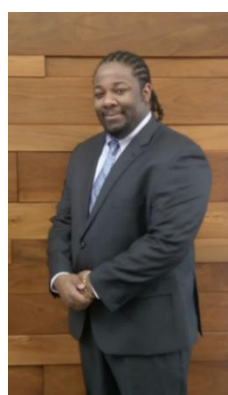
When I started this process, I wanted to help DJ Riddell, one of the graduate assistants who was working here in our Student Academic Success office last year. Although we were not a match, I discovered there are ways that donors can still help their intended recipients even if they are not a match. One of these ways is that when the donor donates to a stranger, the originally intended recipient can receive a voucher to bump him or her up the waiting list.

Another donor helped DJ in this way sooner than I could, so hopefully he should receive a kidney soon. I was also allowed to list multiple voucher holders because of my donation, though only one of these voucher holders can use the voucher (on a first-come, first-served basis). DJ is one of my voucher holders. Since he is young and donated kidneys do not last forever, he is likely to need another kidney some years down the road.

The process of going through all the testing and often having to wait longer than I hoped for the next steps sometimes tested my patience, and naturally, I experienced some pain and discomfort with my surgery, etc. But it was all VERY much worth it. I am glad I donated! Most people are born with two

kidneys but can still lead normal and active lives with just one. I feel that I have been blessed with good health and that God called me to “share my spare.”

We Welcome Ishmael Solomon as a New Academic Coach



We would like to extend a warm welcome to Ishmael Solomon. Originally from New Jersey, Mr. Solomon joined our office this semester as an academic coach. Prior to working in our office, he worked in Residence Life here at Saint Vincent. Mr. Solomon is an alum of Saint Vincent, graduating in 2015 with a

Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and in 2017 with a Master of Science degree in School Counselor Education. While in graduate school, Mr. Solomon worked as a graduate assistant in our office, so this is really a welcome *back*. We are delighted to have Mr. Solomon join our team, and we know he is going to be a great support to students.

Meet Our New Graduate Assistant, Drew Stano

--by Drew Stano



My name is Drew Stano, and I grew up in North Ridgeville, OH. I am currently serving as the graduate assistant in the Student Academic Success Office! I also serve as a graduate assistant for the Criminology, Law, and Society department at SVC.

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I played 4 years of varsity baseball at SVC as a pitcher. During my baseball career, I had the chance to go to the PAC playoffs 3 times, where the team made it to the championship round once and the semifinal round twice! The camaraderie and memories I made during the 4 years I played will never be forgotten.

Additionally, I served on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and was also the Vice President of the SVC Psychology Club! With SAAC, we put together many events and worked on positive changes for student-athlete enhancement at SVC.

With Psychology Club, I had the pleasure of doing outreach to professionals, planning events, and sharing my research at the annual SVC academic conference on The Coach-Athlete Relationship as driven by Motivation and Satisfaction.

I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Criminology, Law, and Society. I am currently studying to earn my Master of Science degree in Criminology at SVC, with an expected graduation date of May 2026. I am actively doing research on The Effects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and How it Reduces Re-Incarceration Rates.

After my time at SVC, I plan on pursuing a career in law enforcement, where I have a passion for detective work. My dream is to work for a government agency where I can use my skills to make the community safe and protected.

My experience with the Student Academic Success Office has been nothing short of fulfilling and exciting! The people in this office truly provide a warm, welcoming, family-like atmosphere, for which I will be forever grateful. I enjoy sharing the resources that our office provides to assist students in being academically successful!

Student Academic Success

Where STUDENTS + SUPPORT = SUCCESS

The Student Academic Success office is funded in part by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and U.S. Department of Education. Its purpose is to help students who have a high potential for achievement to build academic excellence. It is a student-oriented, academic support system, which helps students to develop academic strategies, study skills, time management, organizational skills, and leadership potential.

TIME	PLACE
Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m-4:30 p.m.	4 th Floor, Alfred Hall (724) 805-2255

TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS

Mrs. Lisa Tatone
Director

Mr. Terron Colson
Academic Coach

Mrs. Tayia Karpinski
Assistant Director

Mr. Ishmael Solomon
Academic Coach

Mrs. Nicole Kerr
Coordinator, Academic
Accommodations

Dr. Lea Delcoco-Fridley
Academic
Accommodations
Specialist

Mrs. Theresa Torisky
Academic Coach

Mr. Drew Stano
Graduate Assistant

Ms. Christina Andrae
Academic Coach

SVC STUDY CENTER

The Study Center is an area under the supervision of the Student Academic Success office. It is a quiet, well-lit, clutter-free, and comfortable space created for Saint Vincent College students. The Study Center is located in 23 Alfred Hall, 2nd floor.

TIME

24-Hour Access
7 Days a Week