FACULTY STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS
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It is not an understatement to say, I am extremely proud and privileged to be at Slippery Rock University. While my tenure as president has only spanned 13 weeks, Henry and I have grown to love this campus, admire the community and have enjoyed a warm welcome from faculty, staff and students. I'm not really surprised by these connections, because from the beginning, first as a colleague from a distance and then, a candidate on campus, I could already sense the quality of this institution and the excellence of the people that call Slippery Rock home. Certainly, the professional recognition Slippery Rock has achieved, whether in last year’s Middle States Accreditation review or from the multiple public listings identifying Slippery Rock as one of the best universities in the northeast, a college of distinction, a best value in the country, a top college nationally in commitment to sustainability or historically, the university's recognition by The CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION as a great place to work, your reputation precedes my entry onto campus and highlights the respect that your colleagues have for Slippery Rock University and your work.

These recognitions are not simply given – they are EARNED!

Indeed, Slippery Rock University is an institution committed to excellence and student success through the development of a caring community of lifelong learners - learners who connect to the real world not only through their academic programs, but also by reaching out to serve the society in which we live. This institution not only transforms the lives of individuals, but it helps to shape the character of our community, our region and our state. Indeed, Slippery Rock University is a public institution working for the good of the public.

These values are ones I embrace. This vision is why I am humbled to be here today as your 16th president. And I thank each of you for the time and effort you have collectively given to bring Slippery Rock University to the position of preeminence that it holds today. The intellectual, social and physical development of the campus is truly impressive and I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge former President Bob Smith and Provost Bill Williams for their leadership over the past 10 years - leadership at a critical time in the life of this institution when its transformation and growth truly set the university apart as an educational leader.

Thank you, Bill for your genuine and unselfish leadership of this institution.

And, now, I look forward to continuing this legacy. To continuing to work with you through the process of shared governance to help position the university for further success in the second decade of the 21st century. To continue our collective commitment to:

- A faculty that is full time and professionally credentialed
- To sustaining high quality and accredited academic programs
- To maintaining our investment in quality teaching and learning environments, campus safety and security, and
- To recruiting, educating and graduating high quality, engaged students.

It is said that if you are going in the wrong direction, speeding up does not help! Our direction is not the WRONG direction. It is the right direction for SRU, for our faculty, staff, students and community. Together we will continue our commitment to excellence.

But, forward progress in what continues to be a very difficult economic time is not without its challenges and will require the best of what we can collectively contribute. As you know, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania there continues to be debate over the funding of public higher education. Thanks to the efforts of PASSHE leadership, our legislators, student advocates and many people in this room, this year's state allocation to PASSHE remained on an equal basis with last year's funding level. However, there has been a progressive decrease in financial support over the years. As a result, only 27 percent of our operational costs are covered by state appropriations. While tuition increases have addressed some of this deficiency, cost cutting and greater operational efficiencies have been used to close this gap.
Consequently, today because of careful fiscal management, the institution is in a positive financial position. However, we cannot relax our thoughtful management of the budget. Having said that, at this point in time, I do not foresee the need for faculty retrenchment and consequently, will be eliminating this option from our current fiscal-year management strategies and withdrawing the SRU letter of retrenchment effective today. In reality, we need every person on this campus to participate in the success of our continued vision of educational excellence.

However, to maintain a stable fiscal position, we must recognize our dependence on enrollment. No longer are we in a "build it and they will come" mode. Rather, Slippery Rock University is in competition for quality students, students that we believe can take advantage of the educational offerings we provide. Enrollment of these students will drive our academic quality and our financial success.

This fall, our credit hour enrollment decreased by almost 1 percent compared to last year. While this difference may not be apparent in your classroom, it represents a significant difference in institutional income – a difference of almost half a million dollars in tuition alone. This amount does not include the decrease in technology fees, academic enhancement fees or student fees that accompanies a reduction in student enrollment, money that we depend upon to run our programs.

To demonstrate the relative impact of a credit hour enrollment reduction, we only have to examine last year, FY 12. After expenses, we ended that year with almost $900,000 in unspent funds. This represents approximately one-half of 1 percent of our total budget. Our financial situation would be similar to you earning $1000 per year, paying your bills and in the end having only $5 in your pocket and the hope that your car doesn’t break down! In reality, we were fortunate to have a mild winter, little snow removal and reduced heating costs to account for this cushion.

So maintaining and hopefully, increasing, enrollment is critical to our financial stability. Unfortunately, we are at a time in the Commonwealth and our country where a declining population is now resulting in a declining number of high school graduates. As a result, there is a smaller pool of eligible college-ready students to enroll at any institution of higher education.

In reality, our admission’s team and everyone involved in the enrollment process did an excellent job this year of admitting more than 1550 new freshmen to SRU as well as 600 transfer students with both cohorts meeting our academic standards. The reason, however, we are down in enrollment, frankly is that we are a victim of our own success. In May, we graduated almost 200 more students than projected. As a result, to maintain enrollment, we needed to not only “reload” freshmen and transfers, which we did, but “refill” for graduates. We made the decision to continue to accept only those students we believe to have the ability to strengthen our University even if it meant a decrease in student numbers, thus, the decline in credit hours. But, that was the right decision for Slippery Rock University. The academic progress that we have achieved cannot, should not, be lost. So we will continue to focus our attention on students of quality and how to attract them to our campus.

I will be working with the enrollment team to determine what we can do together to enhance our market share. Already, I have considered expanding scholarship money and financial aid, adding graduate assistantships, expanding our honors program, and increasing money for undergraduate research. I welcome any ideas you have that will continue to position Slippery Rock University as a Best Choice, First Choice institution. An institution where students make monumental, lifetime decisions that create a rock solid foundation for their future.

But, I can only do so much. The reason students attend and stay at an institution of higher education is because of YOU – the faculty and the programs we offer. If we are going to have a competitive advantage that enables us to enroll the students we want, you are the key to providing the curriculum that will support their development in the 21st century. Thus, I urge you to consider where your disciplines are growing and developing and how our curriculum could be changed, modified and matured to meet the needs of our ever changing society and the people we serve. What does it mean for you and your students to be at the cutting edge, the state of the art in your profession and how can we find our niche to maintain a place of preeminence.

It is often said that challenges are simply disguised opportunities. I hope that you will take the leadership in your discipline to energize where needed, revise where required, develop if necessary... programs that will set Slippery Rock University apart in your profession. We have already started this
process by proposing three masters programs that target new audiences and serve our regional needs. But, there is more to do. This is your challenge. This is your opportunity. This is our need.

Along with the continued development of undergraduate and graduate programing, we have another opportunity, perhaps disguised as a challenge, resulting from the passage of the Higher Education Modernization Act. With the passage of this act, we can now offer applied doctorates, doctorates that may also require a complimentary master’s level of education. In addition, this act encourages entrepreneurial activity for faculty by allowing faculty members to profit from their scholarly work. In October, there will be a series of workshops sponsored by PASSHE to introduce HEMA and how you can become involved with new entrepreneurial initiatives. Ours is scheduled for October 16th. We will let you know more about these workshops as information becomes available.

I would also encourage you to consider how to continue to utilize additional programming times and formats to attract and keep new students at the University. Whether it be winter session, summer session, on-line education, weekend colleges, module courses, or other innovative academic programming, these formats have the potential to encourage adults to come back to an educational setting. While we will always remain Pennsylvania’s premiere public residential university, focused on traditional age students, the changing pace of technology, industry and the service sector will continue to demand life-long learning opportunities for non-traditional students. Life-long learning is what we believe in. It is what we encourage. We must embrace new ways of addressing this need.

In line with our recognition of the importance of ensuring our competitiveness in the market place and preserving our commitment to academic quality, we will be working on solidifying our “educational brand” and image. It is important to continue to recognize Slippery Rock University for its excellence in teacher education, but, we have so many other excellent programs: geology, GPS, chemistry, computer science, accounting, finance, dance, adaptive physical activity, exercise science, Physical Therapy, safety management...to mention a few. We must ensure that these programs are also highlighted.

Towards that goal, I will be asking you to provide me information about your alumni; where are they working, where are they going to graduate school and information about you current students’ activities. The individual and collective excellence of our University will continue to be measured by the quality of our graduates. We have a great story to tell and we must be forceful in trumpeting their successes! In addition, I want to know all of your achievements and professional activities. We know that behind successful students are great faculty. The fact that 92 percent of our faculty have terminal degrees in their field is a fact to boast about and I intend to do just that! Help me. Give me the information to use on billboards, create news stories, put on-line and develop news releases. And, yes, we are preparing an RFP to engage a company to help us revamp and revise our web site. As you know, an institution’s home page is its virtual front porch and ours must better reflect the quality, opportunity and energy of the campus.

Finally, you will see some minor, but significant, I hope, changes in the campus in the next few months. As some of you know, I call it “botoxing” the campus: strategically designed initiatives that don’t cost a lot of money, but result in an immediate improvement. Again, with the focus on enrollment, I have been targeting “points of first contact.” Those are the areas of the campus that visitors are first introduced to and, consequently, gain their first impression of SRU and its culture. Places like the “welcome center” or the first floor of Old Main. So, we will be spending some dollars to enhance and renew the entrances to these areas. We also will be spending money to replace old benches across campus, especially those that do not look welcoming, in fact, almost look uninviting, to create new places to sit and enjoy the beauty that our university offers. New trash bins will hopefully add to the look and feel of the campus environment as well as encourage the proper disposal of trash.

Folks, this is an institution of quality and that quality should be reflected at all levels.

Of course, there are other initiatives that we will be working on throughout the year. Our new performance measures have been approved and predictably, focus primarily on student success, retention, graduation, diversity and institutional enhancements.

We will be finishing the renovation of Patterson Hall and that building will be back on line around the 23rd of this month.

The parking lot between the Smith Student Center and Patterson should be completed about the same time.
The remodel of Miller Auditorium is moving ahead and until that project is completed, the Theatre Department will be housed in the old University Union.

Our Campus Climate Action Plan is completed and has been submitted, setting a path for our campus to reach carbon neutrality within the next 25 years. I have asked Paul Scanlon to oversee the implementation of this plan, much of which is dependent upon conservation of energy around the campus and the more efficient use of our resources.

Using this plan as our guide and adding the programing of the Macoskey Center, I foresee a focus on the campus environment and sustainability to continue to have a prominent place in our institution’s future both as an educational program and cost savings initiative. In this way, it will not be a matter of doing more with less, but rather doing more with what we have.

As always, we will continue to be guided in our priorities by the SRU strategic plan REACHING FOR 2025 AND BEYOND adopted in 2011; a guide that provides perspectives that are contemporary and futuristic, national and international. With this plan in mind, we will review the campus master plan to ensure that our physical plant keeps pace with our campus vision.

One final note, especially for those of you who are joining me for our first semester at Slippery Rock University, let me share a few tips I've learned in my first 13 weeks at SRU as a result of a lightning strike on campus.

- First, if you want to know what's going on at the University, you need to read Top-of-the-Rock the University's daily electronic bulletin and Rockpride Online the weekly e-newsletter. It's all there!
- Second, it's very important that you sign up for e2Campus alerts. I can't emphasize this enough. This is our free, text alert system that is utilized to notify you immediately in case of an emergency on campus. You never know when an emergency may occur which is why it is referred to as an emergency.
- Finally, keep your employee self-service file current. If you change your name, title, address, phone number, it's up to you to update your file. Please, don't miss getting important communications because your file has incorrect information.

I'm sure there are lots of other tips you'll receive along the way, but for now, these three are a good start.

I hope we will have many more times to meet, listen and learn together for I have much to learn from you. I have asked Tina to set up meetings with each department to begin that process. So far I have had the pleasure of talking with nine faculty departments. And, they have reconfirmed my first impression of the faculty, you are quality professionals committed to excellence. I look forward to getting to know each of you, soon!

I would be remiss if I didn’t also remind you of the inaugural week starting September 22nd with a fun 5K run/2K walk. The theme of the inauguration is EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE: EXCELLENCE, INNOVATION AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP.

My sincere appreciation and grateful thanks goes out to the inaugural committee that is working on behalf of the institution to provide a celebration of Slippery Rock University during this week of activities. An inauguration may install a president, but the activities acknowledge the excellence of the institution. During this inaugural week, let us gather together and celebrate **Slippery Rock University** - an institution that has a tradition of excellence and a future of unlimited potential.

Thank you.