REPORT OF THE
President
to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees
Friday
December 15, 2006
I am pleased to formally introduce to the Trustees our new Executive Director of Public Relations, Ms. Rita Abent, a higher education marketing and communication administrator and a former newspaper editor. Ms. Abent has more than 30 years experience in the marketing and communication field. Most recently she served 10 years as executive director for marketing and communication at Eastern Michigan University where she is credited with helping design and implement the university’s first comprehensive enrollment marketing campaign and leading the effort to migrate communication from print to electronic media. I know the Trustees join me in welcoming Ms. Abent.

The day this report is prepared is the fourth anniversary of my appointment as interim president of Slippery Rock University. The changes we have seen in those four years have been remarkable. Most noticeably, our enrollment is up 9.3% and we have broken previous records every single year while simultaneously reducing or holding steady the size of the freshman class for the past three years. During this time, applications are up 25.7% and we are accepting less than 70% of the submissions, the most rigorous acceptance rate in anyone’s memory. All measures of the quality of the entering freshman class (SAT, grades, percent from the top tiers of their high school class) are at record levels. Admission of students of color is up (31% for African Americans and 138% for Hispanics and Latinos). Retention and graduation rates are up for all measures. We have had a successful four years in overcoming our greatest challenge at that point of time.

Nevertheless, we have seen other successes consistent with the goals we targeted:

We continue to achieve our goal to increase the quality of the SRU degree. Our academic reputation has increased significantly over the past four years as we have added new accreditations. We have achieved accreditation or reaccreditation for every program evaluated within the past four years. Recent highlights from the last three months include notification that the Exercise Science Program was one of six schools in the nation to receive the maximum five-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, the largest programmatic accreditor in the health-sciences field. The Commission examined the program’s curriculum, faculty, laboratory facilities and advisory committee consisting of professionals in the health, wellness and fitness occupations. CAAHEP accreditation through 2011 means the program meets the highest national standards of quality. In addition, the College of Education received news that the Department of Education reaccredited all of the college’s teaching certification programs, a necessary condition to offering teacher certification programs.

Our prestige has been enhanced by the good work of our faculty since our last report. Congratulations are extended to the Department of Counseling and Development which, at the Pennsylvania Counseling Association conference in October received the award for "Outstanding Counselor Education Program" in the state of Pennsylvania. This is the second time the
department has received an award from the association.

Dr. Thomas Flynn, SRU communication professor, received the Neil Postman Mentor's Award from the New York State Communication Association at its annual convention. The award was given in recognition of Professor Flynn's unfailing dedication to his students and to the association.

Dr. James Strickland, English, received the Conference on English Leadership Exemplary Leadership Award for 2006. The award was presented at the annual National Council of Teachers of English national conference in Nashville. Strickland is a nationally recognized leader in pedagogy.

Dr. Stephen Barr, Music, was chosen as an ASCAPLUS Award recipient by the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers in the Concert Music category. The award recognized Dr. Barr's body of work as a composer as well as recent performances.

For local community service and teaching water purification to villagers in Sudan, Iraq and Honduras, SRU art Professor Dick Wukich has received the President's Award from the New Castle NAACP. It is the highest honor given annually by the New Castle branch. Evelyn Ward, New Castle NAACP president, said: "I admire him as a person who gives so much of himself. There are not a lot of people doing the type of work he does, and the work often goes unrecognized."

Dr. George Mihalik became The Rock's all-time leader in football coaching victories when he led SRU to a 21-17 nationally televised win at IUP. The victory was Dr. Mihalik's 127th in 19 seasons as The Rock's head coach and moved him ahead of the legendary N. Kerr Thompson.

Dr. Charles T. Curry, SRU vice president for finance and administrative affairs, was honored as one of the top 25 chief financial officers in the region at CFO of the Year ceremonies in Pittsburgh. The awards, sponsored by the Pittsburgh BusinessTimes, are given to financial professionals in the Pittsburgh region for outstanding performance in their roles as corporate financial stewards.

While noting the Pittsburgh BusinessTimes, I want to also give attention to an innovative speaker series created by Dean Bruce Russell based on our growing relationship with the Pittsburgh BusinessTimes. The speaker series, "Success Starts Here," brings business leaders from the "Top 100 Growth Firms" to campus for our students to hear these success stories and encourage and motivate students and graduates to remain in western Pennsylvania and contribute to the local economy.

Dr. Jay Hertzog, dean of the College of Education, has been presented the Penn State University College of Education Alumni Society Excellence in Education Award. He is the third SRU related Penn State graduate to be so honored, joining Dr. Dennis E. Murray, 1963 SRU graduate and Penn State alumnus now serving as an SRU trustee honored in 1989, and Dr. Ronald M. Zaccari, a 1963 SRU graduate and 1973 Penn State graduate honored in 1999.
The Center on Disability and Health received two new grants totaling $216,000 to continue providing horseback riding, exercise programs and health education through 2008 to area residents with disabilities. SRU received a $116,000 grant from the FISA Foundation, a Pittsburgh charitable foundation working to improve quality of life for girls, women and people of both genders with disabilities, and $100,000 from DSF Charitable Foundation in Pittsburgh, which supports health and human-services programs. These grants help reinforce the foundation for the adaptive physical activity program that will be seeking approval for a degree major within the year. This program is destined to be an outstanding example of how the university enhances its academic program and serves the Commonwealth's needs through outreach efforts. More than 250 people benefit from the center's services every week.

Faculty and staff of this quality enhance the academic programs of the university and result in great students and great education. The evidence for this claim can be found within the 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement results. The survey shows that Slippery Rock University students consistently rate their experience at SRU higher than do students attending peer institutions.

The five benchmark categories surveyed include: level of academic challenge; active and collaborative learning; student-faculty interaction; enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. Freshman recorded scores that were statistically higher than their respective peer institutions in all five categories and exceeded the national average of all participating NSSE institutions in three of five categories - active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction and enriching educational experience.

Seniors at Slippery Rock recorded responses higher than peer institutions in all five categories and exceeded the national average of all participating NSSE institutions in four of the five categories - level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction and supportive learning environment.

Three students deserve special mention for their accomplishments, made possible by the learning environment at Slippery Rock University. Jennifer Basich, an exercise science major at Slippery Rock University, won the Undergraduate Student Investigator Award at the 29th Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference of the American College of Sports Medicine for her research showing many college students don't recognize they may need to lose weight.

For researching the effect of obesity on horses, Slippery Rock University biochemistry major Kimberly Negrin placed second nationally in the biological sciences category at the Ninth Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Chemical and Biological Sciences, held at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. At the same conference, chemistry major Amanda Henry placed first in the biochemical science category for her presentation on research into how viruses and cancer affect human cells.

The past quarter has also seen steps to achieve our goal to have the region's premier residential university. The University and its alumni association conducted a ground breaking ceremony on October 21, prior to the annual homecoming parade, for a 2,600-square-foot, $600,000 addition to the Russell Wright Alumni House as a project designed to provide
additional meeting and conference space. Approved by the Council of Trustees at the September meeting, the addition will provide a state-of-the-art conference center and expand much-needed meeting space on campus. It will provide space for commemorating the university’s history and for on-campus classes for alumni. Construction will begin this spring with completion expected by late fall 2007.

The official opening of the Slippery Rock University Foundation, Inc., suite-style residence hall complex was marked September 15 with a ribbon-cutting and tours. Joining in the official opening of the $110-million project were William Thomas, a member of the foundation board of directors, William Cooper, president of SRU’s Association of Residence Hall Students, Regis Schiebel, chair of the foundation, Amie Homa, president of SRU’s Student Government Association, President Smith, and William Sonntag and Barry Welsch, members of the foundation board and its housing construction committee. Building A has 366 occupants, while Building B has 346 residents. Building C, officially called Watson Hall, has 326 residents who moved into the building in October. Building D is ready for occupancy and has one resident. Construction for buildings E and F are scheduled to begin in March 2007. On completion, 2,200 beds will be offered in these new suite-style facilities.

Additionally, the university has completed plans for a new locker room facility for women’s field hockey and lacrosse. With approval today, the new complex will provide much needed quality facilities for our women’s sports programs and will also provide convenient restrooms on the visitor side of the stadium field and additional locker room space during playoff tournaments when games are played in back-to-back sequence.

The university made significant strides in reaching its third strategic goal of financial stability. Receiving the most money ever distributed to the university in the four years of the performance funding program, Slippery Rock University added $4,341,344 to its 2006-07 budget based on outstanding results from the previous year’s performance indicators. The amount received was the third highest within the State System. The performance funding program was developed to encourage the universities to improve both student achievement and success and in all of their daily management operations, and to reward them when they do. The three indicators producing the greatest return to the university were: Four- and Six-Year Graduation Rates (Overall and Minority) - $565,887; Faculty Productivity – Total Credits per FTE Instructional Faculty - $1,093,122; and Employee Diversity – Percent of Faculty who are Minority - $1,370,266. This achievement is the result of the collective will of our faculty, staff, and students. Without the combined commitment of our entire university community, we would not have been as successful.

The university continues to seek alternative ways to enhance its funding and attract revenue streams to support the university’s programs. On the athletic front, the university is proud to announce that it will be the host location for professional baseball this coming summer. The as-yet unnamed expansion team in the Frontier League will play 32 home games in Jack Critchfield Stadium. The season opener is May 29th. Not only will this opportunity provide a modest revenue stream to the university, the team will provide many students a chance to gain first hand knowledge of running a professional franchise. The team ownership is expecting that the university’s programs, notably the sports management program, will have first-hand experience
assisting with this season's operation of the pro club.

As a final note to this quarterly report, the university will conduct its fall commencement on December 16. We are proud to have as our featured speaker Elke Flores Suber, Esq., a '93 graduate of Slippery Rock University. Ms. Suber is the lead copyright attorney for Microsoft's Entertainment & Devices Division and Microsoft Research. Before joining Microsoft, Elke worked for three years as Intellectual Property Counsel for CIGNA Corporation. A Commencement brunch is planned for 11 AM in the University Club prior to the ceremony.