to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees
Friday
March 9, 2007
Quarterly Report
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By Robert M. Smith, President

Four key activities have attracted the work of the university for the past quarter: Strategic planning, budget preparation for 2007-08, gender equity in sports, and guaranteed energy savings initiatives that we hope to implement very soon.

Our work remains on track to complete a university strategic plan by the end of this academic year. For the past quarter, the university planning committee has heard several wide-ranging presentations including an update on Middle States accreditation, a prognostication about the U.S. Department of Education’s Spelling’s Commission report, and a special presentation by Mr. Mike Langely, the CEO of the Allegheny Conference, on regional planning within the ten county area of Western Pennsylvania. These, along with several internal reports about campus strategic planning, have given the committee a sense of the complexity our plan must serve if we are to be responsive to the community as well as our students. The committee has six more sessions scheduled before completing its report.

As part of the university’s overall strategic plan, we have completed a five-year enrollment management plan linked to the university budget. Now, our administration can readily interpret how various changes in enrollment (i.e., total number of students, sources of students by level of courses, and residency) can impact the budget and programs.

The second major issue for us in the past three months has been budget planning. The university has received an early estimate of the variables that comprise next year’s fiscal budget. The Governor has made his proposal for a 3.5% increase from the state’s tax sources. The annual state appropriation provides about 38% of the funds needed to operate PASSHE Universities. Student tuition and fees cover most of the rest. If the Governor’s recommendation is approved, Slippery Rock University’s calculations yield a necessary 4% tuition increase to balance the estimated 3.2% increase in costs for 2007-08. This is a difficult estimate to use with confidence since the final tuition for the state is dependent on the totality of institutional needs across all fourteen universities. Slippery Rock University performs more favorably on both the internal appropriation and the performance funding targets. Therefore, we have a smaller gap to close with tuition dollars than most of the other institutions.

The other significant variable not finalized for next year is the cost of labor within our budget. Our largest labor union settled their contract negotiations in early February and those costs are calculated into our budget planning. However, the faculty union, APSCUF, has not reached agreement nor have several of the other labor unions. Without those cost estimates, we remain unsure of the final budget picture for 2007-08. Nevertheless, we are optimistic that a settlement will be reached and that the two sides will find a satisfactory solution without a major increase in the cost of tuition.

The third issue to report is our progress to reach gender equity within our athletic programs. As
of the end of the last calendar year we had reached a formal agreement on achieving proportional representation between our male and female athletes. By careful management of our team rosters, we are currently in compliance and plan to remain in compliance through the end of this athletic season and beyond. Upon the Federal Court's recognition at the end of this season that we have reached proportional compliance, we will then have two years of data reporting before the final terms of that settlement are completed.

The second suit regarding gender equity was focused on compliance with “Other Benefits and Opportunities” or known as the “laundry list” within the Title IX law. This challenge was to address availability, quality, and kinds of benefits, opportunities, and treatment given to men’s and women’s sports teams. An agreement in principle was reached March 2, 2007 whereby the university will continue to make improvements as well as articulate policies associated with how our male and female teams receive funding and other forms of support. The final details are expected to be worked out very soon with a reporting period of four or five years. Assuming the university sustains its commitment through that period, we will end the gender equity litigation of our sport programs. When this most recent agreement is finalized and the university implements the conditions, Slippery Rock University will be only the second university or college in Pennsylvania in compliance with Title IX.

The final special topic to report to the Council for this quarter is our work on energy savings and environmental initiatives. The centerpiece of our work has been the development of a comprehensive contract to achieve energy savings over the next fifteen to twenty years. Led by BCS, a specialty engineering company, the university is in the midst of an energy audit that is reaching across the campus. Within the next few months, BCS will propose an extensive list of capital projects that are guaranteed to save energy equal to or exceeding the cost of the implementation. As part of the Governor’s initiative to save energy consumption and to reduce costs, Slippery Rock University expects to propose an extensive portfolio of projects based on the audit.

In addition, the university is establishing a host of demonstration projects that will showcase energy savings and alternative energy methods. One example of our work was the award of Silver LEED certification for the Regional Learning Alliance building. The RLA is the only building in Marshall Township to be certified as an environmentally “Green” building at this level of performance. LEED certification is a goal we have now set for all of our new construction on campus.

Recently, we installed a solar and wind turbine system to generate electricity for the Robert A. Macoskey Center for Sustainable Systems Education and Research. The wind turbine was erected at the top of a ridge about 100 yards south of the Macoskey Center's Harmony House. The solar panels were installed closer to the building. The idea is to monitor and manage the use of both to efficiently utilize alternatives to electricity to power the facility. Soon a geothermal well will be drilled to add this third dimension of alternative energy sources to the demonstrations possible at the Macoskey Center. If successful, the university plans additional geothermal wells for buildings that are beyond the central heating system that serves our main campus buildings.
Under the helpful guidance of the new University Energy Conservation Committee, several creative savings projects are being developed. The most recent is to mandate the automation of the sleep mode in our Energy Star computer monitors across campus. The Energy Star setting, usable on Windows-based PCs, shuts the monitor down after one hour of no use resulting in saving more than $27,000 annually in electricity costs on 2,000 faculty and staff computer monitors.

The intent of these efforts is not only to realize financial savings but to establish the university as a leader in environmental work and energy research. That distinction is being achieved through our faculty and student work as well. Notably in the last quarter, two Slippery Rock University seniors, David Fuji and Matthew Batina, developed an abstract on their findings on air pollution research and were invited to present at the American Geophysical Union’s National Conference before 14,000 scientists from around the world. The conferences were so impressed that NASA scientists approached them about working together. In addition, Michael Zieg, assistant professor of geography, geology and the environment at Slippery Rock University, just returned from a two-week research expedition in Antarctica, where he collected 150 rocks he and SRU geology majors will analyze to learn more about the separation of continents. Zieg was selected as one of nine geologists for the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs project.

The university remains focused on its three primary goals: increase the value of the SRU degree, be the premier residential university in the region, and establish greater financial stability for the university’s mission.

We are proud to report several recent achievements by our students and faculty that have enhanced the university’s national stature. The School of Business plan for accreditation has been accepted by the national association, setting in motion the final stages for acquiring that important accreditation. The Art Department has completed its response to the visiting team’s report and now waits for a final decision by the national board in the next two months.

The most recent athletic training graduates proved the program provides a Rock Solid education. The December graduates scored significantly higher than the national average on the National Athletic Trainers’ Association Board of Certification Exam. Students must pass the three-section exam to work as athletic trainers. SRU seniors outpaced the national average in all sections.

Dr. Claudia Balach, director of SRU’s Center for Accomplished Teaching (and a National Board Certified Teacher in her own right), led a cohort of five Sharon City School District teachers earn the prestigious National Board Certification Teacher designation. The designation, recognized across the nation, remains in effect for 10 years. The designation automatically gives the recipient the “highly qualified” designation needed as part of the federal “No Child Left Behind” and allows recipients to meet all of the Act 48 requirements established by Pennsylvania. Balach equates the designation similar to that bestowed on certified public accountants or any board certified professional.

Several recent activities have brought national attention to the university. The Slippery Rock University Jazz Ensemble I, directed by Stephen Hawk, associate professor of music, performed
at the 48th annual University of Notre Dame Collegiate Jazz Festival, the oldest such jazz festival in the U.S. Dr. Hawk's own work was recognized with Nancy Wilson on her award-winning "Turned to Blue" CD honored at this year's Grammy Awards. Wilson won in the "Best Vocal Jazz Ensemble" category.

The university will soon receive national exposure as a result of the U.S. Army Reserves basing one of their new marketing campaigns on the personal experiences of one mother and her son, in this case Lisa and Scott Peterson of Grove City. Scott Peterson was a full-time student at SRU studying political science until he was activated in the Army Reserves in 2006. The Army classified him as a student and soldier. The video is part of the Army's overall campaign to provide information to parents of prospective Army Reserve recruits.

Part of being a premier residential community is demonstrating civic responsibility and civil discourse. One of the most evident displays of our students' sense of community building was the activity associated with Martin Luther King Day of Service. This year continued our tradition of using the King holiday as a "day on" rather than a "day off." The event, coordinated by Robert Clay, assistant director of the Office of Intercultural Programs, and Ms. DaNine Fleming, director of the Office of Intercultural Programs, helped bring more than 300 students back to campus to volunteer for a variety of service projects. In addition, Ms. Alice Kaiser-Drobney, director of the Institute for Community Service Learning and Nonprofit Leadership, organized another sixty-seventy students for community projects in the New Castle area.

The university continues to seek ways to manage its financial resources and initiate entrepreneurial projects such as the recent energy savings activities mentioned previously. For this report, the most significant event in the past quarter related to our financial stability was the arrival of $1.8 million from the Office of the Governor to the Regional Learning Alliance that satisfies most of the commitment made when the facility was built. That deposit closes some loans and outstanding obligations of the RLA.

Enrollment remained strong for Spring 2007. Headcount was up 1.3% (on budget) led by transfer enrollment increasing 5.31%. Among important subcategories, enrollment increased for students of color significantly as did enrollment of graduate students.

Prospective enrollment for Fall 2007 continues to be very strong. Deposits of first year students (intent to enroll) are up 8.6% and transfer deposits are up 26%. The quality of the Fall 2007 class remains consistent with the high quality of the last several years (percentage of students from top ten and twenty-five percent of high school class, SAT scores, and high school grade point averages).

On another fiscal front, the SRU Foundation has completed the financial documents and bond work for the second phase of the residential housing project. Ground breaking for construction is expected within the next month. When completed by August 2008, the campus will have replaced approximately 86% of its residential inventory.

We are in the midst of important leadership transitions for the university. We welcome a new
Director of Admissions to our campus. Mr. W.C. Vance, formerly the Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Toledo, will soon arrive at Slippery Rock University. Mr. Vance brings a strong background in recruitment, especially using technology. He provides an excellent compliment to our enrollment services staffing.

A search for a new dean of the College of Health, Environment, and Science is reaching final stages of interviews. The search for the Vice President of Advancement is expected to be concluded before the next meeting of the Council. In the interim, I want to publicly thank former President, Dr. Robert Aebersold and former Vice President for Student Life, Dr. Robert Watson for serving as Co-Interim Vice President for Advancement. Both are helping our staff retain momentum in our development work.

In a final word about leadership changes, Governor Rendell has proposed two new trustees for confirmation by the Pennsylvania Senate. Pending confirmation prior to the next regular Council meeting, this appears to be the final official service of two of our most loyal and distinguished council members, Dr. Van Peterson and Mr. Kenneth Blair. It is difficult for me to express in these words my appreciation for the service of Dr. Peterson and Mr. Blair. Both provided critical leadership during their respective terms as Council Chair. Both have been loyal supporters of the university in many different and important ways. Dr. Peterson has been a particularly valued officer of the PACT. Both will be missed around these tables but, hopefully, both will remain active in the work of the university and its service to the Commonwealth.

On the horizon are numerous special events of interest to our public and the Trustees:

**Academic Honors Convocation**
The Academic Honors Convocation will be held on Sunday, April 1, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. in Morrow Field House. Awards will be presented to distinguished individuals including the President’s Award for Teaching Excellence, Outstanding Service, and the President’s Award for Scholarly and Creative Achievement. More than 2,000 of our students will be recognized for exceptional academic achievements this past year.

**Kaleidoscope**
The annual spring Slippery Rock University arts festival will be April 18 through 29. This comprehensive showcase of our fine and performing arts programs as well as special presentations from around the nation help bring spring to the campus. A full calendar of events occurs each day of the festival.

**Commencement**
Commencement is scheduled for May 12, 2007, at 11:00 A.M. at N. Kerr Thompson Stadium. We anticipate awarding almost 1000 degrees in beautiful weather. Our Commencement speaker will be Dr. Martha A. Smith, president, Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland. Dr. Smith earned her bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Slippery Rock University and has been president of AACC since 1994.