REPORT OF THE
President
to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees

September 27, 2012
President’s Report

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This is indeed a special week for me personally and for Slippery Rock University. For me, this week is special because tomorrow, surrounded by family, friends and colleagues, I will be formally installed as your 16th president. More importantly, for the University this week is special because each event planned for the inaugural has provided an opportunity for our community to unite in a common purpose, to reflect on the past, celebrate our successes and to envision a brighter future.

In planning the week, the executive committee intentionally looked to our strategic plan, “Reaching for 2025 and Beyond” to provide the foundation for activities in support of the six strategic trends guiding the University’s work.

We kicked off the week last Saturday, by focusing on our commitment to wellness and staging a 5K run/2K walk that drew more than 350 participants and raised more than $3,000 for an undergraduate research scholarship.

Monday we celebrated the arts, and throughout the week we have hosted three symposia that have focused on diversity and access, sustainability, and civic responsibility and personal leadership.

Tomorrow we’ll gather with delegates representing the higher education community, PASSHE, the Board of Governors, the Council of Trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, students and the community to celebrate an academic tradition that dates back to the mid-16th century – the formal acknowledgment of a change in leadership at a school’s highest level, within a context of continuity and tradition.

Friday evening is a dinner sponsored by the SRU Foundation, Inc. to raise funds for an undergraduate research scholarship.

We will close the week Saturday with a student-led community service project, and the planting of a ceremonial tree to signify that the University is now growing in new directions.

I am indebted to the many people who have come together to help plan this celebration of Slippery Rock University, and especially Honorary Chair Eric Holmes and our Council of Trustees, without whom I would not be here. Thank you.

In the midst of all this activity, we have not lost focus on what is our core mission – providing an outstanding undergraduate and graduate education.
As we alerted you in June, we started the year with a slight decrease in student enrollment. The decrease, 153 students (a decline of -1.76 percent compared to last year), is the result of a combination of factors: a demographic decline in the number of qualified high school students; a change in the funding structure for graduate education; and our success in graduating a record number of students last May.

Although our decline pales in comparison to the losses of 400 to 800 students being reported by some of our sister institutions, any loss of students and the credit hours linked to those students, has an impact on our budget. Fortunately, a small budget surplus realized as the result of reduced costs for heating and snow removal due to the mild winter, will allow us to absorb the financial loss without an adverse impact on the academic mission.

Amidst the enrollment numbers were several positive signs. The number of out-of-state and international students increased slightly, as did the average number of credit hours being taken by a student. Our average SAT and entering GPA remained essentially unchanged at 1010 and 3.41 respectively, as did our 81 percent retention rate. We continue to attract, admit and retain high-quality students. As an institution, we are committed to maintaining our standard of excellence – even in the face of external challenges.

This commitment to excellence also extends to our sustainability efforts. Earlier this month I approved and submitted the University’s Climate Action Plan as required under the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment that was signed by former-President Bob Smith in 2010. This plan will help guide the University in its efforts to become climate neutral within 25 years through a combination of education, energy efficiencies and the purchase of greenhouse credits.

Almost simultaneously, we submitted our annual STARS report to the American Association for Sustainability in Higher Education. The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. As the result of our efforts, Slippery Rock University earned a Silver Star – an improvement over the Bronze Star earned last year.

We’ve also been active in reviewing our emergency management plan and training initiatives. University Police hosted a regional active-shooter and advanced emergency training program and have undertaken training for certification on new weapons purchased for the department. The Cabinet recently participated in the National Incident Management System Executive Training and is now certified in that module. Our health and safety officer has laid out a plan for additional NIMS training for key individuals across campus.
and for a structured tabletop exercise for University and local emergency responders.

As you heard this morning, we had significant construction activity over the past several months. The Robert M. Smith Student Center is now open and has already become the "town square" for our students. We will officially dedicate the Smith Center, Oct. 20 as part of our Homecoming Activities. I invite you all to join us. The Patterson renovation and addition are complete and we are now shifting academic programs into spaces that will provide more effective learning environments.

An environmentally designed parking lot – one that utilizes an impervious surface to control water runoff – between the Smith Center and Patterson is now open for visitors, commuter students and faculty. Plans for the Miller renovation are being reviewed in Harrisburg and we are anxiously awaiting DGS approval to implement next steps to move this project forward.

We are also moving forward to fill key academic administrative posts. In July, we welcomed Dr. Keith Dills to Slippery Rock University as our new Dean of the College of Education, and initiated the search process to fill the critical position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. As you know, Dr. Williams has announced his intention to retire in late January 2013 and our hope would be to have a new Provost on board as quickly as possible. The search committee received a significant number of applications from qualified candidates. They have narrowed the pool and will soon conduct airport interviews to identify the most qualified candidates to invite to campus.

When they visit, I’m sure they will be impressed by the quality of our programs, students, faculty, staff and alumni…all of whom, through their successes bring honor to the University.

And, we have many successes we all can share:

- Slippery Rock University was named a Top 100 Regional University - North in the U.S. News & World Report's 2013 edition of Best Colleges. The report describes SRU as offering: "Rock Solid academics; A classic residential campus; A safe, small-town setting; An affordable life-long value; Committed, caring faculty and a once in a lifetime experience."
- For the tenth year in a row, Slippery Rock University was named a "Best in the Northeast" university by the Princeton Review. The "northeast" designation includes schools located in 11 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont and Pennsylvania along with the District of Columbia.
- Slippery Rock University has again been named a Military Friendly
School by Victory Media, the premier media entity for military personnel transitioning into civilian life and publisher of GI Jobs Magazine. The 2013 Military Friendly Schools list honors the top 15 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools nationally that are doing the most to embrace America's military service members, veterans and spouses as students and ensure their success on campus.

- Slippery Rock University's School of Business received its initial 10-year accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs. The ACBSP board of commissioners for the baccalaureate degree commission gave its stamp of approval to SRU's School of Business programs in accounting, economics, finance, management and marketing. The school was cited for its strong faculty member support system and its student-learning outcomes and effective system for listening to its key stakeholders.

- The International Association of Counseling Services has reaccredited our Student Counseling Center. Approval by IACS is dependent on meeting established standards of counseling practice, evidence of continuing professional development as well as demonstration of excellence of counseling performance.

- The Pittsburgh Business Times cited SRU's student housing buildings A-F as the fifth largest LEED-certified project in the Pittsburgh area.

- The American Red Cross named SRU the "University of the Year in the Greater Alleghenies Region," for its educational programming and successful campus blood drives.

- Slippery Rock University was one of six universities featured on the SyFi Channel's summer series, "School Spirits." The series examined schools that were reportedly haunted. The SRU episode featured an alleged haunting of the former Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity house on Kiester Road.

- The University's "Up 'til 2 for St. Jude" fundraising program won the Program of the Year Award from ALSCAC/St. Jude, the fundraising organization for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. SRU has participated in the program since 2007, raising a total of $246,572. Residence Life sponsors the campus program.

- A school-record 48 percent of Slippery Rock University student-athletes earned Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Scholar-Athlete status during the 2011-12 academic year. A total of 206 Rock student-athletes finished the academic year with a grade point average of 3.25 or higher. The Rock's 2011-12 numbers improved 7 percent and 34 student-athletes compared to previous-year marks of 41 percent and 172.

- A team of Slippery Rock University exercise science majors won the national American College of Sports Medicine Exercise Science Student "College Bowl." SRU's team of Eric Geiselhart, of Monroeville; Ryan Spiardi, a December graduate from Indiana, Pa.; and Colleen Thomas, a
May graduate from Hudson, Ohio, bowled over teams from Indiana State University, the University of Massachusetts, Brigham Young and the University of Texas in the finals to bring home the gold. The College Bowl competition tests students’ knowledge in exercise physiology, anatomy, biomechanics and clinical exercise physiology.

- Eric Holmes, chair of the SRU Council of Trustees, was promoted to commander in the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Aug. 22. Holmes, a Pittsburgh native, joined the Pittsburgh Police 13 years ago and has worked in the K-9 unit, narcotics and vice divisions. He was named a sergeant in 2007. He is a certified instructor at the Pittsburgh Police Academy and the Allegheny County Police Academy. Holmes has served as president of the SRU Alumni Association. In 2008, he established the Eric L. Homes Criminal Justice Scholarship.

- The Grove City YMCA named Susan Herman, assistant professor of exercise science, Volunteer of the Year for Healthy Living.

- Tierney Smithson, a political science and philosophy major from Verona, was selected to spend this semester working for the Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission as part of a 15-week internship sponsored by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

- Patrick Burkhart, professor of geography, geology and the environment, was elected a fellow of the Geological Society of America. Burkhart has led SRU student-faculty research expeditions to the Badlands for more than 10 years and was recruited by NASA for Mars research. He has also led undergraduates to the Gulf Coast region of the U.S. to study the effects of the 2010 oil spill and this past summer led a group of students to Newfoundland for a similar study.

- Andrew Ryan, a 2011 geography, geology and the environment graduate, has co-authored an article published by Science Magazine. The article looks at evidence for past volcanic processes on Mars.

- Michael Robb, a 1997 master’s degree in counseling graduate, received the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2012 Award in the nonprofit category for western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Robb is executive director of the Center for Community Resources, the Alliance for Nonprofit Resources and the Nonprofit Development Corp.

- Cameron Daugherty, a graduate student from Jacksonville, N.C., and pole vault standout, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Male Field Athlete of the Year.

In closing I’d like to note three upcoming programs and encourage your participation:

- Induction ceremonies for the Slippery Rock University Athletic Hall of Fame’s Class of 2012 will be Sept. 29 in the Smith Student Center Ballroom
and will coincide with The Rock's home football game against Kutztown University. The hall's 29th induction class includes former football student-athletes Gene Collodi (class of 1963), Ron Hunt (1973 and 1975) and Jim Ward (1998); wrestling All-American Anthony Calderaio (1983); two-sport, student-athlete Ken Denne (1959); women's soccer All-American Sonya Maher (1999); and men's soccer student-athlete Todd Olsen (1985). The 1989-90 PSAC-Western Division champion men's basketball team coached by Bob Barlett will also receive special recognition.

- The Distinguished Alumni Awards will be presented Oct. 19, at a 6 p.m. dinner in the Russell Wright Alumni House and Conference Center. The event is part of Homecoming Weekend. Honoree's this year include: Garry Benford, '77; Dr. Mary Jo Geyer, '73; Andy Major, '88 and one of your own, Trustee John Hicks, '62.
- Slippery Rock University will host the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education 2012 Diversity Summit "Inclusive Excellence and International Education: Charting the Future Together." The event, planned by members of the Council on Social Equity, Campus Climate and Inclusion and the PASSHE International Education Consortium will be Nov. 15-16 at the Smith Center.

With that Chairman Holmes, I conclude my remarks.

Cheryl J. Norton
President