Report of the
President
to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees
Friday
September 27, 2013
Slippery Rock University
President’s Report to the Council of Trustees
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Good afternoon. I’d like to begin my remarks by formally welcoming our new trustees as they begin their term of service to Slippery Rock University and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. I look forward to working with you, and our veteran trustees, as together we chart the University’s course for continued success.

As you’ve heard at a number of committee presentations, this new academic year greeted us with great opportunities and with more than the usual number of challenges; the greatest of which is an estimated $5.2 million deficit in our FY 2013-14 operating budget.

This deficit is due to a combination of events, which are not individually dangerous, but occurring together have produced a disastrous outcome, a perfect storm if you will: the fragile economic recovery, unavoidable increases in expenses and a declining population of high school graduates who are college ready.

Later in today’s agenda, the administration is presenting for your approval a balanced budget for 2013-14 that will keep the ship upright and moving forward. This balanced budget is the result of increased performance funding revenues, strategic reductions in each of the divisions, plus the use of institutional reserves. While these budget reductions were difficult, every effort was made to preserve the core mission and values of the University. I’m confident this budget will allow SRU to continue to provide the Rock Solid educational experience for which the University is known.

While we’ve been dealing with the budget challenges of the here and now, we were concurrently addressing the challenges we anticipate for FY 2014-15 and 15-16. While it is premature to discuss any specific initiatives, it is critical to note that with nearly 80 percent of the University’s budget dedicated to wages, salaries and benefits costs, reductions in the next two years will inevitably include personnel cuts at all levels.

We are conducting our budget planning in an open and transparent environment. We have engaged the leadership in each of the collective bargaining units and have reached out to the entire University community, including students, alumni and friends, to involve them in the process and provide access to all the data and planning assumptions upon which decisions will be made. To facilitate participation, we’ve launched a budget planning website at: http://www.sru.edu/budget where anyone can share suggestions about the budget and read what others are suggesting.

I have pledged that we will work together in a spirit of shared governance recognizing that decision to contain costs and increase revenues lie within the administration, but we must all have a voice.

Friday, Oct. 4, I will be sharing this information with business leaders, our legislative delegation and community leaders at the inaugural meeting of my Community Leaders Forum. The Forum, comprised of a select number of public and private partners from the region, is intended to provide for two-way interaction with community stakeholders through the development, exchange and application of knowledge, information and expertise for mutual benefit. The Forum will meet three times a year (fall, spring, summer). I hope you will be active participants.
On a very positive note, we launched the fall semester amid a wave of accolades that validate the quality work we are doing at The Rock and solidify our position as a BEST Choice, FIRST Choice institution.

- **U.S. News and World Report** again named SRU one of the Top 100 Regional Universities in the North in its annual U.S. News & World Report's 2014 edition of Best Colleges. SRU was one of the top three of five PASSHE schools recognized in the "top 100" group.

- **AffordableCollegesOnline.org**, an online rating service, included Slippery Rock University on its list of colleges and universities with the greatest lifetime return on investment.

- **BestOnlineColleges.org**, a leading resource for online education, named Slippery Rock University's special education programs as one of the best in the nation in its 2013-14 national report.

- **The Chronicle of Higher Education**, a weekly national news and job-information publication for college and university faculty members, administrators and students, again named Slippery Rock University a "Great College to Work For."

- **The Corporation for National and Community Service** named SRU to its 2013 Honor Roll for exemplary community service. Last year, SRU students, faculty and staff contributed the equivalent of $329,794 in volunteer hours locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

- Slippery Rock University was named among the top 100 universities nationally in **Sierra Magazine's** seventh annual rankings of the nation's greenest universities. The report gave SRU kudos in planning and waste elimination.

- **The Princeton Review** named SRU as one of the "Best in the Northeast" universities. This is the sixth consecutive year SRU has been included on the list.

- SRU was again named a "Military Friendly University" by **G.I. Jobs magazine**.

- Just this past Wednesday, **The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette** named SRU as one of the region's top workplaces, and

- **Student Horizons Inc.** named Slippery Rock University a 2013-14 "College of Distinction" for our institutional commitment to engaged students, great teaching, vibrant communities and successful outcomes.

This is an institution that is doing great things and as a public university contributes to the public good.

I am pleased to report that our Master of Business Administration program, which you approved at your last meeting, received Board of Governor approval in July. This unique blended program of online and traditional classes is designed to meet the needs of the commonwealth's high priority occupations in the areas of financial services, logistics and management. The 36- to 39-credit program will consist of three tracks: general, accounting/finance and management/marketing. Our first cohort of students will begin classes in December at the Regional Learning Alliance.

The provost is working with the college deans to develop several additional new market responsive programs including a physician assistant program, health care informatics, a special education doctorate in autism, professional tracks in modern languages and a three-year undergraduate criminal justice degree among others. Each of the colleges is working to restructure fields and courses to better prepare students for innovative career opportunities, and to explore ways to make an SRU education more affordable.
As I noted in my State of the University address, while our traditional market of 18-year-old high school graduates is on the decline, new markets are emerging and we must respond to meet the needs of adult (non-traditional) students, just-in-time learners and year-round learning expectations.

We continue to expand our professional articulation agreements. The College of Health, Environment and Science has added a 3+3 biology agreement with Palmer's chiropractic school and a 4+4 biology agreement with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. Agreements are being finalized for a 3+2 physics pre-engineering degree with the University of Pittsburgh and a 4+4 biology dentistry agreement with the University of West Virginia.

The Institute of International Education has selected Slippery Rock University as one of five higher education institutions in the U.S. to participate in the 2013-2014 International Academic Partnership Program focusing on Vietnam. Over the next year, international education professionals at each of these institutions will participate in a series of training activities arranged by IIE to help them develop their strategy and implement and sustain partnerships with counterparts in Vietnam.

While our overall enrollment numbers were down we were able to maintain the academic quality of our incoming students. The average SAT score for incoming freshmen was 1006 and the average high school GPA was 3.40. 12.3 percent of this year's freshmen come from the top 10 percent of their high school class; 36.4 percent from the top 25 percent of their class.

Our 2012 retention cohort was a phenomenal 82.36 percent. Retention for African-American students jumped 8.47 percent, from 67.39 percent in 2011, to 75.86 percent for 2012. Hispanic enrollment retention jumped 10.25 percent and returning students reporting two or more ethnicities was also up, 4.22 percent.

Faculty, staff and students have worked hard to create a proactive student-centered environment both in-and-out of the classroom experience, which has assisted us in retaining and graduating more students. This past year, SRU experienced the largest number of graduates in its history.

Graduate students, both in state and out-of-state, increased from 699 a year ago to 752 this year, with the increase of 53, split almost evenly - 28 from Pennsylvania and 25 from out-of-state. International graduate student numbers held even at five.

As Michael Jordan once said, “Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.” That’s exactly what we are doing.

Slippery Rock University remains an institution of exceptional people working together as a caring community contributing to the world. We are an institution that is rich in its history, strong in its roots, and with unlimited potential for the future.

As is my custom, I will end my remarks by sharing just a few of the successes of our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

Students:

Slippery Rock University ranks among the best institutions in the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference in terms of student-athlete's academic success, according to reports released by the league office. The Rock's student-athletes combined to post a 3.139 cumulative grade
point average for the 2012-13 academic year, which ranks as the fourth-best in the 16-team PSAC and second-best among the 14 Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education schools.

Seventy SRU student-athletes were named Academic All-American, which ranked sixth among all Division II institutions and first in the PSAC and Atlantic Region.

Kevin Jewel, a Slippery Rock University physical education major and track and field standout from North Versailles, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Male Track Athlete of the Year in voting by the league’s coaches.

The Slippery Rock University Flute Choir, directed by Stacey Steele, SRU assistant professor of music, earned an invitation to perform during the National Flute Association Annual Convention. The event is the largest flute convention in the country.

Caleb Sykora-Bodie, a Slippery Rock University geology and environmental studies major from Harrisville, is spending fall semester interning with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as part of a 15-week program sponsored by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

Christopher Lefever, a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Reading who is starting his doctor of physical therapy studies this fall at SRU, has been honored as a MWA Monthly Coaches Recognition Award winner for his outstanding internship work at Verizon Wireless Corporate Wellness.

The Rocket, Slippery Rock University's weekly student newspaper, just this week won five top awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association as part of its 30th Gold Circle Awards program for outstanding collegiate journalism. Previously, The Rocket was recognized with 34 awards from five regional and national journalism associations for work done by its editors and contributors in 2012-13. The Rocket was one of three newspapers nationwide to be named Most Outstanding University Newspaper for 2012-13 by the American Scholastic Press Association. The Society of Professional Journalists named The Rocket the Best All-Around Non Daily Newspaper (Medium) in their 4th region. Rocket Photo Editor Alex Mowrey received 17 regional and national individual prizes including two First Place National awards and one National Finalist award from the Society of Professional Journalists and two nationwide awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

Gov. Tom Corbett appointed Laura Ordaz, a Slippery Rock University physics/pre-engineering major from Cooperstown, to a seat on the SRU Council of Trustees.

Alpha Kappa Psi, professional business fraternity at Slippery Rock University, received three top awards at the organization’s national convention. The local chapter received the Outstanding Alumni Outreach Programming award for its “Brothers Calling Brothers” fundraising program; the Chapter Performance Award for its chapter activities; and the Membership Performance award for its membership growth.

Slippery Rock University fishing buddies Tyler Branca, a geology, geography and environmental studies major from Hermitage, and Benjamin Tawney, a management major from St oystown, will represent SRU at the FLW College Fishing National Championship next spring. The two, both members of the Bass Fishing Club at SRU, earned entrance to the national event by scoring ninth at the FLW College Fishing Northern Conference in Chesapeake Bay, Md.
Faculty:

Jeff Lynn, Slippery Rock University professor of exercise and rehabilitative sciences, spent a week in scorching Death Valley, Calif., where he provided medical treatment for the legendary Badwater Ultramarathon in temperatures topping 120 degrees.

Joanne Leight, Slippery Rock University associate professor of physical education, was one of only 50 educators from around the world to be accepted to the Google Teacher Academy in Chicago. Leight is now a Google Certified Teacher.

George Brown, SRU professor of political science, directed a faculty development field seminar for eight college professors from across the United States (including one from SRU) in a five-week program in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. The Henry Luce Foundation funded the seminar.

Kathleen Melago, Slippery Rock University assistant professor of music, has written an exercise book of etudes for flute with what she calls "a bit of a twist." "Modal Exercises for Double- and Triple-Tonguing Mastery," researched at SRU and targeting advanced flutists, recently received distinction as a finalist in the National Flute Association Newly Published Music Competition.

Akiko Kotani, Slippery Rock University professor of art emeritus, has been named "Artist of the Year" by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

Benjamin Jirasakuldech, professor in the school of business, was awarded the Best Paper Award at the 2013 Bangkok Conference on Interdisciplinary Business and Economic Research in Bangkok, Thailand.

Staff:

Jessamine Montero-Michaels, senior officer for diversity and inclusion and special assistant to the president at Slippery Rock University, is among those who recently received the Multicultural Leadership Award at the National Diversity and Leadership Conference at California University of Pennsylvania.

Renee Decker, government contracting specialist at Slippery Rock University's Government Contracting Assistance Office, has earned U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs certified verification counselor status. The GCAC is a Procurement Technical Assistance Center providing federal, state and local government contracting assistance to area businesses.

Alumni:

Four SRU Music Therapy students successfully completed their 6-month music therapy internships and were all offered employment as music therapists prior to the end of their internships. Brandon Mace is working at Twin Valley Behavioral Health in Ohio; Rebecca Lewis is working at Masonic Village, Pa.; Megan Neal is working at Bethany Children's Home in Pa.; and Victoria Culp has been hired as a full-time therapist with a private practice in Dallas, TX.

Rachel Popik, a 2012 Slippery Rock University special education graduate from Newtown, is serving with the Peace Corps in Gambia. During her undergraduate career at SRU, Popik spent three weeks in Ghana in an internship, collaborating on a research study with Case Western University's medical program on the effects of domestic violence on access to reproductive healthcare. She credits her internship with igniting her interest in the Peace Corp.
The Oakland Athletics picked Lou Trivino, a Slippery Rock University business manager from Green Lane and a pitcher on the SRU baseball team, in the 11th round of the 2013 amateur baseball draft.

It’s not quite Broadway, but two former Slippery Rock University Marching Band members, R. Courtney Riffer and his wife, Sharon, along with their elementary-age son, are using their talents in a small-town community theater group’s musical. The pair—he graduated as a social work major in 2000, she followed in the same major in 2001—have lead roles, as “Josh Claypool” and “Mary Mantini” in the hometown-written work “Rivertown Firemen’s Jubilee.” Their son, Jacob, a student at Kiski Area School District’s elementary school, plays “Bobby Barnett.” The family lives in East Vandergriff.

Erin Lawrence, a 2009 Slippery Rock University biology graduate and a 2010 master of secondary education graduate, now teaching sixth-grade science at Wake Forest–Rolesville Middle School, has been named a National Science Teacher Association new teacher fellow and a Wake County Public School System Kenan Fellow for 2013-14.

Blaze Foster, a May Slippery Rock University sport management graduate from Monroeville, was among some 400 athletes competing in the 2013 World Dwarf Games at Michigan State University. Foster competed in track and field and swimming events.

Four members of the 2012-13 Rock men’s basketball team have signed to play professional basketball internationally. Gerald Brooks signed a professional contract to play for Club Atlético Barrio Parque in the Argentinian Professional League, Devin Taylor and Darius Clark both inked deals with leagues in Luxembourg, while Luiz Santos signed a pact with a Brazilian team.

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Tim Geibel, a 2000 Slippery Rock University health services administration graduate, is among the “40 Under 40” list of professionals to watch, produced by Mass Transit Magazine.

Wayde Killmeyer, a 1998 Slippery Rock University secondary education graduate, has been named executive director of the Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4.

In closing, I would ask that you join me in a moment of silence for Van Peterson, Frank Kohler and Zachary Sheridan. Van served as a Trustee from June 1995–March 2007. Joan Chew, his wife, served from June 1984 to January 1996. Frank was among those who lost their lives in the tragic shooting rampage at the Washington Navy Yard. Frank was a 1985 graduate who majored in computer science. His wife, Michelle, was a 1986 graduate. Zach, a former Rock football standout and safety management major, died Aug. 3, in Pittsburgh, from a fatal gun shot wound. Slippery Rock football players this season are wearing a helmet decal commemorating their former teammate and captain. (Take a moment). Thank you. That concludes my report.

Cheryl Norton, president