Report of the President

to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees

Friday

December 13, 2013
Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees

President's Report
Dec. 13, 2013

In the words of one of my favorite authors, Dr. Seuss, "How did it get so late so soon? My goodness how the time has flown."

It seems like only a few days ago we were helping our new freshmen and transfer students move into the residence halls. Tomorrow, we will be welcoming 480 new graduates into the Alumni Association.

As I reported in September, we spent much of our first few weeks dealing with a $5.2 million deficit in the 2013-14 budget. The ink was barely dry on the revisions we made to balance the current budget, when we began to address fiscal year 2015 issues.

In both the Finance and Audit Committee and the Academic Affairs Committee there was an opportunity to hear in great detail about the challenges FY 15 presents and the University’s approach to resolving those challenges.

I think it bears repeating that these budget issues are the result of several factors including:

- Declining enrollment
- Level state funding
- Increased personnel costs
- Rising operational costs, and
- Potential minimal tuition increase

We are currently addressing what we anticipate could be nearly a $10 million deficit through strategic reductions in the workforce, cuts in operating budgets and increasing revenue opportunities.

Each division is being asked to achieve a 9 percent reduction in their cost structure. This is a difficult task, but one that is necessary to protect the financial integrity of the University and allow SRU to continue to provide the exceptional learning opportunities for which it is known.

Because of deadlines in the APSCUF collective bargaining agreement, tenured faculty members were notified of workforce actions October 30. Seven faculty members were affected. Six were moved from low enrolled programs to higher-need program areas in which they were fully credentialed and qualified to teach. One faculty member, at her request, was formally retrenched.

Tenure-track faculty and APSCUF coaches will be informed of any workforce reductions by December 15. All other bargaining units, (AFSCME, SCUPA, OPEIU, SPFPFA), and managers will be notified by March 31.

To the degree possible, we are using natural attrition and retirements as a means of capturing the needed FTEs. However, it will be impossible to meet our goals without some furloughs and/or changes in work assignments from 12- to 10-month contracts.

In light of these workforce decisions, I want to be very clear that the budget situation we are facing is structural, multi-year and in no way the result of mismanagement of state resources as was alleged by a recent APSCUF commissioned report. Although Ms. Mercer had an opportunity to discuss the report with the Audit and Finance Committee this morning, I think it
is important to state publicly that PASSHE and SRU found the report contained errors and misinterpretations and should not be construed as a financial audit of our institution.

We are good servants of the public resources with which we are entrusted; a fact that was affirmed through the CliftonLarsonAllen audit presentation this morning, highlighting a clean opinion of our financial results and internal controls.

Against this budget backdrop, several positive initiatives have emerged. Our Winter Session, now in its third year, is far-exceeding credit hour expectations. Our new MBA program will launch next week with a fully subscribed cohort. The program will be taught online and at the RLA and will provide a visible presence for the University in the center of one of the fastest-growing business regions in the state.

We are expanding our recruitment efforts in other markets particularly eastern Pennsylvania, western New York, northern New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia.

We have identified several international markets we believe will provide us great opportunities. I recently led a delegation to China, the Provost was in Vietnam and he and others will be traveling to Sri Lanka in January. We are finding that foreign universities are interested in graduate and undergraduate programs in education, business, recreation, tourism, marketing and public health – areas where we have the capacity and expertise. We are looking to bring cohorts of full-pay students to study at SRU.

Under the Provost's leadership we are also exploring dual enrollment programs, competency-based certifications, letters of completion, three-year degrees and developing additional articulation agreements to increase enrollment and reduce time and cost to graduation.

For example, Slippery Rock University biology majors who want to become dentists or chiropractors have a faster and less expensive option for realizing their dream thanks to SRU's new articulation agreements with partner institutions. The University has approved a dentistry 4+4 program with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine/Bradenton, Fla., and a chiropractic 3+3 program with Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa.

The work of the University goes on. And we do it very well.

Slippery Rock University's online "World Literature" English course has received the University's first Quality Matters Certification from Quality Matters, an international organization that works to improve and certify online courses. The designation, awarded following an external peer-review, certifies that a course meets Quality Matters' standards for excellence in online course design and delivery.

First-year and senior-year Slippery Rock University students participating in the bi-annual National Survey of Student Engagement indicated higher levels of engagement than students at other U.S. masters-level institutions in a number of categories.

The University was selected to host the inaugural Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Conference for Undergraduate Research in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). More than 150 student researchers, including 47 from SRU, presented 80 posters and 10 papers.

Nearly 300 racers - and walkers - took to the streets in September when SRU hosted the second annual President's Scholarship Fun 5k Run/2k Walk. The event raised nearly $4,500 for undergraduate scholarships. My thanks to Trustee Robert Marcus who greeted folks and handed out water as participants crossed the finish line.
Slippery Rock University's dance program was again ranked in the top 45 dance programs in the country and among the top 250 college programs in the U.S. for creative students by "Creative Colleges: A Guide for Student Actors, Artists, Dancers, Musicians and Writers."

Dallas Jackson, assistant professor of physical and health education, was recognized with a Minority Achiever Award at the 39th Annual Salute to Minority Achievers Reception sponsored by Minority Opinion/Talk Magazine.

As part of our sustainability efforts, the University initiated "Flaunt your Fleece Fridays." Beginning Nov. 1, thermostats in all University buildings, except the residence halls, are turned down from 67 to 64 degrees on Thursday evening to reduce operating costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We had an incredible fall sports season. Football won the PSAC-West championship before losing a heart breaker to Bloomsburg in the championship game. Their winning season was rewarded with a spot in the NCAA Atlantic Regional where The ROCK bowed out of the tournament after a loss to Winston-Salem. In voting by his peers, George Mihalik, Slippery Rock University's head football coach, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference-Western Division "Coach of the Year." George was also awarded the American Football Coaches' Association Regional Coach of the Year.

The men's soccer team won the PSAC championship and earned a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Division II Men's Soccer Tournament. Their season ended with an upset loss in their first match.

The women's soccer team was upset in the PSAC championship game, but continued their season with a second seed in the NCAA Division II tournament. The women made it to the NCAA elite eight before bowing out of the tournament.

Our student athletes earned numerous individual awards, which are listed in your written report, including 8 All-America honors.

As we close the academic semester, staff, faculty and students are busy preparing for the launch of our 125th anniversary year. More than 200 people have been involved in planning activities that will take place throughout the year. A full calendar of events will be posted on our special 125 anniversary website, but I want to get a few dates on your calendar now and encourage your participation. They include:

**Jan. 30, 2014** – Our official anniversary kickoff

The day will begin at 11:30 a.m. with bells ringing throughout the community to signify the start of the event, and as a call for the community to gather for a grand march from Old Main (the oldest building on campus) to the Student Center (the newest.) The official ceremony concludes at 12:30 p.m. with a transition to a student-sponsored festival of fun.

**March 26, 2014** – Founders’ Day

Official ceremony scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. followed by a “birthday party.”
March 28, 2014 – An Evening Celebrating the Arts at SRU

Come be “blown away” by our students in art, music, theatre and dance at an evening celebrating the arts. There will be an invitation only reception at 6:30 p.m. followed by the show at 7:30 p.m.

May 31, 2014 – “Through the Looking Glass”

The bi-annual President’s Scholarship Gala. Enjoy an evening of fine food, great entertainment and a silent auction to benefit SRU students.

Oct. 18, 2014 – We’re going to the “Big House”

SRU will celebrate the 35th anniversary of its first trip to Michigan Stadium by making a return visit. The ROCK will host PSAC rival Mercyhurst in a special PSAC game in Ann Arbor, MI. The teams will try to break the record for the most fans to view a Division II football game. The record crowd of 64,000 was set at SRU’s first game in Michigan Stadium against Shippensburg.

As always, I will close with a sampling of the accolades earned by our students, student athletes, faculty and alumni:

STUDENTS

- Megan Graubard and Caleb Sykora-Bodie, geology majors from Mechanicsburg and Harrisville, won first place awards in the papers category at the PASSHE Undergraduate Research Conference in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- The Online Rocket, an electronic version of SRU’s weekly student newspaper, won the Best of Show award from the College Media Association/Associated College Press.
- Anthony Scibilia, a spring Slippery Rock University history graduate whose grandfather was instrumental in bringing penicillin to the masses, has had his undergraduate paper published in the journal “Pennsylvania History,” the first such undergraduate paper in the past 15 years.
- Kevin Adamik and Eric Garber, music performance/voice majors and Vernon, J. Patrick McGill, a music education major, and Zachary Wood, a 2010 music performance/voice graduate were selected to perform as part of the chorus for the Pittsburgh Opera’s presentation of Verdi’s “Aida” at the Benedum Center.

FACULTY

- Paul Birckbichler, associate professor of chemistry, was named a recipient of the Regional Undergraduate Leadership Award from Duquesne University for his work with undergraduate researchers.
- David Dally, SRU professor of computer science, Dan Miller, an SRU computer science major from Oil City, and Kyle Marich, an information technology major from Enon Valley, were selected to present at The Graphical Web. The trio presented a paper titled "Breaking the Rectilinear Mold: Spicing Up Our Communicative Choreography." SRU joined Stanford University, the University of Groningen, the University of San Francisco and Telecom Paris Tech as one of only five universities whose papers were accepted.
• When he discovered there was no biography of Bella Abzug, one of the most compelling and well-known American political figures of the 1970s and 1980s, Alan Levy, history professor, set out to correct that omission. His latest book "The Political Life of Bella Abzug, 1920-1976: Political Passions, Women’s Rights and Congressional Battles." This book is the the first of a two-volume compendium of her tumultuous life.

• Akiko Kotani, professor emeritus, was named the 2013 Pittsburgh Artist of the Year.
• Thom Cobb, associate professor of dance, plans to retire in July after 36 years at SRU, but will continue to further the cause of dance education by serving as president of the National Dance Education Organization. Cobb was elected president of the association for 2013-2015. He will provide leadership for the 2,600-member non-profit organization as it works to advance and promote high-quality dance education.

ALUMNI

• Skyles Calhoun, a 1979 elementary education and secondary education graduate and now principal of Woodbridge Middle School in Prince William County, Va., led his school to its designation as a “School to Watch” by the Association of Middle Level Educators.
• Jennifer Kennedy, a 2004 music education graduate and sixth-grade teacher at Mars Centennial School, was awarded a Red Apple Award from the United Way of Butler County. The award recognizes outstanding teachers who teach in Butler County.
• Valerie Hoffman Benko, a 2002 communication graduate, had an essay published in “Readers Choice, The Chicken Soup for the Soul Stories that Changed Your Lives.”
• Diane Kuharsky, a 1991 biology graduate, now an instructor in the biology department at Penn State Shenango, has been named recipient of the 2013 Leonard R. Riforgiatio Memorial Teaching Award.
• Vanessa Veltri, a music therapy graduate, was selected to receive one of Pittsburgh’s 2013 “40 Under 40” awards presented by Pittsburgh Magazine.
• Eric Bable, a 2010 music education graduate, has been named conductor of the Canfield [Ohio] Community Concert Band.
• Joshua Young, a 2004 political science graduate and former member of the University’s Council of Trustees, won re-election as a Caln Township (Chester County, Pa.) commissioner.

STUDENT ATHLETES

FOOTBALL:

• Nigel Barksdale, a senior from San Jainto, Calif., was a Super Region 1 finalist for the Harlon Hill Trophy (top Division II player in the nation), 1st-team Daktronics All-Super Region 1, PSAC-West Offensive Player of the Year, 1st-team All-PSAC-West, 3-time USA College Football honorable mention national Offensive Player of the Week, 2-time Beyond Sports Network national Offensive Player of the Week, D2Football.com national Offensive Player of the Week and 4-time PSAC-West Offensive Player of the Week (only player to be honored more than one week).
• James McCombie, a senior from Nicktown, was named 1st-team Daktronics All-Super Region 1, 1st-team All-PSAC-West and a Beyond Sports Network national Special Team Player of the Week.
• John Schademan, a senior from Pittsburgh, was named 1st-team Daktronics All-Super Region 1, 1st-team All-PSAC-West, 2-time Beyond Sports Network national Offensive Player of the Week and 2-time USA College Football honorable mention national
Offensive Player of the Week.

- Cory Tucker, a sophomore from South Park, was named 1st-team Daktronics All-Super Region 1 and 1st-team All-PSAC-West.
- Quindell Dean, a senior from Uniontown, was named 2nd-team Daktronics All-Super Region 1, 1st-team All-PSAC-West, Beyond Sports Network national Linebacker of the Week and USA College Football honorable mention national Defensive Player of the Week.
- Tony Papley, a senior from Slippery Rock, was named 1st-team All-PSAC-West and 2-time USA College Football honorable mention national Defensive Player of the Week.
- Gary Allen, a senior from Pittsburgh, was named 1st-team All-PSAC-West.
- Austin Miele, a junior from Valencia, was named 1st-team All-PSAC-West.
- Anthony Saunders, a senior from New Kensington, was named 1st-team All-PSAC-West.
- Derek Walker, a senior from Pittsburgh, was named 1st-team All-PSAC-West and USA College Football honorable mention national Player of the Week.
- Jake Myers, a junior from Glenville, was named the PSAC Champion Scholar (student-athlete with the highest GPA on a team playing in the PSAC championship game).

MEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

- Morgan Elliott, senior from Erie, was named All-PSAC and All-Region.
- Alex Koksal, a senior from Lancaster, Ohio, was named All-PSAC and All-Region.

WOMEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

- Janine Powis, a junior from Telford, was named All-PSAC.
- Kara Styles, a senior from Windber, was named All-Region.

FIELD HOCKEY

- Lindsay Brown, a junior from Mountain Top, was named All-PSAC and NFHCA All-America.
- Kelsey Gustafson, a junior from Endwell, N.Y., was named All-PSAC.

MEN’S SOCCER

- Dom Francis, a junior from Huddersfield, England, was named PSAC Player of the Week and All-PSAC.
- Stephen Donnelly, a junior from Dublin, Ireland, was named All-PSAC, Daktronics All-Region, Daktronics All-America, NSCAA All-Region and the PSAC Tournament MVP.
- Declan Brennan, a junior from Dublin, Ireland, was named All-PSAC, Daktronics All-Region, Daktronics All-America and NSCAA All-Region.
- Joshua Gray, a senior from Norwich, England, was named All-PSAC, Daktronics All-Region, Daktronics All-America and NSCAA All-Region.

WOMEN’S SOCCER

- Andrea Felix, a freshman from Cincinnati, was named All-PSAC, PSAC Freshman of the Year, Daktronics All-Region, Daktronics Honorable Mention All-America and NSCAA All Region.
- Lurien Impey, a senior from Northampton, England, was named All-PSAC, PSAC Defensive Player of the Year, Daktronics All-Region, Daktronics All-America, NSCAA All-Region, NSCAA All-America, Capitol One Academic All-District, and Capital One Academic All-America.
• Dana O’Neill, a senior from Leonardtown, Md., was named All-PSAC and NSCAA All-Region.
• Allison Harbart, a sophomore from Huber Heights, Ohio, was named All-PSAC, Daktronics All-Region, NSCAA All-Region and NSCAA All-America.

With that Mr. Chairman, I conclude my report by wishing each and every one a happy and healthy holiday season.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Norton, president