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

March 28, 2014
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Percy Shelley once asked, “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?” I think this year most of us would answer…yes.

Indeed, I know I’ve found new appreciation for Mark Twain’s lament, “This spring, I have counted 186 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours.”

Despite the weather challenges, we had a great start to the semester, thanks in no small part to the efforts of our facilities crew. They did a yeoman’s job of keeping the campus safely clear of ice and snow, so the business of the University could continue. As you can see on your “by the numbers” bookmark,” Slippery Rock historically averages about 44 inches of snowfall, this year by Feb. 18, we had already recorded 50 inches. Kudos to the entire team for their efforts…I hope they get a long, long break from anymore shoveling and plowing.

Bells were ringing in everyone’s ears Jan. 30 when area churches and the University rang their bells to officially launch a yearlong celebration of Slippery Rock University's 125th anniversary. The bell ringing symbolized the community’s involvement in establishing the University in 1889 and “called” the local and University community to join together in the celebration. A "Grand March" wove across campus from Old Main, the oldest building on campus, to the Smith Student Center, the newest building on campus, where the University Grand Marshal officially convened the celebration.

A very special part of that day was the launch of our “Reading of the Names” initiative to recognize the nearly 80,000 individuals who have attended SRU since its 1889 inception. Sponsored by the Green and White Society, each weekday a series of names are being read at various locations across campus by volunteers. This will continue through December’s graduation. We are honored that the Trustees will be participating in this project with each of you reading a few names at the end of today’s meeting.

Campus and the community came together again this past Wednesday, March 28, when we celebrated Founders’ Day – the day on which Slippery Rock State Normal School first opened its doors 125 years ago to a class of 188 students. It was an honor to receive accolades from the President of the United States, the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, the Governor of Pennsylvania, the Chancellor of the State System of Higher Education and each of our bargaining units among others.

It was even more of an honor to listen to presenter after presenter share their personal story about the impact this institution had made on them and generations of their families.

The history of Slippery Rock University is one of community, resilience and bold innovation. These characteristics continue to underpin the foundation of our approach to meeting today’s challenges and planning for the future.

I have spoken to you in the past about the perfect storm, a combination of external forces including: changing demographics; declining state funding; increased costs; and modest revenue increases, which continues to impact the financial health and vitality of the institution.
As you know, this fiscal year 2013-14, we faced a budget deficit of nearly $5.2 million that we are addressing through personnel savings (vacancies and attrition), reductions in operating expenses, reserves and new revenue resulting from placing first among all PASSHE universities in performance funding. We did better than projected in spring enrollment and had a robust winter online intersession resulting in an increase in revenue of almost $400,000.

Still, based upon data available at this time, and the "perfect storm" challenges still in effect, we anticipate a budget gap for fiscal year 2014-15.

This financial scenario is playing out at most of our sister institutions. Some have taken a “slash and burn” approach to this challenge. We have not. While it is true that at the end of the day our workforce will be smaller, we are working strategically to realign positions to support areas of high demand and are investing in programs attractive to new markets, particularly non-traditional students.

Over the winter semester, we launched a new master's of business administration program with a first cohort of nearly two-dozen students. More than 60 students have applied for the summer semester. This hybrid program of online and traditional classes, offered at the RLA, is targeted at working professionals.

We have a number of certificate and letter of completion programs in the works. These "content-intense," short-term opportunities provide the "just-in-time" learning experience demanded by working professionals who are looking for "stackable" credentials to complement their degrees. Just this month, PASSHE approved our letter of completion in teaching online. More are in the pipeline.

We hope to gain approval for a master's program in public health and a master's for physician assistants. Both have high-market demand. We are reinstating our online master of history program. Today, you are being asked to approve a new doctoral program in special education—an area of institutional expertise, and again, high-market demand.

We have ramped up our international recruiting. SRU has signed agreements with two universities in Sri Lanka; a faculty and student exchange program with the University of Peradeniya and a 2+2 agreement with ANC Education. Our first student applications have already arrived. We are working on additional opportunities involving Vietnam, China, Egypt, Australia, India, Ireland, Nepal, Ghana and Japan.

Ten students and an instructor from Nanjing University in Nanjing, China, are currently at the University enhancing their English language skills and learning new skills related to the hospitality industry. The project, headed by Kurt Schimmel, dean of SRU's College of Business, Information and Social Sciences, Genevieve Bordogna, associate director for international student admissions, Tess Crispin, adviser for international and study abroad, and Steve Park, ESL program director, is the result of SRU's recent travel to Chinese universities.

Our globalization efforts extend to our domestic students as well. During the most recent spring break, more than 340 students spent their time studying abroad in nearly a dozen countries including Cuba, Denmark, Ireland, England, France, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Costa Rica, the Bahamas and Greece.

International education is an important piece of the fabric at SRU. For some of our students, this means working collaboratively with international students in class, while others take advantage of the opportunity to study abroad. Each of these experiences encourages our students to consider alternative and sometimes contrasting viewpoints and practices. The more
opportunities students have to interact with people from diverse cultures, the better prepared they will be for a global workforce. A skill employers are demanding.

Although the traditional undergraduate market has demographically declined, we have refocused our recruiting efforts to eastern Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia and are working relentlessly to maintain and grow our market share in western Pennsylvania. We know that enrollment and retention are key to our fiscal health and are continuously assessing these areas in order to anticipate and respond to trends. As we shared with you last spring, our marketing tools have changed with market needs and we have moved more aggressively into the digital marketplace. Enrollment Services recently captured two national marketing awards for their work on Instagram and for SRU’s digital undergraduate and graduate viewbooks. The marketplace remains highly competitive.

Fortunately, we have great “outcomes” to share in our messaging:

✓ The University was ranked 77th among the 2014 Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America by Healthiest Employers Inc., a data-research company that focuses on corporate wellness.
✓ We were ranked 43rd of 301 universities worldwide in the University of Indonesia’s 2013 Green Metric University Sustainability Ranking. The survey assessed and compared higher education sustainability practices, with an emphasis on preservation of the campus environment.
✓ Rebecca Burcher, a senior, was recently honored with the Syed R. Ali-Zaidi Award for Academic Excellence, which is presented by the PASSHE board of governors to the top student in the system. This is the first time in the history of the award an SRU student has been selected.
✓ Our student health center is among the best higher education health centers in the country, having earned a three-year renewal of its accreditation from Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health. Only 196 student health centers in the country that are members of the association earned accreditation.
✓ We have a safe campus, and were recently ranked 34th among the Top 60 Safest Colleges in America by University Primetime.
✓ The Slippery Rock University field hockey team posted the highest cumulative grade point average of all NCAA Division II field hockey teams in the nation. The Rock has ranked in the top-five in cumulative grade point average in each of the last five years and has posted the best team GPA in the country three times in the last five years. Slippery Rock owned a cumulative team GPA after the fall semester of 3.56, more than a tenth of a point higher than the next best team in the nation.
✓ The Slippery Rock University women’s indoor track and field team won the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Championship. Slippery Rock earned two individual titles this year with Kaitlyn Clark winning the pole vault and Janine Powis winning the 800-meter run.
✓ The Online Rocket was named one of the top five college websites in the nation by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.
✓ Zoey Prokopick, a Slippery Rock University computational biophysics major, won first place for her poster in the Cellular and Molecular Biology category of the American Association for Advancement of Science Conference. Prokopick’s accomplishment followed 18 months of research with Carolyn Steglich, SRU professor of biology.
✓ The University Public Relations office earned 11 national awards for its work. CUPRAP, the Association of Communicators in Education, awarded the PR staff six CUPPIES, its annual design, writing and publication awards competition. The PR Office won five top awards, including two Gold awards and three Silver awards, in the national 2013 Collegiate Advertising Awards Program.
As you heard from Trustee Laura Ordaz earlier, community service continues to be part of our DNA. Thirty-two Slippery Rock University students used their spring break to provide community service in Savannah, Ga., Salem, Va., and Jacksonville, Fla. SRU’s service organization “Athletes for Forgotten Angels” spent 10 days visiting the African city of Kiserian in Kenya teaching sports clinics and handling service projects. Other students visited Ghana, Nicaragua and other countries. In each of these cases, students paid their own way, as one student put it, “to get more out of the experience of helping others than I could ever hope to give.”

I’m proud to report that G.I. Jobs magazine once again named SRU a military friendly university. This coming week, the University will host a two-day “Skills Learned, Respect Earned: Valuing the Veterans in Higher Education” conference March 31-April 1. The event will bring together higher education professionals to collaborate and share best practices in making higher education campuses more military supportive.

Michael Wolf, Pennsylvania secretary of health and an SRU graduate, Tim Burke, chief of staff at the Veterans Administration Butler Healthcare facility, and David McPherson, the veteran’s global chief medical officer, will be among those addressing the conference. I would encourage you to attend any or all of the sessions.

I also would encourage you to attend tonight’s 125th Anniversary celebration event, “An Evening of the Arts” presented by the College of Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts. The free festivities begin at 6:15 p.m. with a reception and art exhibit followed by performances at 7 p.m. All activities are in the Smith Student Center Ballroom. And please, be sure to save May 31 and plan to attend the President’s Scholarship Gala.

Each day the fine print at the bottom of our digital GOOD NEWS item reminds us that “success is something we all should share.” That’s good advice. So please join us in sharing our students’ academic success at the Honors Convocation April 5. At that ceremony we will also honor winners of the 2014 President’s Awards: Bruce Orvis, school of business, teaching; Tom Sparrow, philosophy, scholarly and creative achievement; Wendy Stuhldreher, public health, academic advising, and Nick McIntire, advancement, service.

As is my custom, I will conclude my report by highlighting a list of accolades and accomplishments earned by our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

STUDENTS

Two, three-member teams from the Slippery Rock University computer science department walked off with first-place honors and $6,000 in prize money in the first Scholastic Challenge Programming Contest sponsored and organized by FuturePOS in Butler. The mobile team, Rock Hard App, included Nicholas Botzer and William Botzer, both from Bethel Park and Zachary Petrusch from Pittsburgh. All three are computer science majors. The web team, Rock Hard Web, included Tyler Bassett, an information technology major from Parker, Jacob Dunn, an information systems major from Harmony, and Eric McAlpine, a computer science major from Greenock. Each team won $3,000. Hongbo Zhou, SRU associate professor of computer science, served as the team’s adviser.

One hundred eighty-four student-athletes earned Director of Athletics Honor Roll status with a 3.5 GPA or above for fall 2013. Of these, 73 had a perfect 4.0 GPA.
Theatre major Samantha Kuchta won first place for Excellence in Scenic Design and Margaret Rial won third place in Excellence in Stage Managing at the Kennedy Center American College of Theatre Region 11 festival.

The Slippery Rock University field hockey team led the nation with 21 student-athletes named to the 2013 Division II National Academic Squad by the National Field Hockey Coaches Association. This marks the second consecutive year that The Rock has placed more student-athletes on the National Academic Squad than any other Division II institution. In order to be named to the honor, a student-athlete must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.30 or above through the fall semester.

Slippery Rock University’s field hockey team landed a Division II best six student-athletes on the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Scholars of Distinction. In order to be named a Scholar of Distinction, a student-athlete must maintain above a 3.90 cumulative grade point average following the fall semester. This marks the second straight year Slippery Rock has led the country in the total number of Scholars of Distinction. Headlining the list for Slippery Rock this year is senior Lindsay Brown, who was also named to the Division II All-America team for her performance on the field after leading SRU in scoring with 13 goals and seven assists.

Brown is a repeat selection to the Scholars of Distinction, as are Casey Young and Melissa Newmark. Joining the three repeat honorees are first time selections Kayla Klaus, Erika Rohrbach and Lauren Shideler. A total of 40 student-athletes in Division II were honored with the Scholar of Distinction title.

Kara Styles, a doctor of physical education graduate student from Windber and a distance runner on Slippery Rock University's indoor track and field team, was presented her third Champion Scholar Award at the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships. The award is presented at each PSAC Championship event to the athlete with the highest cumulative grade point average among the teams competing.

Slippery Rock University senior Hans Lubich earned All-America honors and broke a Slippery Rock school record with an eighth place finish in the heptathlon at the NCAA Division II Indoor Track and Field National Championships. Lubich, a senior from Jefferson, Pa., scored 5,021 points to set a new SRU record.

Slippery Rock University senior frontline players Maurice Lewis-Briggs and Tabari Perry were named to All-Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference-Western Division honors. Lewis-Briggs earned first-team All-PSAC-West honors, while Perry received a second-team honor for the second time in his collegiate career.

Senior punter James McCombie earned a first-team honor and headlined a group of three Slippery Rock University football student-athletes named as members of the 2013 Don Hansen NCAA Division II All-America Team. Senior wide receiver John Schademann received a third-team honor, while senior quarterback Nigel Barksdale was an honorable mention selection.

Lauren Impey a December adapted physical activity graduate from Northampton, England, and Allison Harbart, a secondary education major from North Royalton, Ohio, both members of the Slippery Rock University women's soccer team, were awarded All-America honors by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. Impey was named to first team All-America honors on defense, becoming one of only four defenders in the nation to earn the honor. Harbart was named to second team All-America honors at midfield, one of only seven midfielders in the nation to be named to first or second team honors.
FACULTY / STAFF

Judy Werner, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of mathematics, has received the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics Outstanding Contribution to Mathematics Education Award.


George Brown, political science, was selected from a national pool of candidates to participate in a summer research seminar in India. The seminar will focus on "India: Religion, Globalization and Environment in the 21st century."

ALUMNI

Former Slippery Rock University distance running standout Jeff Weiss punched his ticket to the 2016 U.S. Olympic Team Trials in the marathon Sunday afternoon with an impressive performance at the 2014 Anthem Half Marathon in Virginia Beach. Weiss, a 2009 Slippery Rock graduate, was the first American finisher in the elite field and the third overall finisher, covering the 13.1-mile distance in 1:04:47, an average of a blistering 4:57 per mile.

John Mazur, a 2004 Slippery Rock University parks and recreation management graduate, has been named the hunter education coordinator for the North Dakota Fish and Game Department. Prior to joining the department, Mazur had worked as a private land biologist at the Chase Lake Wetland Management District with Ducks Unlimited.

Josh Rizzo, a 2010 Slippery Rock University communication graduate and former editor-in-chief of The Rocket, SRU's weekly student newspaper, has been named a sports writer for the Butler Eagle. Rizzo, award-winning writer for The Rocket, interned at the local newspaper while a student.

Scott Spinucci, a 1991 Slippery Rock University communication graduate, has had his most recent documentary film "America's First Park: River Common," based on the origin of the nation's first park that was established in Wilkes-Barre, aired on Fox, CW and MyTV. Spinucci, a Wilkes-Barre native, now with AppleCart Films and Integrated Media Services, is continuing to work with elected officials for a national monument celebrating the park's founding.

Jessica Madden, a 2012 Slippery Rock University dance and elementary education graduate, has been hired by Hubbard Street Dance Chicago to teach jazz dance to students' ages 7-11. She will begin teaching musical theatre this spring. Madden attributed her success to the training she received at SRU.

Jason Varnish, a 2003 Slippery Rock University sport management master's degree graduate, now serving as box office manager at Pittsburgh's Consol Energy Center, has received the Venues Today 2014 Box Office Stars Award.
Slippery Rock University and The Rock athletic family mourn the passing of former Rock football student-athlete John Krauland, Jr. Krauland, 28, died as a result of injuries sustained in a multiple-vehicle accident in Hampton Township north of Pittsburgh. A 2009 safety and environmental management major, Krauland was an offensive lineman on The Rock football team from 2004-08. He worked as a loss control coordinator in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh office for the Parish Property Planning and Development since January 2011.

Respectfully submitted:

Cheryl Norton, president