Report of the President

to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees

Friday

June 6, 2014
Last Wednesday marked my second full year as president of this wonderful institution. When I spoke with you last year, having just completed my first year, I reflected on how the time had flown by as I immersed myself in the life of the people, programs and traditions that define The ROCK. I'd like to report today that as I was preparing these comments, I again asked myself the question – where did the time go?

It's been a year characterized by challenge, change and celebration.

The characteristics that define the history of this University – community, resilience and bold innovation – continue to underpin the foundation of our approach to meeting today's challenges and planning for the future.

As you know, we began fiscal year 2013-14, with a budget deficit of nearly $5.2 million. As Molly Mercer, assistant vice president for finance, reported this morning, we addressed that budget challenge through personnel savings (vacancies and attrition), reductions in operating expenses, reserves and generating new revenue as a result of placing first among all PASSHE universities in performance funding, exceeding expectations in spring enrollment and having a robust winter online intersession.

Still, despite some positive early results in our fall 2014 enrollment numbers and additional reductions in the workforce and operating expenses totally nearly $7 million, we anticipate a very tight 14-15 budget. As Molly shared with you in the Finance Committee, IF we continue to receive flat funding from the state, and IF we get a 3 percent tuition increase, and IF enrollment drift stays within the predicted range, we could have a budget scenario that provides a “cushion” of around $800,000, which equates to less than half of one percent of the overall budget. Not a great deal of breathing room, but certainly preferable to other scenarios.

Change any one of the elements in the formula – funding, tuition, enrollment – and we are easily facing a deficit that would require additional cuts and threaten our scope of operations.

As I shared with you in March, rather than taking a slash and burn approach, we made the decision to invest in SRU and, as they say in the corporate world, develop new markets, grow our market share and leverage market demand into new product development. We are already seeing some success in this area.

Our inaugural MBA class is underway and a second cohort will launch this fall. Our request to add a doctorate of special education was approved by PASSHE and is winding its way through the Middle States Commission on Higher Learning process. We’ve submitted to PASSHE a new program proposal for Instructional Technology and Online Education; two Letters of Intent for a master of science in Data Analytics and a bachelor of science in Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering; a letter of completion in Geographic Information Sciences; and a minor in Geophysics. A minor in Developmental Psychology is forthcoming.
Our first group of 10 students from Nanjing University in Nanjing, China recently completed their program of study in hospitality services and has now returned home. Last month, we hosted a delegation from China's Xi'an Fanyi University and signed three agreements in the areas of hospitality, tourism and English.

We will continue to identify select international markets where there is synergy between our programs and market needs. To that end, we are working on opportunities involving Vietnam, China, Egypt, Australia, India, Ireland, Nepal, Ghana and Japan.

We've also seen change in key leadership positions. Earlier today you recognized Dr. Watson and Molly Mercer for their exemplary service to the University. I'd like to publicly add my thanks for their contributions to SRU's success. While Bob heads off on a road trip to Alaska and Molly returns full-time to her assistant vice president for finance position, we welcome two new leaders to SRU. Dr. Amir Mohammadi, joins us as our new vice president for finance and administration. Dr. Mohammadi comes to SRU from Delaware State University where he served as executive vice president and university treasurer. I'd like to also welcome Dr. John Ziegler, our new associate provost for information technology. John comes to us from Duquesne University where he served as director of computer and technology services. I'm confident both will help continue to move the University forward.

In an effort to increase opportunities for students while streamlining the University's administrative functions, we have implemented an institutional transformation process that merges the academic and student affairs units into one. We believe this approach underscores that student learning happens both inside and outside the classroom and that curricular and co-curricular efforts must support each other. The three student affairs units -- Student Development led by Brad Kovalski; Student Services, led by Deb Pincel; and Student Wellness, led by John Bonando -- will report to Provost Way. Once selected, the new student affairs officer will report to Provost Way and oversee these three units.

Amidst the challenges and change, the daily life of the University continues and gives us much to celebrate.

In May, more than 1,635 students graduated, 437 of them with academic honors, and, as Chairman Taylor remarked, "instantly raised the value of his degree."

Lauren Coggins, a May Slippery Rock University therapeutic recreation graduate from Canton, Ohio, and captain of the women's tennis team, became the first SRU student athlete to earn the Division II Arthur Ashe Jr. National Leadership and Sportsmanship Award presented by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association. Lauren will receive her award in August at the U. S. Open in Flushing Meadows, New York.

David Reinhardt, a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Bradford, won the NCAA Division II National Championship in the men's javelin at the Outdoor Track and Field National Championships at Grand Valley State University. The win also earned him his first career All-America honor. Reinhardt uncorked a huge personal best on his third and final throw of the preliminary round of 68.83 meters (225' 10") that not only put him in the finals, but stood up through the final round as the best mark on the day.

During the 2013-14 seasons, SRU student athletes earned more than 280 performance honors, with more expected through the month of June. I invite you to review the comprehensive list at: http://www.rockathletics.com/sports/2014/1/22/GEN_0122148719.aspx
The University was cited as one of the Top 60 Safest Colleges in America by University Primetime, and Educate To Career Inc., a California-based nonprofit, ranked Slippery Rock University in its top 50 schools as part of the 2014 ETC College Rankings Index, an outcome-based rankings index for the real world. SRU was chosen from 1,222 schools included in this year’s report.

For the fifth consecutive year, Slippery Rock University has been named one of the 332 most environmentally responsible colleges in the U.S. and Canada, by The Princeton Review for its demonstrated exemplary commitment to sustainability in its academics, campus infrastructure, activities and career preparation.

The student newspaper, The Rocket, earned 37 awards in a variety of competitions including eight 2013 Mark of Excellence Awards from the Society of Professional Journalists. Alex Mowrey, the newspaper’s photo editor and a communication major from San Diego, Calif., earned five awards, among them the top spot in three categories.

The Rocket scored 27 honors from the Society for Collegiate Journalists including eight first-place awards, and it earned the First Place with Special Merit Award and was one of two student newspapers nationally to receive the Most Outstanding University Newspaper for 2013-14 from the American Scholastic Press Association.

Jeanne Powell Furrie, a 1945 Slippery Rock University physical education graduate and longtime University benefactor, bequeathed the largest legacy gift in SRU’s history - $735,000 to date - as part of her estate. The funds have been earmarked for the Jeanne P. Furrie Scholarship fund at SRU with the first scholarships to be presented at next year’s SRU Alumni Association Spring Recognition and Awards Banquet.

Our yearlong celebration of our 125th anniversary continues. March 26th we celebrated Founders’ Day, the actual opening of Slippery Rock State Normal School, with a formal ceremony that marked the accomplishments and outstanding growth of that institution into Slippery Rock University and included reminiscences, proclamations, celebrations, balloons and greetings from U.S. President Barack Obama. More than 20 resolutions, proclamations, commendations and greetings marked the momentous occasion.

A student-sponsored birthday party in the Student Center followed with the day culminating with the taking of a group photo for inclusion in the 125-celebration time capsule.

Our next event in the celebration is the June 21 Community Picnic. The picnic will celebrate the founding families and the “university the community built.” I hope you will all join us for this special event.

Preparations are ongoing for our Oct. 18 “Battle at the Big House.” SRU will “host” Mercyhurst in Ann Arbor, Michigan for the 35th anniversary of our first appearance in “The Big House.” SRU set a national record for attendance at a Division II football game at that contest - a record that stands to this day, and a record we hope to shatter this year. To do so, we’ll need everyone’s support.

The Alumni Association has organized a variety of options to make it easy to attend, including an overnight excursion, a day trip option or a ticket only option. The University of Michigan is sponsoring high school band day to celebrate SRU’s return, so it promises to be a great fall football weekend in one of the nation’s most recognized facilities.

In April we celebrated two ribbon-cuttings. We opened a Student Veterans’ Center in the Smith Student Center. The Center will provide SRU students who are veterans, veteran-dependents,
active duty personnel, reserve and National Guard members, and ROTC cadets a place to gather, share information and relax. As part of the initiative, SRU became the first university in the commonwealth to pen an agreement and one of the first in the country to support the Veterans' Telehealth program.

Telehealth is a national program that uses electronic information and telecommunication technologies to support long-distance clinical health care, patient and profession health-related education, public health and health administration. The system will allow student veterans to use videoconferencing, the Internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media and terrestrial and wireless communication to connect with VA health services. Student veterans will no longer have the cost and inconvenience of traveling to a VA facility, Telehealth brings the services to them.

We also re-dedicated Patterson Hall. The new academic building was remodeled from a former campus residence hall. It is now the home of the exercise and rehabilitative sciences, parks and recreation and criminology and criminal justice departments, SRU’s Honors. A highlight of the event was the opening a time capsule sealed in 1958.

The University also helped launch PASSHE’s "Stop It Now!" training program promoting community awareness and a higher calling of social responsibility in the area of child sexual victimization by hosting a two-day workshop. The system wide program, backed by Marie Conley, a member of the PASSHE board of governors who is serving as an intermediary between the national Stop It Now! organization and the system, included an SRU team and representatives from other regional PASSHE universities.

As is my custom, I will end my report with a sampling of outstanding successes achieved by our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

STUDENTS

Two Slippery Rock University's finance majors, Darrin Hyde from Springboro and Devin Sauers from Conway, won the $1,000 prize in the annual Woodmen of the World Financial Planning Competition at SRU. This year's competition included working from a financial planning case based around a couple in their 50s planning for retirement, but with three children planning to attend college. The overall objective of the competition was to build a financial plan/portfolio that would allow the fictional couple to be able to achieve their objectives and retire successfully.

Five teams of Slippery Rock University students earned two meritorious, one honorable mention and two successful participant rankings in the 2014 Mathematical Contest in Modeling. Only 9 percent of the 6,755 international teams that competed were judged meritorious.

The Pennsylvania State Athletic Council named freshman Jordan Pacheco, an undeclared major from Rockaway, N.J., the men’s Freshman of the Year athlete for the 2013-14 indoor track and field season. Pacheco was named after an impressive debut in the pole vault. He won the conference championship in the event and qualified to compete at the NCAA Division II National Championships with a clearance of 3.90 meters.

Will Kengor, a Slippery Rock University undecided major from Pittsburgh and a senior All-America shortstop, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference-Western Division baseball Athlete of the Year.
Nikolina Grbac, a Slippery Rock University finance major from Pula, Croatia, was named a first-team All-Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference-Western Division women's tennis singles performer in voting by the division's head coaches. Grbac compiled a 36-16 record this season as The Rock's top player.

Four members of the Slippery Rock University track and field and cross-country teams were named to first team Capital One Academic All-District honors by the College Sports Information Directors of America. The women's teams are represented by three-time selection Kara Styles and first-time honoree Julia Cain, while the men's teams are represented by first-time selections Morgan Elliott and David Reinhardt.

Slippery Rock University senior shortstop Will Kengor completed a sweep of All-America accolades when he was named a second team All-America by the American Baseball Coaches Association and Rawlings. The ABCA, the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association and Daktronics have now named Kengor, a native of Pittsburgh, Pa., an All-American.

FACULTY AND STAFF

Kimberly Smith, Slippery Rock University associate professor of exercise science and adviser to the Triathlon Club at SRU, was recently recognized as a 2013 Bronze Ironman All World Athlete. Her 2013 Ironman, earned at Louisville, Ky., and her half-Ironman earned at Syracuse, N.Y., races placed her in the top 10 percent in the world for her age group.

John Papa, track and field head coach, was named the women's Coach of the Year by the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference. The win was Papa's 19th career PSAC Coach of the Year honor and the third of his career for women's indoor track and field.

ALUMNI

Nicole Henry-Taylor, a 1993 Slippery Rock University history graduate, received the Woman of the Year Award from the Duquesne University School of Law Women's Law Association.

Alfonso "Butch" Angelucci, a 1992 Slippery Rock University elementary education graduate, has been named superintendent of the Slippery Rock School District. He will start July 1. Angelucci had formerly served as superintendent of the Union School District, which serves some 800 students. The Slippery Rock district serves 2,100 students.

Calvin Phillips, a 1991 Slippery Rock University masters of arts in student personnel graduate, was named associate vice president for student affairs at Eastern Michigan University.

Darin Dick, 2008 Slippery Rock University parks and resource management graduate, has been named the Northeast Region Refuge Office of Year at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia. Considered one of the busiest refuges in the Northeast, Dick, who joined the refuge seven years ago, works to ensure that the 1.5 million people who visit the refuge annually have a safe and enjoyable time.