Report of the President

to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees

Friday

September 26, 2014
With apologies to the great Dinah Washington for taking liberties with her lyrics, “what a difference a year makes.”

This time last year, faced with several major challenges, and even more “unknowns,” I spoke honestly with you about a worse-case scenario for fall 2014 that included enrollment declines, a budget deficit and a reduction in force.

Today, as the famous old time radio host Gabriel Heatter would say, “There is good news in the house.”

We’ve enrolled our largest freshman class in the history of the University; balanced the FY 13-14 budget, invested reserves for health, safety and deferred maintenance improvements, and collaborated effectively with all our employee groups to reduce personnel costs through strategic attrition.

A year ago, the FY 15 budget projection indicated a $10.1 million deficit. Today, as the result of the changes implemented in FY 14, the 3 percent tuition increase approved by the Board of Governors, the 14.7 percent increase in the BOG technology fee, a 12.3 percent increase in our freshmen class, a 20 percent increase in international students, and a 21 percent increase in graduate students we are predicting a balanced budget for FY 15.

This $10.1 million dollar swing is the result of increased revenue of $5.2 million and a decrease in expenditures of $4.9 million. That, ladies and gentlemen, is a remarkable achievement, and one that is the result of the entire University community working together to create a preferred future of success, not failure.

I take great pride in the tremendous success we’ve accomplished this past year and feel even more enthusiastic about what our terrific team and campus community will accomplish going forward.

If we are to continue to control our own destiny, then we must continue to invest in our programs, our campus and ourselves.

Programmatically, at the graduate and post-graduate level we are investing in market-driven areas such as the Physician Assistant program, the doctorate of occupational therapy, a master of science in data analytics, a master of public health, and a master in healthcare informatics with a track in healthcare informatics management. At the undergraduate level we are developing a bachelor of science in engineering with a track in petroleum and natural gas, a bachelor of fine arts in dance, a minor in geophysics and a letter of completion in geographic information Science.

We are already seeing an early return on our investment in developing select global partnerships that complement our institutional strengths and address international needs. To that end, we will continue to pursue initiatives in China, India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Turkey and other countries.
Staying ahead of the competition also means investing in our physical environment to enhance our students’ learning experience.

Yesterday, you had the opportunity to tour two repurposed spaces, the Math Emporium in Bailey Library and the SCALE-UP classroom in North Hall that support cutting-edge learning pedagogy. We must, and indeed plan, to recapture and repurpose additional labs and learning areas.

Included in this improvement plan are: the performing arts center, Morrow Field House; the McKay Education Building; repurposing the former student union into a comprehensive Student Success Center, and hopefully, with the help of an industry partner, the construction of a Safety Management Industrial Lab.

In addition, we will have to continue to effectively manage our limited human resource budget to make strategic hires, and utilize existing staff, to support institutional goals in growth areas. This is always a challenge, but as we witnessed this past year, “people support what they help to create,” so we will work with our employee groups to solicit their assistance as we plan our growth.

Last month, an alum gave me a copy of a 1954 Sports Illustrated magazine article in which the legendary sportswriter and editor Robert Creamer wrote: “at Slippery Rock there is a great pride: a pride based on a cheerful appreciation of very real values – a highly skilled faculty, a self-reliant responsible student body, a lively educational program, an atmosphere of friendliness that permeates every part of the campus.”

The values that Creamer praised some 60 years ago are still values by which we define the University today. Values for which we continue to earn external validation and accolades.

We value great teaching with a learning-centered approach and innovative instruction. And for delivering on that promise, have been named “One of the Best Colleges in the Northeast” by the Princeton Review, and “One of the top 100 regional universities in the North” by U.S. News and World Report.

We value engaged students, both locally and globally. In the past year alone, SRU students contributed volunteer service valued at more than $520,768. We send students locally, regionally and internationally (mostly paid for by the students themselves) on CareBreak and Service Learning projects. These activities have contributed to the University being named a “College of Distinction,” “A President’s Honor Roll Designee,” by the Corporation for National and Community Service, and “A top university nationally among masters-degree granting institutions for the number of students participating in short-term study abroad,” by the Institute for International Education.

We value a campus that epitomizes a caring community of respect, encourages a healthy work/life balance and environmental sustainability. Once again, based upon our employee feedback, the Chronicle of Higher Education named SRU a “Great College to Work For.” The Daily Beast has listed us as “one of the safest campuses nationally.” Healthiest Employers, Inc. has ranked us in the top 100 healthiest places to work in the U.S. The Princeton Review named SRU, “one of the top 322 institutions nationally for our commitment to sustainability,” and SIERRA magazine identified SRU as “one of the top 100 Green Colleges in the U.S.” The Smith Student Center earned a Silver LEED certificate, and G.I. Jobs magazine named us, “A military friendly university.”

We value a ROCK SOLID education built on affordability, accessibility and accountability. AffordableCollegesOnline has recognized our efforts in these areas as providing
“A great lifetime return on investment.” EducateToCareer.com named us a “Top 100 Best Value College,” and College Factual said SRU is a “Top 150 ‘Best for the Money’ schools nationally.” And, I’m proud to say, we’ve done this by employing the highest professional and ethical business standards, which earned the University “an unqualified audit with no material weakness or deficiencies,” from CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP.

At SRU, we are clearly walking the talk. We will build on our past and accelerate into the future. I’m confident that by working together, Slippery Rock University will continue to set the standard for delivering on its promise to provide students with a comprehensive learning experience that intentionally combines academic instruction with enhanced educational and learning opportunities that will help them succeed in their lives and be engaged citizens.

As is my custom, I’d like to share with you a sampling of outstanding achievements and accolades earned by our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

STUDENTS

- Three members of the Slippery Rock University track and field and cross-country teams were named to Capital One Academic All-America honors. Kara Styles, a graduate student in the doctor of physical therapy program from Windber, and Julia Cain, an exercise science major from Magnolia, Ohio, represent The Rock’s women on the Academic All-America team, while David Reinhardt, an undeclared major from Bradford, represents the men’s team.

- Slippery Rock University athletic training majors were awarded national scholarships and demonstrated an overall 95.65 percent pass rate on the U.S. Board of Certification Examination. Nicholas Ciccone, Mary Conklin, Cassandra Lipinski and Juliana Smeltz, from Aliquippa, Hersey, Mercer and Dornsife, each received $2,300 National Athletic Trainers’ Association Foundation scholarships.

- Slippery Rock University biology majors have ranked in the 92nd percentile on the Major Field Test for Biology - the highest ranking in University history. Students ranked in the 98th percentile in the “diversity of organisms category,” one of several subsections assessing knowledge.

- A total of 178 Slippery Rock University student-athletes were named PSAC scholar-athletes for maintaining a 3.25 GPA or above during the 2013-14 academic year. A total of 110 females and 68 males represent The Rock on the list.

- An original play written by Kevin Lukacs, a Slippery Rock University history major from Butler and a docent at the University’s Old Stone House, titled “The Stone House: An Original One-Act Play,” was presented at the museum by the Butler Little Theatre.

- Twenty-two of 29 Slippery Rock University athletic training majors passed the latest U.S. Board of Certification Examination. Of these students, 20 students passed the examination. SRU’s overall 95 percent pass rate exceeds the national overall pass rate of 86 percent. SRU’s 90 percent first-time pass results tops the 82 percent national average.

- Tyler Sheppard, a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Hermitage, and Tyler Branca, a geography, geology and environmental science major from Hermitage, captured fourth place in the recent FLW College Fishing Bass Tournament at Chautauqua.

- Timothy Samec, a Slippery Rock University physics major from Drums, has been selected to Team USA to compete in the 2015 International Triathlon Union Age Group World Championships.

- Will Kengor, a Slippery Rock University undecided major from Pittsburgh and a senior shortstop on the SRU baseball team, became the 20th player in SRU program history to
be drafted in the Major League Baseball First Year Player Draft when he was selected by the Detroit Tigers in the 28th round.

FACULTY /STAFF

- Ursula Payne, Slippery Rock University professor of dance and department chair, has been elected to the national board of directors of the American College Dance Association.

- Stentor Danielson, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of geography, geology and the environment, was featured in Pittsburgh Magazine for his paper cutout maps and maps depicting cities in a fantasy style.

- Football has zones, so does basketball. At Slippery Rock University, so does the planning and facilities operation. Its zoned maintenance program was featured in the May issue of College Planning and Management magazine.

- Abbas Noorbakhsh, Slippery Rock University School of Business professor, has found the perfect sabbatical: He'll use his time teaching three, semester-long business courses to some 75 engaged, challenging students - aboard the seven-deck, 25,000-ton, nine-classroom cruise ship MV Explorer as it sails the Atlantic Ocean. The classes are part of the Semester at Sea floating college program operated by the University of Virginia.

- Tim Croll, a 1991 SRU geography graduate who works as a laborer for SRU's facilities and planning, has written and self-published a natural history book, "Slippery Rock: The Philosophical Center of the University."

- "Electra: An American Gothic," written by David Skeele, Slippery Rock University professor of theatre, which was presented four times in Scotland by 15 SRU students, received a four-star review.

- Betsy Kemeny, Slippery Rock University assistant professor of parks and recreations, has been elected to the national board of the American Therapeutic Recreation Association.

- Dallas Jackson, Slippery Rock University assistant professor of physical and health education, has been appointed to the physical activity council of the Society of Health and Physical Educators America organization.

- Robert Arnhold, Slippery Rock University professor of physical and health education, has been invited to participate in a White House Summit and Research Forum on Improved Health and Fitness for Americans with Disabilities. Arnold will share how the national "I Can Do It, You Can Do It" mentoring program can be further expanded and potentially linked to first lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative.

ALUMNI

- The story of a Slippery Rock University four-time All America runner, who grew up in poverty in a family of six children without a mother, was turned into an "inspirational documentary" by a fellow SRU alumnus. The film, "The Vetters: All We Needed" tells the life story of Juanita Vetter, a 1984 SRU communication graduate, and her family. Vetter was a student-athlete on SRU cross country and track teams. The film was co-produced and co-directed by SRU alumna Nancy Pokorny, a 1984 secondary education graduate, and Anne Bruder.

- Matthew Cunningham, a 2004 Slippery Rock University elementary and special education graduate, received a $50,000 cash prize as the recipient of The Chicago Teacher Award 2013-2014 from GEMS Education. He is a 7th- and 8th-grade special education teacher at Chicago Public School's Frederic Chopin School in Ukrainian Village.
Jordan Stehle, a 2013 Slippery Rock University bachelor of music, music education graduate, has been named Teacher of the Year for his first-year teacher work at Jouett Elementary School, part of the Louisa County Public Schools located in Mineral, Va.

Five All-America performers and two championship coaches comprise the Slippery Rock University Athletic Hall of Fame's Class of 2014. The class includes (with their year of graduation and sport):
  - Matt Kinsinger, 1999, football;
  - Jessica Bungo Livermore, 2004, women's tennis;
  - Lori Robinson Nuzzo, 1997 and 1999, women's basketball and track and field;
  - Pat O'Hare, 1965, men's soccer;
  - Nate Thimons, 2000, baseball;
  - Chuck Tursky, 1980, wrestling; and

Tabari Perry, a Slippery Rock University professional studies major from Cambridge, Md., signed a professional contract to play overseas with the Saitama Broncos of the Basketball Japan League.

Kara Petro Montgomery, a 2006 Slippery Rock University secondary education graduate, has been named director of alumni relations at Westminster College.

Robert Stevens, Marine Corps veteran, former chairman, president and chief executive officer of Lockheed Martin and 1976 Slippery Rock University graduate, was honored at the United States Navy Memorial's 2014 Lone Sailor Awards Dinner. The Lone Sailor Award is given to Sea Service veterans who have excelled with distinction in their respective civilian careers while exemplifying the Navy core values of "Honor, Courage and Commitment."

Madeline “Maddie” Williams, a 2013 Slippery Rock University communication major and former Rocket sports editor, has been named a sports department information assistant at Presbyterian College.

Dennis Roberts, a 1988 Slippery Rock University graduate, has been appointed to a second term on the New Jersey Department of Education School Ethics Commission.

U.S. Navy Capt. Kathlene Contres, a 1977 Slippery Rock University graduate and formerly the Navy's highest ranking female Hispanic officer on active duty until her 2010 retirement, will receive the President's Title IX Champion Award at the SRU Alumni Association's annual Distinguished Alumni Dinner.

Patricia Kardambikis, a 1990 Slippery Rock University secondary guidance and counseling master's degree graduate, has been named assistant superintendent at the Slippery Rock School District joining Superintendent Alfonso "Butch" Angelucci, a 1992 SRU elementary education graduate.

Adam Forgic, a 2000 Slippery Rock University secondary education graduate, has received the Human and Civil Rights Awards Educational Leadership Award from the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

In your packets you have a schedule of upcoming University events that we encourage you to attend. I will make special note that in addition to the scheduled homecoming activities, Congressman Mike Kelly will be joining us at halftime to present the University with a flag he had flown over the capital in honor of the University's 125th anniversary. Although he could not join us on Founders Day, March 26, Congressman Kelly had a resolution honoring SRU read into the Congressional Record. I would also point out that Oct. 4 as part of game day
activities we will honor veterans and current members of the armed forces. A special activity that day will include a "Hug a Veteran for $1 and say thanks for their service," event sponsored by our SRU Student Veterans Association. Proceeds will go to military charities.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I conclude my remarks.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Norton, president