REPORT OF THE

President

to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees

Friday
March 20, 2015
As I write these words, the first vestiges of spring are visiting Slippery Rock University...and none to soon I might add. Like much of the country, we've had a bitterly cold winter with enough snow and ice to make us grumble and to cause a few two-hour delays in the University's business.

Monday's 60-degree temperatures (although only temporary) not only brought out the requisite Frisbees, footballs and flip-flops, but also elicited almost a collective sigh from the community with its promise of even nicer days to come. "Weather," the author Terri Gullemets wrote, "is a great metaphor for life - sometimes it's good." Like Monday's weather, things are certainly good at SRU, with the promise of even better days to come.

Since the beginning of the semester, I have spent a good deal of time on the road visiting current and potential international partners, recruiting students and connecting with alumni. I found the experience incredibly invigorating.

A whirlwind 12-day initiative took a team comprised of Provost Philip Way, Dean Susan Hannam, Associate Professor of Business Bruce Orvis, Associate Professor of Physics and Pre-Engineering Aholda Herat, Pam Frigot, director of global engagement and me more than 10,000 miles to Sri Lanka and from there, Philip and me to Vietnam for meetings with SRU partners at the University of Peradeniya and American National College, and meetings with potential partners, including the American College of Higher Education, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, National School of Business Management, Gateway Graduate School, and the Graduate Institute of Science and Management. While in Sri Lanka, our team also represented SRU at a two-city, five-day education expo during which we had the opportunity to directly interact with potential students.

In addition to our partnership and recruiting activities, we also had the opportunity to visit with several international alumni, among them Eric Wikramanayake, the 2014 Outstanding International Student Alumni Award winner. Eric earned his bachelor of science degree in 1979 and his master of science in biology from SRU in 1981. He then continued on to earn his doctorate in ecology at the University of California, Davis. Today, Eric is serving as a conservation biologist/co-principal investigator with the Elephant Research Project in Sri Lanka.

Eric has an impressive resume, having served as a senior conservation scientist with the Conservation Science Program, World Wildlife Fund-U.S. and the Bhutan program, director of the Environmental Foundation Ltd.; a biodiversity system planner with the World Wide Fund for Nature - Indochina Program; and as a conservation scientist with the World Wildlife Fund - US; and Wildlife Conservation Society. He is also the author/co-author of more than 100 publications, reports or manuscripts.

Eric was generous in sharing how his SRU experience helped to shape his career and success in life. He couldn’t speak highly enough about the academic rigors of his program and the personal attention and guidance he received from faculty and staff. It’s a long way from Sri Lanka to Slippery Rock, but Eric said his classmates made him feel at home at The ROCK. Eric was equally proud of his contributions to SRU as an ambassador of his county and the role he played
in helping domestic students learn more about the world and his culture. This is a theme we heard over and over from our international alumni. It's the theme that underscores our commitment to developing and enhancing opportunities for students like Eric to study at SRU and for our domestic students to study-away.

My travels also took me to Florida where we crisscrossed the state engaging with more than 225 alumni living in The Sunshine State. In conversations wherever we went, these alumni - some at the beginning of their careers, others enjoying well-earned retirements - shared a common message of how SRU made a singular difference in their lives.

To witness the excitement of University leaders in Sri Lanka and Vietnam, and the interest our alumni, at home and abroad, have for SRU and their commitment to help the University to be the best it can be was most gratifying.

As I shared with each of these groups, the higher education landscape is changing rapidly and dramatically. This change is represented in student demographics and enrollment, in technology, the changing nature of the world of work and the need to significantly control tuition costs. To thrive in this extraordinarily shifting landscape, we need to act boldly.

One way we are doing that is through our strategic pursuit of international partnerships. Another avenue is the development of academic programs designed to meet student demands as well as to align with current and emerging workforce needs of Pennsylvania and beyond.

Since April 2014, the Board of Governors, based upon your recommendation, has approved our Doctorate of Education in special education, master of education in technology for online instruction, and the master of science in physician assistant studies. We have several additional programs in development.

We have aligned all of our STEM-H - science, technology, engineering, mathematics and health professions - programs in one college as a means of providing better continuity and improved course and department linkage. The realignment involved moving computer science and information technology from the College of Business, Information and Social Sciences to the College of Health, Environment and Science.

Concurrently, the departments of political science, criminology and criminal justice, and interdisciplinary programs were reassigned to the College of Humanities and Fine and Performing Arts. These realignments prompted name changes for the two colleges. CBISS will now be known as the College of Business to better reflect its focus. CHFP will now be known as the College of Liberal Arts, in part, to demonstrate our commitment to the liberal arts as the foundation of a fully rounded undergraduate education.

We continue to fine-tune the merger of academic and student affairs into one cohesive unit focused on student success in-and-out of the classroom. The merger is already paying off in greater collaboration between and among the various departments, and new initiatives for our students.

I am happy to report we have finished the interview process for the associate provost for student success and hope to conclude the search process soon.

That individual will join a team of faculty, staff and students who continue to excel and help to keep the Slippery Rock brand front and center and the accolades coming. Since our last meeting:
• Slippery Rock University was named to the 2014 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

• Slippery Rock University was designated a 2015 STEM Jobs Approved College as part of the inaugural list created by Victory Media.

• Slippery Rock University received the 2015 Outstanding Adapted Physical Activity Program Award from the Society of Health and Physical Educators of America organization for its leadership in the promotion of health and wellness as a lifelong core value for young people with disabilities.

• Slippery Rock University was included in the worldwide Top 100 List of the 2014 University of Indonesia Green Metrics World University rankings. SRU made the list at the number 64 spot. Some 360 universities from 62 countries competed in the worldwide program.

• Slippery Rock University’s College of Education master’s degree in education was ranked in the top 25 of such schools in the nation by BestColleges.com.

• American City Business Journals, parent of the Pittsburgh Business Times, ranked Slippery Rock University among the top 150 public colleges and universities in the U.S.

• The Slippery Rock University field hockey team topped the nation in earning academic honors for its outstanding performance in the classroom. The team posted the highest cumulative grade point average of all NCAA Division II field hockey teams to earn the Academic Team Award from the National Field Hockey Coaches Association and Gladiator by SGI.

• The University Communication and Public Affairs Office and staff brought home a slew of national awards for their work promoting the University. The office captured 17 gold, silver and bronze medallions for posters, booklets, game day sports programs and materials promoting the University’s 125th Anniversary. The office received six Educational Advertising Awards, three CUPRA, creative excellence in marketing and communication awards, and eight Collegiate Advertising Awards. Sandy Busch, SRU graphic communication director, earned 10 of the 17 awards. The other awards went to Jon Holtz, SRU director of athletic communication, Aaron Moore, former graphic designer and Megan Shever and Christine McMasters, former student designers in the Office who graduated in 2014.

These accolades demonstrate that even though the University has become a much more complex organization than many of our alumni remember, our mission remains the same – to provide a high quality, nationally recognized education at an affordable cost. I am confident that through our rigorous curriculum, with a focus on service, we will continue to educate and transform every student.

There are some changes at the University that I'm not quite as happy to share: those are retirements of two key members of the leadership team. Barbara Ender, vice president for University Advancement, will be retiring at the end of the month. Although you recognized her earlier for her service, I would publicly like to acknowledge Barbara and thank her for all her efforts on behalf of the University. Susan Hannam, dean of the college of health, environment and science, has also announced her retirement effective June 2015. We will certainly miss the contributions of both of these administrators, but wish them well as they start the next chapter in their lives.

I’d also like to acknowledge the passing of a great friend and supporter, Darrell Hess. Darrell, a former Foundation Board member, chair of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, newspaper columnist and entrepreneur, died Jan. 30 at his home in Venice, Florida. He was 82. Darrell and
his wife Bette were to host one of our alumni receptions in Florida. True to their commitment to SRU, Bette graciously welcomed us to Venice, and while we had a wonderful visit, it was tinged with sadness at the loss of our friend. Our condolences go out to Bette, his daughters Holly and Heidi, and the rest of his family and friends.

The University lost another friend with the passing of former President Albert Watrel. Dr. Watrel served as president of Slippery Rock State College from 1968-1976. Among his many contributions to the University, President Watrel helped to grow enrollment to more than 4,000 students; opened the N. Kerr Thompson Stadium (now Mihalik-Thompson Stadium); and formed the Slippery Rock Foundation (now the SRU Foundation, Inc.) to secure additional private financial support for the college. We extend our deepest sympathies to his family and friends.

I would remind the Trustees of our Legislative and Community gathering Monday, March 20. I'm sure we'll have a lively discussion, especially in light of the Governor's recent budget recommendation to invest $43 million in the state system of higher education and what that might mean to SRU. While we are certainly grateful to see that the Governor has recognized the importance of higher education to the economic wellbeing of the commonwealth, as you all know, much can transpire between recommendations and the final budget bill. The next several weeks will be a period of tepid optimism and restrained anxiety. Still, it feels much better to be in this position than facing another year of flat or reduced funding.

As is my custom, I will conclude my report by sharing a sampling of the many accomplishments we've seen in the classroom and on the playing fields:

**STUDENTS**

- Victoria Yeager, a Slippery Rock University geography major from Patton, and Ashley Beal, a environmental geo-science major from West Mifflin, have had their research posters accepted for participation in the 19th Annual Posters on the Hill program which will be presented on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., April 22-23. The two are among the 60 posters to be displayed in the program sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based Council on Undergraduate Research. Nearly 500 applications were reviewed as part of the selection process.

- Folks often say, "The proof is in the pudding." In the case of the Slippery Rock University athletic training program, the proof is in the numbers. According to the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, SRU's athletic training program is at the top of the list. The University's athletic training program ranks sixth in size in the 365 CAATE-accredited programs nationally, is third in number of graduates for all such programs within the State System; and is tied with the West Chester University for the highest number of first time pass rate students on the mandatory licensing exam.

- The Slippery Rock University women's cross country team, and five of its members, and the SRU men's cross country team, and four of its members, have been honored by the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association. Both SRU teams earned All-Academic team honors because the team's collective grade point average was at or above a 3.0 during the fall semester. In order to earn All-Academic individual honors, a student-athlete must maintain above a 3.25 GPA and place in the top 50 percent at the NCAA Regional Championship meet.

- The Online Rocket scored eight awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association for its editors, photographers and contributors in digital/online journalism categories. The Rocket print edition also won eight awards; four of them first place, in the 2015
Student Keystone Press Awards program sponsored by the Pennsylvania News Media Association.

- The Rock landed a Division II best five student-athletes on the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Scholars of Distinction list. 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. Headlining the list for Slippery Rock this year was junior Casey Young (Orchard Park, N.Y./Orchard Park), who earned the award for the third time in her career. Senior Lauren Shideler (Gibsonia, Pa./North Allegheny) and sophomore Kayla Klaus (State College, Pa./State College Area) joined Young as a repeat selection to the Scholars of Distinction, with each receiving the honor for the second time. Also joining the honorees were freshmen first-time selections Alyssa Castle (Felton, Pa./Red Lion) and Cortlyn Van Deutsch (Trucksville, Pa./Dallas).

- Tyler Palenchak, a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Monroeville and a middle-distance runner on the SRU men's outdoor track team, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Male Champion Scholar Award winner.

- Slippery Rock University women's basketball senior forward D'Asia Chambers (Farrell, Pa./Farrell) was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Western Division Defensive Player of the Year. Chambers was also named to the All-PSAC-West first team. She is the only player in program history to be named the league's top defender.

- Three members of the SRU women's soccer team were named to the 2014 National Soccer Coaches Association of America / Continental Tire All-Atlantic Region Team for their stellar play this season. Caitlin Binder, a physical and health education major from New Castle and a midfielder on the team, Ali Brosky, an exercise science major from Emmaus also a midfielder; and Andrea Felix, an exercise science major from Cincinnati, Ohio, a forward, received third team all-region recognition.

- Nicole Krueger, a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Scottsdale, Ariz., was named to the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Fall Top 10 list for her outstanding efforts in the classroom and as a member of the SRU women's soccer team. The Top 10 award is presented by the league office in each of the three seasons - fall, winter, and spring - and is awarded to five men and five women from the 18 PSAC schools. To be eligible for the award, a student-athlete must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 and have significant athletic credentials.

- Abbie Lahmers, a Slippery Rock University English major from Delmont, has had her recent work, "Knowledge and Secrecy in Alias Grace," judged the 2014 Best Undergraduate Essay by the Margaret Atwood Society.

- Brandon Lombardo, a communication major from New Castle, and Jacob Miller, a communication major from Butler, have had their TV-news package "North Country Brewing Company Distribution Update" selected as a finalists in the 2014 National Broadcasting Society's National Undergraduate Student Electronic Media Competition. Their entry, the first from SRU to be named a finalist, is in the Video News Package Category and explains the downtown brewery's recent expansion.

- The Slippery Rock University football team landed three players on the Don Hansen's Football Gazette All-America team. Named to the squad were: Marcus Martin, a safety management major from West Mifflin, who garnered third-team honors, Shamar Greene, a safety management major from Duquesne who earned honorable mention status; and Cory Tucker, a sport management major from South Park, who received honorable mention rank.
FACULTY / STAFF

- Jason Hilton, Slippery Rock University assistant professor of secondary education and foundations of education, was named an associate editor for Pennsylvania Teacher Educator, a peer-reviewed academic journal published by the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators.

- Nora Ambrosio, Slippery Rock University professor of dance, was selected by the National Association of Schools of Dance to serve a three-year term as a dance representative to the Accrediting Commission on Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools.

- Robert Ogoreuc, Slippery Rock University assistant professor of health and physical education, received the Ripple Award from the National Drowning Prevention Alliance. The award recognized a person who demonstrates service and commitment to enhancing the field of drowning prevention and water safety.

- David Glover, Slippery Rock University associate professor of music, will receive the Citation of Excellence based on nominations and voting by the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, District 5 at its March 25-28 in-service conference in Hershey.

- Simon Beeching, Slippery Rock University professor of biology, has won the Ourson Literary Award in the 2013-14 Presidential Lecture Series Writing Contest sponsored by the University of Maine at Fort Kent. Beeching won for his submission "To The Edge of the Forest Kingdom."

ALUMNI

- Nate Thimons, a 2000 Slippery Rock University management graduate and a 1995 Bethel Park graduate, was recently inducted into the Bethel Park High School Athletic Hall of Fame. He was inducted into SRU’s Hall of Fame earlier this year for his efforts as a baseball player at The Rock. Thimons played right field and was a pitcher for the high school team where he earned three letters and helped guide the Hawks to a section title and the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League championship game in 1995.

- David Price, a 1978 Slippery Rock University psychology graduate and multi-organization community volunteer who endows a scholarship in his name at his alma mater, received the Ohio Governor’s Humanitarian Award. The award honors a "selfless soldier" who gives time freely, often without recognition, to those in need in an attempt to eliminate pain and suffering.

- Christian Conte, a 1998 Slippery Rock University psychology graduate and Rock baseball player, has been named a co-star in a new SPIKE TV show "Coaching Bad" and will share TV time with famed NFL linebacker Ray Lewis.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Norton, president