REPORT OF THE
President

to the
Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees

Friday
June 5, 2015
I have always found June to be one of my favorite times of the year. Besides the obvious transition from the unpredictable and sometimes tumultuous spring to the sultry days of summer, June also is a time to reflect on possibilities and progress.

Nowhere is the example of possibilities and progress more evident than at Commencement. For those of us privileged to participate in or attend Commencement Ceremonies, it is a day of great joy as we share with the graduates and their families the culmination of their four, five or even six years at Slippery Rock University.

For many of these students, they were the first in their family to attend college. While many students came to us directly from high schools across the Commonwealth, others transferred to SRU from community colleges or other four-year institutions, and some were working Moms and Dads who juggled family, work and college to improve their opportunities for success.

Most came wondering about where their education would lead them, and if they were up to the high expectations we set for them – to graduate prepared to succeed in their lives, professional careers and be engaged citizens.

As each walked across the stage, their pride was palpable as they celebrated the progress they had made and looked ahead to the possibilities before them. Believe me, they met our challenge and will represent the University well.

Each of our 1,549 graduates had a unique story to tell of where they started and the challenges they had to overcome to graduate, but if there is one unchanging theme that runs throughout their individual stories, it is that the only constant in our life is change.

That axiom applies to the University as well as our newest alumni.

Slippery Rock University is strong in its roots, rich in its history, with unlimited potential for the future. By any measure, we’ve had a great year.

- SRU was only one of three universities in the State System with increased enrollment in Fall, 2014;
- We were No. 1 in the PASSHE system for achievement in the system’s Performance Indicator Measures;
• In 2014, SRU recorded the highest 4-year (50.9 percent) and 6-year (67.5 percent) graduation rates in PASSHE;
• We were named “one of the best colleges and universities in the Northeast” by The Princeton Review;
• U.S. News and World Report ranked us “One of the top 100 regional universities in the North;”
• The Princeton Review, Sierra Magazine and AASHE all cited us for our commitment to “sustainability;”
• The Corporation for National and Community named us to their “Honor Roll for exemplary community service;”
• We were named a “College of Distinction” for our institutional commitment to engaged students, great teaching, vibrant community and successful outcomes;
• The ETC College Ranking Index named SRU “A Top 100 Best Value Institution;”
• American City Business Journals ranked us "A Top 150 public institution in the United States;"
• SRU’s residence halls were ranked in the top 10 nationally in a recent study released by LendEDU. According to the publishers, SRU’s halls came in at No. 8 nationally. Also on the list were housing facilities at Loyola Marymount in California, the University of Arizona, University of Florida, Eckerd College, Boston University, Washington University in Missouri, Stanford University, Georgia Southern University and the University of Cincinnati.
• We earned additional accolades for “best for the money,” “safety,” being a “Great Place to Work;” a “great value;” and “one of the top 100 Healthiest Workplaces in America.”

Despite our successes, we won’t rest on our laurels. As Robert Collier said, “If you don’t make things happen then things will happen to you. You can’t stand still. You must go forward.” And that is exactly what we intend to do as we expand our possibilities.

Yesterday at the Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting we presented the University’s 2014-15 Action Plan. This document merges our strategic plan, the State System’s strategic plan and Middle States directives to provide a pathway for achieving the possibilities that lie ahead. Underpinning that plan is our unwavering commitment to our mission – to provide high quality undergraduate and graduate academic instruction.

In developing our strategic goals, we recognized there would be challenges to the bold progress we envision. Arguably, the continuing demographic decline, shrinking public and private support, and the struggle to invest in the people, plant and equipment necessary to provide accessible and affordable educational opportunities must be addressed. We are doing that through a multi-pronged
approach dealing with budget, new markets, new degree programs, new organizational structures and people, and campus enhancements.

In the past few years, we've added master's programs in Physician Assistant Studies, Business Administration, Online Teaching, History and English; and a doctorate in Special Education. We have four undergraduate programs: a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in Dance; Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering; Corporate Security; and Homeland Security; two master's programs: Data Analytics and Public Health; and a doctorate in Occupational Therapy in the approval process. All of these programs reflect student interest and employer demand.

We're developing new markets across the state, out of state and internationally. These efforts are already beginning to pay off and we anticipate even more success in the future. Two weeks ago, we hosted a delegation from Dong A University in Vietnam and hope to develop a formal agreement with them in the future. On Monday, last week, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the National School of Business Management in Sri Lanka. We continue to grow our relationship with several Chinese universities.

I've spoken with you in the past regarding how we've flattened the organization by merging academic and student affairs to fully-integrate the student learning experience. I would like to take a moment to welcome one of the newest members of the ASA team, Dr. Warren Anderson, who recently joined SRU as the Associate Provost for Student Success. As to further streamlining, I now have alumni relations and special events reporting to me, and will serve as the University's liaison to the SRU Foundation. Advancement Services is now reporting to Finance and Administrative Affairs.

The commonwealth budget and state appropriations for higher education have once again taken center stage in Harrisburg. As you recall, in Governor Wolf's initial budget he proposed $458 million for the State System; a $45.3 million increase with the caveat that there would be no tuition increase. At the April board of governors meeting the board voted to freeze tuition, but only if the legislature fully funds the additional $43.5 million recommended by the Governor. As you know, it's still a long way to June 30, the target date for passing the budget, and the House and Senate recommendations are just now being discussed. We will continue to closely monitor the activity in Harrisburg and are prepared to adjust our planning budgets as necessary.

I would like to draw your attention to two major initiatives in the works that are helping to keep the University in the news.

Our Campus Recreation Disc Golf Course will be one of four area courses to host the Pro Disc Golf World Championships tournament Aug. 1-8. The tournament offers a $50,000 purse.
Tournament participants will play preliminary rounds at Deer Lakes Park, Knob Hill Community Park and Moraine State Park Lakeview. The semifinals and final championship rounds are at Slippery Rock.

More than 400 of the best men and women players from 10 countries will compete for world titles and prize money.

Our par-66, 9,956-foot SRU disc golf course, located in the Aebersold Student Recreation Center/James P. McFarland Recreational Sports Complex areas of campus, features a mix of mostly open and grassy holes with a few wooded holes to keep players on their toes. Elevation, wind, three water hazards and other out-of-bounds areas will challenge players to make accurate drives, approach shots and putts. The course features three par 5, six par 4, and nine par 3 holes that will give spectators great views of the player's skills.

Disc golf rules are the same as traditional golf, but a flying disc or Frisbee substitutes for the ball and clubs. I invite you to join us for the semifinals and finals Aug 8.

Sept. 23-26, the University will host the 2015 International Graphical Web Conference in downtown Pittsburgh. Google Inc., the worldwide Internet services provider, has signed on as a sponsor. David Dailey, SRU professor of computer science is chief organizer of the conference. The four-day conference, which is expected to draw 200-250 graphic experts and programmers from around the world, will be at Pittsburgh's Fairmont Hotel.

The Graphical Web is an annual, global conference that showcases the many new open source technologies that have become available for presenting visual information on the Web.

As you know, Dr. Dailey is an international expert on Scalable Vector Graphics and has been honored by the World Wide Web consortium for his groundbreaking work in this area. This will be an excellent opportunity for our students to network with leading authorities from around the globe and for those experts to learn about the exceptional students and programs at SRU.

As is my custom, I will close my report by sharing a sampling of the accomplishments of our students, staff, faculty and alumni.

STUDENTS

Rachel Hollingsworth, Andrew Zelasco and Kevin Squires, Slippery Rock University biology majors from Independence, Ohio, Meadville and West Mifflin, presented research posters at the Experimental Biology 2015 Transforming the Future of Science conference in Boston.

Noah Bostick, a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Pittsburgh and a men's track and field standout, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic
Conference Freshman of the Year for the 2014-15 indoor season. Bostick, a multi-event athlete, enjoyed an outstanding first season of collegiate competition, capped by winning the PSAC individual title in the heptathlon.

D'Asia Chambers, a Slippery Rock University professional study major from Farrell and women's basketball forward, was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Western Division Defensive Player of the Year.

Rock Roast, a Slippery Rock University student-run business and sustainability initiative focused on providing organic, fair-trade, sustainably grown coffee to the western Pennsylvania community, was one of five finalists in the annual PASSHE Student Business Plan Competition.

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 to earn the Academic Team Award and five players earned academic honors for their outstanding performance in the classroom. Earning Scholars of Distinction honors for maintaining a 3.9 or higher GPA were: Casey Young, a psychology major from Orchard Park, N.Y., who earned the award for the third time; Lauren Shideler, a secondary education major from Gibsonia; Kayla Klaus, an exercise science major from State College, Pa.; Alyssa Castle, a marketing major from Felton; and Cortlyn Van Deutch, an exercise science major from Trucksville.

Tyler Walters, an undeclared major from Saegertown and catcher on the Slippery Rock University baseball team, was named Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Western Division Freshman of the Year.

Sam Taylor, a junior from Monroeville, earned her second straight first team All-America honor in the javelin at the 2015 NCAA Division II Track and Field National Championships.

Ashley West, a junior from Gibsonia, earned first team All-America honors for her eighth place finish in the high jump at the 2015 NCAA Division II Track and Field National Championships.

Sabrina Anderson a Slippery Rock University exercise science major from Warren, and Tyler Melius, an SRU safety management major from Revloc, were two of 10 student-athletes receiving Pennsylvania State Athletic Winter Top 10 honors for their performances academically and athletically during the winter sports season. Both are members of the SRU track and field.

The Slippery Rock University field hockey ranked second in the nation with 20 student-athletes named to the 2014 Division II National Academic Squad. This marks the third consecutive year The Rock has placed in the top two of total number of student-athletes on the National Academic Squad across all of NCAA Division II. The previous two years, SRU led the nation in the award.
Adam Urbania, a senior psychology major from Mentor, Ohio and outfielder on The Rock baseball squad, was named to the 2015 National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (N CBWA) All-America team. Urbania earned his first All-America award after guiding the high-powered Slippery Rock offense to a stellar season in 2015. Urbania led the nation in doubles with 26 and compiled a 34-game hitting streak, the 11th longest in NCAA Division II history. For the season, Urbania ranked fourth in the PSAC in hits (76) while batting .427 with 43 runs, eight home runs, 50 RBI, five stolen bases and a .493 on-base percentage. His 24 multi-hit games and 16 multi-RBI contests were both team-highs as well.

Kaitlyn Clark, a junior physical therapy major from Shepherdstown, W. Va., came away with an All-America finish in the pole vault on the opening day of the NCAA Division II National Championships. Clark, who was appearing in her fourth career national meet and third outdoor national championship, cleared 3.70 meters to place in a tie for 12th overall and earn second team All-America honors from the U.S Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association. It marks the first All-America honor in Clark's career.

FACULTY AND STAFF

Debra Pincek, executive director of student services, was presented the State System's Chief Student Affairs Officers' Suzanne S. Brown Distinguished Service and Outstanding Professional Award. Pincek, a 38-year SRU employee, was cited for her talents in decision-making resulting in actions plans that contribute directly to the success of SRU students.

Lorraine Craven, instructor in Slippery Rock University's Academic Services and director of first-year and transfer student experiences, received a 2015 Outstanding Advising Award Certificate of Merit from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising.

The Transition Program at Slippery Rock University won the Adapted Physical Activity Outstanding Program Award from SHAPE America - the Society of Health and Physical Educators. The award recognizes community-based programs that focus on improving the physical capacity of individuals with disabilities through education, sport and community activities. It embodies programs that advocate and encourage creative thinking for programming developed for persons with disabilities; fosters ideas of inclusion and implements developmentally appropriate practices.

Nicole DaFoe, Slippery Rock University associate professor of biology, has received a $9,924 grant from the State System Faculty Professional Development Council for a student-faculty research project on cellular DNA.

Ursula Payne, Slippery Rock University professor of dance, has received a $6,000 grant to teach and perform in Uganda during "Dancing the Terrain of
Uganda: Rediscovering My Identity as a Performer." Payne received the grant from the State System Faculty Professional Development Council.

Colleen Gray, Slippery Rock University associate professor of music, has sung the works of American composer Lee Hoiby at venues around the world. Now she's written a resource book that includes a complete catalog of all of his known songs. "The Life and Vocal Works of Lee Hoiby, American Composer and Classical Pianist (1926-2011): Including a Complete Catalog of his Songs" was published earlier this year by Edwin Mellen Press in Lewiston, N.Y.

Jennifer Keller, Slippery Rock University professor of dance, has received a $7,630 grant from the State System Faculty Professional Development Council to shoot a dance film in the Smith Student Center titled, "Over, Under and Through: Creating an Experimental Dance Film from The Intimate Perspective of the Performer."

Patrick Beswick, director of Resident Education, was awarded the 2015 SRU President's Award for Outstanding Service.

Lori Wolf, storekeeper II in facilities and planning, was awarded the 2015 SRU President's Award for Outstanding Service.

William Bergmann, assistant professor of history at Slippery Rock University, received the 2014-15 SRU President's Award for Scholarly and Creative Achievement for his book "The American National State and the Early West."

David Valentine, currently serving as interim dean of SRU's School of Business, but nominated as a professor of computer science, was awarded the 2014-15 SRU President's Award for Teaching Excellence.

Lorraine Craven, instructor in Slippery Rock University's Academic Services and director of first-year and transfer student experiences, was awarded this year's SRU President's Award for Outstanding Academic Advising for her dedication and outstanding service to students.

ALUMNI

Shelly Moore, a 1998 SRU bachelor of science in nursing graduate, has been appointed dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health at the Community College of Beaver County effective June 23.

Paul David McCartney, a 1984 Slippery Rock University allied health and occupational safety graduate who played rugby at SRU, coached his Stony Point high school rugby team to a state championship.

David Price, a 1978 psychology graduate, received the Ohio Governor's Humanitarian Award.
Charles Gancio, a 1981 Slippery Rock University physical education graduate, was named general manager of the University Bookstore at Morehead State University.

Josh Rizzo, a Slippery Rock University communication graduate now a sports writer for the Butler Eagle, won second place in the annual Pennsylvania Associated Press Managing Editors writing and photography contests for his story: "Flawless, Moniteau uses dirty uniforms to complete clean, unbeaten run to D-9 softball crown."

Deborah Blakeley, a 2002 Slippery Rock University biology graduate, recently became the Tuscaloosa Police Department's first female helicopter pilot.

Carly (Thomas) Krouse, a 2010 Slippery Rock University communication graduate, won a Pennsylvania Associated Press Managing Editors Award. Krouse, a sports reporter for the Indiana [Pa.] Gazette, was named in the News Use of Video Category for her work on the End Zone Extra Thursday High School Preview Show, along with James Nestor, the videographer.

Stephen Clark, a 1986 parks and recreation graduate, was named superintendent of the U.S. National Park Service's Nation Parks of Western Pennsylvania District.

Jan Forsty, a 1975 Slippery Rock University physical education graduate and head softball coach at Bethany College, reached a career milestone by capturing career wins 700 and 701 when the Bethany Bison softball team defeated Franciscan. The 700th win came in her 1,179 career contest. She is the 15th coach in NCAA Division III to reach the milestone.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Norton, president