

## SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES MINUTES

**June 9, 2023**

The Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees held its quarterly business meeting Friday, June 9, 2023, in the Russell Wright Alumni House and Conference Center and via ZOOM conferencing. Chair Domenic Ionta called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

The video recording of this meeting in its entirety can be found on the Council webpage, <https://www.sru.edu/about/administration/council-of-trustees>

### **Recording of Attendance**

Trustees present: Dr. Alfonso Angelucci, Mr. Domenic Ionta, Mr. Dan Lavalley, Mr. Matt Lautman, Ms. Elise Michaux, Mr. William McCarrier, Ms. Cierra Mitchell, Mr. Jeffrey Smith, Ms. Suzanne Vessella, Mr. Joshua Young,

Trustees absent: Mr. Robert Taylor

Council welcomed Dr. Danette DiMarco, faculty liaison to the SRU Council of Trustees. Dr. DiMarco is a professor in the Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Writing Department at SRU.

### **Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Trustee Lautman moved, second by Trustee Angelucci, approval of the June 9, 2023 meeting agenda. Motion carries. **(Tab 6, Appendix A)**

### **Approval of Minutes**

Trustee McCarrier moved, second by Trustee Young, approval of the quarterly business meeting minutes of Friday, March 24, 2023. Motion carries. **(TAB 13, Appendix B)**

### **Public Comments**

#### **Ella Bloom, President, Slippery Rock Student Government Association (SRSGA)**

Thank you and good morning. My name is Ella Bloom, and I am the newly elected President for the Student Government Association. It's nice to be here and hello to everyone.

Before I talk about SGA and our goals for the upcoming academic year, I wanted to share a little bit about myself. I am a junior, political science major, minor in economics. I bounced around as an undeclared student for a time before landing on pre-law. I love SRU and the experiences I have had as a student here.

I am a community assistant on campus and worked in Building E last year, and will be working in Watson Hall this year. I've engaged as a student on campus and was president of the debate club, this past year our membership has grown from 6 members to 25 members. It's an awesome group!

It is an honor to serve as the new SGA President and I am excited to share that we are working on some big goals for the upcoming year.

Our first priority is ensuring that SRU is a safe space for our minority students. The SRU student population is predominantly white, and we want to be sure every student feels this is a safe space. We want everyone to live their best life at SRU.

Our second goal is to work with the administration on recycling efforts on campus and to ensure we are responsible in our sustainability efforts on campus and in the residence halls.

Our third goal is to work with ARAMARK, our [contracted] dining service on campus. We want to work collaboratively toward better meal choices and higher quality ingredients in the meals that are being served. From a survey we sent to students, there were many responses that students are not happy with the meal choices on campus. Our goal is to ensure we have a better dining experience for our students moving forward.

As a university that promotes accessibility for all students, we understand that many students are first generation college students. It is our goal to create programs through SGA to provide additional help and resources as new students navigate college life. This will include offering information about student loans, signing up for housing, financial aid, commuter vs. living on campus, etc.

And finally, we as an organization want to be accessible to all students and have input from the student body in how we serve them. We are reviewing the language in our policies and will be providing a clear understanding of our finances and all the programs we provide through SGA.

This concludes my report. Thank you for your time. I am available to answer any questions.

*Chair Ionta thanked President Bloom for her report and for driving over three hours to be in-person this morning to address this Council.*

Chair Ionta formally welcomed Trustee Cierra Mitchell to her first meeting of the Council. Cierra was selected to serve as student trustee following the nomination and recommendation of the SRU Student Trustee Selection Committee to Chancellor Greenstein of the Pennsylvania System of Higher Education.

Cierra is a junior political science major from Pittsburgh. She is an excellent student and is involved in numerous activities on campus. We are so pleased to have her join us on Council!

**To read related article:** <https://www.sru.edu/news/052323a>

### **Presentations**

#### **Commendation:**

SRU Council of Trustees recognized William J. Behre, Ph.D., 17<sup>th</sup> President of Slippery Rock University with a Commendation for his outstanding leadership of this great university since July 1, 2018.

(Appendix C)

To read related article, <https://www.sru.edu/news/060923a>

## **REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

**William J. Behre, Ph.D.**

Good morning, Chair Ionta and trustees:

Thank you for this, I appreciate it [commendation], but I was just doing my job.

Over the past year, my administrations primary goal has been pandemic recovery. I'm happy to report that this effort has shown positive results. Our first-year and transfer classes have bounced back and look very much like those of pre-pandemic days. The current fiscal year will end in the black, and next year's budget will be balanced, and reserves are healthy. Most importantly, our graduation and retention rates continue to creep upward. In short, SRU has shifted from surviving the pandemic to thriving in a post-pandemic world.

We have our challenges, in particular, demographics are not on our side. Still, with increased marketing efforts in Ohio, concerted regional public relations efforts, and our ability to take advantage of the local market conditions have remained positive mitigating factors, indeed the only existential threat to SRU, which, unfortunately, remains largely out of our control, is the challenges faced by some other System schools.

I am grateful the PA House passed a bill that will provide a 6 % increase in the base appropriation as well as a \$30 million one-time payment to address the looming debt, rather some of the looming debt, of some of the other institutions. I encourage you all to reach out to your legislators and support this measure. Over time, reinvestments such as this will allow SRU to continue to be the most affordable, high-quality four-year university in Western PA, if not the entire commonwealth.

Finally, though the last five years have not been simple nor what any of us expected, I remain grateful for having had the opportunity to work alongside the members of this community. It is an extraordinary place that does great things. It has been my honor to be President. Go Rock!

Chair Ionta, this concludes my report.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Academic and Student Affairs Committee (Agenda, Appendix D)**

Trustee Elise Michaux chairs the Academic and Student Affairs Committee and provided the following report.

Michael Zieg, Interim Provost and Chief Academic Officer, introduced Dr. Nicole Dafoe, who was appointed Dean of the College of Engineering and Science following a national search.

Dr. Jason Hilton provided an overview of SRU's Honors program, emphasizing the program's change in orientation from "The best students at Slippery Rock University" to "The best students for Slippery Rock University." He highlighted the strong program growth and outcomes, along with many examples of the impressive accomplishments achieved by Honors students. Among other opportunities for the future, he described the UPMC Neighborhood Experience, providing community-engaged learning in Pittsburgh's East End community.

Dr. Anthony Jones, chief diversity officer, reviewed the goals and accomplishments of the office of DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) as well as the background and status of DEIB strategic

planning efforts. Emerging themes identified by the DEIB advising team include The People (Students, Staff, and Community); The Policy; A Sense of Belonging; and Cultural Competence. He also presented the goals of the DEIB Strategic Plan, which will be used to create specific action steps to implement the plan, and will be integrated with the upcoming SRU strategic plan.

Dr. Amanda Yale provided an enrollment update for summer and fall student enrollment and registrant.

Summer term headcount total is up 2.2%, and summer term credit hours are up 1.0%. The fall term headcount total is up 1.5%, and credit hours are up 2.3%. Undergraduate credit hours are up 2.0%, while graduate credits are up 4.9%.

Total freshmen deposits are up for fall 2023, currently at 1570, representing an increase of 75 students. Nearly 1500 of deposited freshmen are signed up for orientation sessions, and 1494 are already registered for the fall term. Pell-eligible deposits represent 32.5% of the incoming freshman class.

Transfer deposits are also up for fall 2023. Total deposits are up by 62, with domestic deposits up by 42. At this time, 55% of all domestic deposits are from a Pennsylvania community college.

Graduate deposits are up by 29 for summer 2023 and down slightly for fall by 12, but it is early in the process, and these numbers are expected to increase by August.

All three freshmen cohorts are maintaining a strong persistence as compared to the previous year, with some increase with our underrepresented students.

Dr. David Wilmes provided a summary for the 2022-23 academic year highlighting successes in student engagement and student well-being. He also reported on the impact of recent strategic decisions within the division. The transition from a 24/7 health services model has been successful from both a financial and services perspective with minimal impact in providing essential health services for students. The implementation of a two-year residency requirement has not had a negative impact on new student enrollment. Housing and Residence Life are planning on a near 100% occupancy for fall 2023.

Chair Ionta, this concludes my report.

### **Finance and Administrative Affairs Committee (Agenda, Appendix E)**

Trustee Dan Lavalley chairs the Finance and Administrative Affairs Committee and provided the following report.

The Finance and Administrative Affairs Committee met with the Council of Trustees Thursday afternoon, discussed several topics and submitted the following items for review.

Ms. Carrie Birekbichler, vice president for Finance and Administrative Affairs, presented the Financial and Budget Update for the third quarter of FY 2022-23. A forecast for FY 2022-23 where the University's Education and General Fund is projected to end the 2022-23 fiscal year in a positive position due to a combination of increased interest income and receipt of \$2.6 million in Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSFRF). Auxiliary operations are projected to end FY 2022-23 in a negative position. The auxiliary year-end position is the result of contractual pay increases and inflationary cost pressures. In addition, most fees for auxiliary operations have remained constant since 2016-17 fiscal year.

The FY 2023-24 budget projections are currently under review and work on the Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) continues. An abbreviated version of the CPP is due to the Office of the Chancellor by June 14, 2023. The FY 2022-23 CPP was not due until after the fall census date. At this time, the state appropriation has not been finalized for the State System, the specifics of union contracts are unknown, and a tuition increase may be considered by the Board of Governors at their July meeting. The CPP will be updated later in the fiscal year after tuition, state appropriation and enrollment data are finalized.

Mr. Scott Albert, associate vice president, Facilities, Environmental Safety and Sustainability, presented an update on the Green Fund's spring awards totaling \$169,530.

Information items included:

- Report of contracts and purchases issued from January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023
- March 2023 Financial Report
- Facilities and Planning Project Lists
- Human Resources Personnel Items
- Divisional Report

Chair Ionta, this concludes my report.

### **University Advancement Committee (Agenda, Appendix F)**

Trustee Joshua Young, committee chairperson, provided the following report.

The University Advancement Committee met this morning.

Interim Vice President Samantha Swift presented the advancement update as of March 31. Giving Day, which took place March 24, raised more than \$700,000 from 1,400 donations, besting last year's total by \$50,000. The development staff had 100 meetings, 130 proposals resulting in 28 new or increased scholarships. We reviewed the Gift Income Report, which stated that close to \$2 million was raised of March 31. This is a decrease from last year of approximately \$700,000. Samantha is hopeful that they will achieve their goal of \$3 million.

Kelly Bailey, director of Alumni Engagement, provided an update on Alumni Association activities. They recently hosted a variety of spring events, including Countdown to Cap and Gown, a Philadelphia Alumni Event, the Alumni Speaker Series and an early-summer Pirates Game. They are currently focused on the upcoming Alumni Weekend, where there will be celebrations of the 3s and 8s reunion classes, the Rock Solid 10 Under 10 Awards, and a variety of activities for all alumni. The annual SRU Alumni & Friends Golf outing is on the horizon, as is a Cleveland event to see the musical Six. Fall event planning is also underway.

David Hollenbaugh, executive director of the SRU Foundation, discussed Foundation activities and collaboration with University Advancement. He and AVP Scott Albert provided an update on the progress of the Police/ROTC Building. Dave also shared new information and progress on the proposed senior independent living development in Technology Park. He reported that through collaborative efforts, the agreements, contracts, and budgets between the Foundation and the University are all finalized, or being finalized, in preparation for the new Fiscal year. Productive teamwork with University Advancement and Financial Aid continues in reviewing and refining existing and new student scholarships. Dave also reviewed the Balance Sheet Summaries for the Foundation and SRUF Student Housing LLC and the investment portfolio.

Chair Ionta, this concludes my report.

### **Governance Committee (Agenda, Appendix G)**

Trustee Alfonso Angelucci, chair of the Governance Committee, provided the following report. Items addressed for action, discussion, and information were:

- Trustee Jeffrey Smith shared a brief PACT Update.
  - Announced there will be no PACT annual dues this year.
  - Shared the proposed PACT Bylaws changes, dated June 27, 2023
- Presented a Commendation to William J. Behre, Ph.D., 17<sup>th</sup> President of SRU
- Resolution: Order of Succession
- Elected the slate of officers for 2023-2024

Domenic Ionta, chair  
Joshua Young, vice-chair  
Cierra Mitchell, secretary

- Discussed scheduling a workshop with incoming President Karen Riley
- SRU Council Proposed Meetings Dates: 2023-2024
  - September 28-29, 2023
  - December 7-8, 2023
  - March 21-22, 2024
  - June 13-14, 2024
- Calendar mentions (spring/summer 2023/fall 2023)
- SRU Council bylaws were included in the materials as information.

Chair Ionta, this concludes my report.

### **Executive Session (Agenda, Appendix H)**

Council met this morning in executive session with President Behre and University Legal Counsel. No report; closed session.

## **ITEMS FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

### **Certifying Resolution: Order of Succession (TAB 7) (Appendix I)**

Trustee Angelucci moved, second by Trustee McCarrier, approval of the Certifying Resolution: Order of Succession in accordance with BOG Policy 1983-14-A: *Appointing Interim and Acting Chief Executive Officers*. Roll Call: 10 Y, 0 N: motion carries.

#### **ROLL CALL:**

Alfonso Angelucci	Y	Domenic Ionta	Y
Matt Lautman	Y	Dan Lavalley	Y
William McCarrier	Y	Elise Michaux	Y
Cierra Mitchell	Y	Jeffrey Smith	Y
Suzanne Vessella	Y	Joshua Young	Y

**Election of Officers: 2023-2024 (TAB 4)**

Trustee Angelucci moved, second by Trustee McCarrier, to accept the slate of officers: June 2023- June 2024: Domenic Ionta, chair, Joshua Young, vice-chair, Cierra Mitchell, secretary.

Roll Call: 9 Y, 1 A: motion carries.

**ROLL CALL:**

Alfonso Angelucci	Y	Domenic Ionta	Y
Matt Lautman	Y	Dan Lavalley	Y
William McCarrier	Y	Elise Michaux	Y
Cierra Mitchell	Y	Jeffrey Smith	Y
Suzanne Vessella	A	Joshua Young	Y

**SRU Council of Trustees Proposed Meeting Dates: (September 2023 – June 2024) (TAB 9)**

Trustee Lautman moved, second by Trustee Angelucci, to approve the meeting dates for the upcoming year. Roll Call: 10 Y, 0 N: motion carries.

**ROLL CALL:**

Alfonso Angelucci	Y	Domenic Ionta	Y
Matt Lautman	Y	Dan Lavalley	Y
William McCarrier	Y	Elise Michaux	Y
Cierra Mitchell	Y	Jeffrey Smith	Y
Suzanne Vessella	Y	Joshua Young	Y

**INFORMATION ITEMS****Meeting Dates:**

September 28-29, 2023

**Contracts: (TAB 8) (Appendix J)****Budget/Financial Update (TAB 10) (Appendix K)****Facilities & Planning Active Project List (TAB 11) (Appendix L)****HR Personnel Items (Tab 12) (Appendix M)**

- Instructional Appointments: Effective Academic Year 2022-2023
- Administrator Appointments
- Management Appointments
- Support Staff Appointments
- Retirements
- Resignations
- Emeritus Status

**Committee Presentations (TAB 14)****Divisional Reports (TAB 15)**

## FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER


Trustee Young: Dr. Behre, thank you for everything you did for the University that we both love. And, I wish you well in your future endeavors. This Council is very appreciative of your leadership during the pandemic, you kept the ship running and kept everything on track. While a lot of other universities were struggling, we seemed to be thriving. Thank you so much for everything you did.

Trustee Angelucci: I want to echo Trustee Young's comments. Dr. Behre, you were a great neighbor of mine across the street. We will forever be indebted to you for your leadership through the pandemic. Thank you.

Trustee Lautman: We've had a good two days; the presentations were really good. I learned a lot. I hope we continue to do these [types of presentations]. Moving forward, we may not always have yes votes, we've got some tough issues we are going to have to attack in September and March, but I think we have a great group here and can anticipate good debate, and ultimately, landing in a good place. Dr. Behre, thank you for your service. Thank you for sharing your talents with us and for your passion for SRU. Thank you for leaving the University in a better position than when you found it.

Trustee Michaux: Dr. Behre, we are forever indebted to you for your leadership, keeping our meetings on track, steady and focused, happy that we had you at the helm. I know your Cabinet was happy having you on the ground, boots on the ground, with them and their teams throughout the pandemic. Thank you for keeping us a top institution within PASSHE. Forever indebted to you and your leadership. I wish you the best in your future endeavors, whatever those may be. Thank you for your leadership.

With no further business, Trustee Angelucci moved, Trustee Lautman second, to adjourn the Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees business meeting. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted: 

Tina L. Moser, Administrative Liaison to the SRU Council of Trustees