

## **SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES MINUTES**

**March 21, 2025**

The Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees held its quarterly business meeting Friday, March 21, 2025, in the Russell Wright Alumni House and Conference Center and via Zoom conferencing. Chair Angèle Stoebener called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Meeting materials for this meeting can be found on the SRU Council webpage:

[\*\*SRU COT LIVEBINDER March 20-21 2025\*\*](#)

Trustee Stoebener called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

### **Recording of Attendance**

Trustees present: Mr. Domenic Ionta, Mr. Matt Lautman, Mr. Dan Lavalley, Dr. Elise Michaux, Ms. Charli Severo, Mr. Jeffrey Smith, Ms. Angèle Stoebener, Mr. Robert Taylor, Mr. Joshua Young

Trustees absent: Dr. Alfonso Angelucci. Mr. William McCarrier

Dr. Danette DiMarco, faculty liaison to the SRU Council of Trustees, was present.

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE** **Honoring Senator Mary Jo White**

Trustee Robert Taylor called for a moment of silence to honor Senator Mary Jo White, who served the Pennsylvania Senate and the Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees with honor and distinction. Trustee Taylor commented, “a woman who quite frankly was brilliant, capable, and so very smart, broke through glass ceilings before we as a society even knew what glass ceilings were.”

As her obituary states, Senator White served the Pennsylvania State Senate, 21st district, 1997 – 2013. And, in 2011, she was the first woman elected to Republican Leadership in Pennsylvania. Mary Jo was a tireless advocate for sound environmental policy, rural communities, and equal rights for women.

Senator White, a dedicated public servant, passionate rural community advocate, and beloved wife, mother and grandmother, passed February 21, 2025, peacefully at home at the age of 83. She is survived by her husband, H. William White Jr., a former Venango County judge, three children and seven great grandchildren.

Mary Jo’s life was also defined by her love for her family. She will be deeply missed by her family, friends, colleagues, and pets.

A celebration of her life will be held at a later date.

### **Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Chair Stoebener called for a motion to amend today's meeting agenda removing Item B: COT Bylaws Revision, under Section X: Items for Council Action, following discussion in the Governance Committee yesterday. The Bylaws will be revisited at another time. Trustee Ionta moved, second by Trustee Michaux. Motion carries. (TAB 6, Appendix A)

### **Approval of Minutes**

Trustee Young moved, second by Trustee Lautman, approval of the quarterly business meeting minutes of Friday, December 6, 2024. Motion carries. (TAB 7, Appendix B)

### **Public Comments**

SRSGA President Ella Bloom presented an update of student government activities to the Council.

Ms. Bloom shared SRSGA end-of-year updates. She also announced that this is her last Council meeting as she is graduating in May. [Congratulations, Ella!]

- The Student Life Survey is out and running until March 31. Ella shared that she and her team are working with departments across campus to get their perspectives so that we can offer a broad range of questions to students in the survey and learn their experiences and perspectives. We also use the survey results as an opportunity to work with the incoming SGA executive board to see what projects they may undertake in their first year in office and beyond.
- We also made adjustments to our constitution aligning job descriptions with the actual work we are doing and the jobs we are actually performing. We have also better aligned our senators' duties within committees and have stronger procedures in place to guide them in their responsibilities, and we now have an even complement of committee members for all committees to run more effectively.
- The annual "Campus Crawl" is scheduled early April. If anyone is interested in attending, please join us. It's a great experience to walk around the campus and look for potential opportunities for improvements to the campus landscape.
- The end of year banquet is scheduled, and this is when we recognize our senators and the good work they are doing for our students and for SRU.
- And I am so excited to share the intramural turf project, which we have been working on since last January, went out for bid a couple of weeks ago. This is a super exciting project, and students are going to love it! It's been an incredible experience for me to work through the process with our board and SRU administration.
- We also had a group of senators and non-SGA students meet with Dr. Chris Cole and ARAMARK, our dining services vendor, to learn about some changes ARAMARK is making to better serve our students. This was an opportunity for students to come to the table and share their feedback about meal plan options and the overall food service for the student body. I heard it was a good, productive discussion.

- Ella shared an open invitation for Council members to attend the amazing variety of upcoming performances showcasing our talented student performers in the Music Department.
- Ella shared that SRSGA elections are coming up April 7-9. The candidates have been vetted and approved, and Ella will be meeting with them soon to talk through election rules and regulations. This is an also an opportunity to stress the importance of advocating for students. A candidate debate will also be coming up soon. It's going to be a great year for elections.

In closing, Council congratulated Ella on her upcoming graduation and for her outstanding service to the SRU student body. President Riley offered congratulations to Ella and thanked her for her leadership as President of SRSGA for the past two years. Dr. Riley shared that when she & Ella began working together, they both looked at the SGA budget and said, "We are not buying a bench. We are doing something big with the money and investing in something that the students need." Dr. Riley further commented, "without Ella's passion, advocacy and leadership, we wouldn't have those intramural fields." "I am proud of you, and I want to thank you publicly for all of your great work."

Ella thanked President Riley and the Council of Trustees for their time and leadership on behalf of the students. End of report.

### **Commendations**

There were no commendations presented today.

### **Presentations**

A Team Effort: The Super Bowl and other Experiential Learning Activities (Sport Management)

- Dr. Robert Zullo, assistant professor, Sport Management
- Miss Dallas Kline, assistant director, First Year Admissions, SPMT alumna
- Miss Mikayla Perry, SPMT student from Orchard Park, NY

## **REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

**Karen S. Riley, Ph.D.**

President's Report  
Council of Trustees  
March 21, 2025, 11:00 a.m.  
Alumni House and Conference Center

### **Enrollment:**

Overall enrollment is up again, due to another record semester in retention. Headcount for Spring 2025 shows an additional 166 students, representing a 2.1% increase when compared to Spring 2024.

	<b>Spring 2024</b>	<b>Spring 2025</b>	<b>+/-</b>	<b>%</b>
Undergraduate	6,305	6,438	+133	+2.1%
Graduate	1,485	1,518	+33	+2.2%

Total	7,790	7,956	+166	+2.1%
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We continue to set records in retention. Each of the current undergraduate cohorts showed an increase in retention fall to spring over the previous year. This is our stated goal. Students who start at Slippery Rock University should graduate from Slippery Rock University. This is clearly so important for our students and their families. Finishing a degree is what one would expect when they start an undergraduate program. These numbers also have positive financial implications for the university. Larger cohorts with increased persistence and retention numbers increase the overall enrollment for the university.

	Total Cohort	+/-
2024 FR	94.6%*	+1.3%
2023	93.3%	
2023 SO	80.7%*	+2.6%
2022	78.1%	
2022 JR	74.2%*	+1.9%
2021	72.3%	

Fall 2025 numbers reflect a slight decrease year over year at this point in time, however the calendar and the events related to admissions suggest a positive outlook for the fall enrollment.

First-Year Fall deposits are down -14 from 2024 but up from 2023 by +56.

Fall 2025 transfer deposits are down by -3. It is important to note that Enrollment Management has made some shifts within the Transfer structure and has decreased the gap year over year by 32 students in the past month. The shift appears to be having the positive impact that we anticipated, and we expect to see increased numbers in this area. Fall graduate deposits are down by -15 with an increased number of applicants and offers. As such we anticipate this number to also rise over the next few months.

Our campus daily visits, high school programs, Saturday campus visits, and Open Houses are all reporting strong participation numbers. Although our current overall enrollment numbers are positive, we are continuing to prepare for the pending enrollment cliff. We are exploring the implementation of the Common App to increase the top of the enrollment funnel. This approach comes with both opportunities as well as challenges, which are currently being weighed by the Enrollment Management team. We are also engaging in two new initiatives to increase enrollment. The Carnegie Marketing project is designed to increase our marketing reach while tracking the ROI on our marketing spend. We must be more intentional in our marketing approach as we face stronger enrollment headwinds. The initial overview was provided by Ken Bach during the March COT meeting. Additionally, we are participating in The Aspen – AASCU Transfer Student Success Intensive, funded by Ascendium Education Philanthropy. This was described in detail in the December 2024 President's Report.

Financial Picture/Budget Scenarios: The revenue and expenses are consistent with the proposed budget and are consistent with FY 24. There have been no unanticipated events resulting in significant changes in revenue or expenses.

Construction Projects: There are several projects that have been completed and/or are in various stages of completion. The Women's Softball Field is 99% complete, and the ribbon cutting is scheduled for

April 5th. The renovations to the Student Success Center have been completed and we are now utilizing the space. The conversion of Rhodes from the Health Center to additional student housing has begun. Demolition has started and will be monitored weekly. The turfing project for the IM field has been sent out for bid and the designs have been finalized. The dredging of the pond in the middle of the campus will begin in April. The sound system for the stadium is being sent out for bid with completion expected in the summer. The new scoreboard has been installed in the Critchfield Baseball Stadium.

### Strategic Plan:

### **Implementation**

The strategic plan is being implemented. Within each of the pillars there are measurable action items as well as process items. All work together to advance the University.

### **Highlights**

#### Pillar Working Groups

The pillar working groups are led by pillar co-chairs and are responsible for maintaining a broad view of the pillar's progress and leading specific activities.

#### Implementation Plans

Each of the strategies in the strategic plan has several actionable activities. Cabinet members and pillar working groups assumed the lead on various activities and are planning action items by semester. At the end of the semester, leaders will update their implementation plans and submit evidence of completed action items.

#### Action Items in Fall 2024

More than 40 action items are currently underway with several items to be completed during the Spring Semester.

Although there are many initiatives within the strategic plan that could be highlighted, the following represent a sampling of activities within the various pillars.

### **Pillar #1 Robust, Supportive and Inclusive Culture**

#### **Create/enhance programs to strengthen holistic wellbeing for the entire campus community.**

*Activity:* Create a shared lounge/meal area with food for purchase for faculty, staff, and administration to utilize.

*Action Item:* Create a designated "Employee Gathering Community Space" in Weisenfluh.

An employee gathering space is something that has been requested by many across the campus, a place for faculty and staff to meet and to share a meal together. Many years ago, there was a faculty and staff lounge. The food costs made the former project unsustainable. Recreating a space will allow faculty and staff a designated space that is "theirs". Food will not be provided but can be purchased through typical means. We are exploring food trucks and soup and salad meals that employees would pay for. We will be providing incentives to help launch the concept and to get people into the habit of eating at Weisenfluh.

### **1.1.c Develop a culture of recognition and engagement.**

Last year we instituted a system of recognition for coaches and athletes who perform exceptionally well. Any team that wins the conference or attains a higher level will have dinner at the President's Residence. The Football team will be having dinner at the President's Residence on April 22nd. The women's indoor track team will also be having dinner with the president due to their PSAC Championship win. The date is to be determined.

### **1.2.a Embed the development of cultural competencies across the university through the integration of the Culture and Climate strategies and initiatives across curricular and cocurricular experiences, training, and programming opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.**

*Activity:* Provide training for faculty and staff.

*Action Item:* Drs. Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple to present on *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity*.

Drs. Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple, authors of *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity: The Keys to Successful Equity Implementation*, will be providing a one-day training to several groups on campus.

Their approach to inclusion is focused on the culture of the organization centered on dignity. The authors will meet with the faculty within the College of Education. They will also conduct a training for the Administrative Council and an open training session on inclusive pedagogy through the Center for Teaching and Learning.

### **1.3.b Raise the reputation of the university.**

*Activity:* SRU is excelling in all key performance indicators. Ensure that local legislators are aware of all of the positive things that are going on at this university.

*Action Item:* Host a legislative breakfast.

On February 13, 2025, we hosted a legislative breakfast for our local elected officials in the newly opened Campus Success Center. The goal was not to ask them for money or to lobby for the increase in appropriations, rather to highlight the positive work that is being done at Slippery Rock University. We had a bipartisan turnout and the largest applause for a statement on the importance of working together across party lines. The following individuals attended the event including Trustees Angèle Stoeber, Alfonso Angelucci, Jeff Smith, and Matt Lautman.

Butler County Commissioner Leslie Osche

Butler County Commissioner Kim Geyer

PA State Senator Scott Hutchinson

PA State Rep. Tim Bonner

PA State Rep. Marla Brown

PA State Rep. Marci Mustello

PA State Rep. Dan Miller

PA State Rep. Stephenie Scialabba

Laura Sohinki, Southwest Director for Gov. Josh Shapiro

Dan Gladis, Chief of Staff to Rep. Jessica Benham

Julia DeSantes, District Director to Stephenie Scialabba

Julie Swartfager, Constituent Services Director to U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly

Rene' Fustos, Field Representative to Senator Michelle Brooks

Jordan Grady President Butler County Chamber of Commerce

This was considered to be a success and as such we will hold similar events in the future. It is crucial for our legislators to be aware of the strengths and the needs of Slippery Rock University.

## **Pillar #2 Commitment to Academic Discovery and Human Growth**

### **2.2.c Enhance the quality, functionality, and aesthetic appeal of the campus environment.**

*Activity:* Identify factors that contribute to the student experience at SRU.

*Action Item:* Conduct focus groups with students to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of the SRU student experience.

Recent construction projects have been focused on deferred maintenance, accreditation requirements, and increased safety. With the completion of the Campus Success Center, it is time to make sure that we understand the evolving needs of our students. The Pillar 2 team will be leading focus groups with students to understand their perceptions as well as their preferences so that upcoming capital investments include student needs and preferences rather than only those of the faculty and staff.

### **2.3 Improve retention and graduation rates.**

Please see enrollment section above.

### **2.4.a Provide varied academic offerings and delivery methods-including micro-credentials, short term learning modules, prior learning experiences, and other enrichment opportunities to accelerate career fulfillment that enhances personal development and well-being.**

### **2.4.c Expand professional development and continuing education programs to enhance lifelong learning.**

*Activity:* Create new arm of the academic enterprise.

*Action Item:* Hire Associate Provost for Academic Innovation and Dean of Graduate Programs and Professional Development.

Dr. Timothy Slekar will serve as the first Associate Provost for Academic Innovation and Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education. He was appointed to the newly created position following a national search and he will start at SRU on May 19.

A native of Pittsburgh, Dr. Slekar earned his Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction and elementary social studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in elementary education at Edinboro University and Millersville University, respectively.

In this role reporting to the provost, Slekar will help the Academic Affairs division identify and develop new opportunities for academic programming to enhance the University's existing offerings. He will work in collaboration with a wide range of internal and external partners, particularly in industry and state and local governments, to better understand the workforce needs of the regional economy and to support the faculty and deans in developing programs that are responsive to those needs.

Dr. Slekar was previously the executive director of Muskingum University's Department of Education Studies, where, from 2021-24, he led an academic unit responsible for educator preparation programs in undergraduate and graduate teacher and leader licensing programs in Ohio.

Prior to Muskingum, Dr. Slekar was a dean of the School of Education at Edgewood College in Wisconsin from 2013-20, and prior to that he was a co-coordinator of education programs at Penn State Altoona, where he was an assistant (2003-06) and associate (2006-08) professor of education.

### **Pillar #3 Commitment to Community Impact and Collaboration**

#### **3.2.d Develop educational-specific partnerships with industry and philanthropic leaders to enhance student learning experiences while cultivating outside funding sources for program growth.**

*Activity:* Assess current state of community engagement.

*Action Item:* Develop a data-collection instrument.

Community engagement is an integral part of Slippery Rock University. As is the case in many colleges and universities community engagement can be ill-defined with many individuals working in the area with little coordination. During the past year we have worked diligently to collapse the disparate aspects across the University and to bring collaborative and strategic focus to the work, with the goal of increasing the engagement to the betterment of our students, faculty and the broader community. The Office of Community Engagement has moved under the Office of the Provost. There is a SRU Carnegie Elective Steering Committee that has been working on definitions and a plan for the newly formed Office of Community Engagement. They have provided the following as guiding statements.

*Community engagement is the collaboration between Slippery Rock University and its larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial creation and exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (adapted from Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2024).*

*The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2024).*

Although we have made great strides in the past several months in coordinating our efforts we are still operating with limited data and need to assess the activities across the campus. The Pillar #3 team is working to develop a tool to measure community engagement with the goal of truly capturing the efforts across the campus in order to work more effectively and strategically.

### **Pillar #4 Commitment to Financial Sustainability and Resource Stewardship**

#### **4.1.e Encourage collaboration, communication, and connection across campus to minimize the duplication of programs/services and increase variety of options.**

*Activity:* Foster a culture of idea-sharing and collaboration.

*Action Item:* Establish college-level development-alumni-advancement committees.

Philanthropy is everyone's responsibility. Donors often hold a special affinity to groups within the university, particularly programs within colleges. As such the Pillar #4 team has suggested the development of college-level development-alumni-advancement committees. Many universities have advancement officers assigned to each college. We do not have the capacity to apply this model, however, training and supporting committees within colleges will help to advance our campaign and to increase both giving and alumni engagement. This approach has been shared with the cabinet as well as the advancement team and it will be implemented.

#### **4.2.a Increase gifts, grants, internships, and sponsored research.**

*Activity:* Since December 1, 2024, we submitted 21 grant proposals totaling \$4,141,701. We received 4 grant awards (3 Federal and 1 private) totaling \$105,310.



As follow-up, we learned in February that we did not receive the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Lab. This grant went to Penn State Beaver. All of the other labs are also housed within Penn State.

It is important to note that we are working with PASSHE to track our federal grants and are following their guidance regarding compliance with federal rules and regulations. At this point we have limited exposure to proposed cuts to indirect costs for federal grants but will provide updates when appropriate.

#### **4.2.c Generate more philanthropic support for the university.**

*Activity:* Launch quiet phase of the comprehensive campaign.

*Action Item:* Create campaign cabinet.

Troy Miller has updated the Council of Trustees on the comprehensive campaign including the campaign cabinet.

#### **4.2.d. Encourage and support strategic faculty and staff driven initiatives to sponsor workshops, conferences, and other special events to generate revenue**

*Activity:* Camp Coordinator – Athletics

Camps are another revenue stream that is important to the financial sustainability of Slippery Rock University. As such we are launching a pilot program to try to expand the athletic camp offerings. Lisa Horton will be serving in this position. Lisa is a former women's professional football player and NFL Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship recipient who joined the SRU football staff in 2023 as an offensive assistant. Lisa earned a bachelor's degree from Cleveland State University, where she was a two-sport athlete and her master's degree in exercise science and wellness promotion from The Rock in 2003. Lisa played professional football for the Pittsburgh Passion in 2003 and would go on to serve as the team's starting quarterback for 15 years. She was a 14-time all-star selection and was named the league MVP four times while leading the Passion to three national championships. After her career, Horton was enshrined in the Women's Pro Football Hall of Fame and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. Lisa also worked for the YMCA as the Vice President of Operations, where she set up youth camps and clinics in the Pittsburgh area.

Camps not only provide additional revenue for the university, but they also serve as an important marketing and recruitment tool as well. Each time a student steps onto this campus it is an opportunity for us to make a positive impression and to raise our reputation. This is a one-year pilot to determine how we can leverage our institution and facilities to generate revenue and to elevate our reputation.

#### **Presidential Activities**

I currently serve on the Pennsylvania Rural Revitalization Commission as the PASSHE representative. During the past several months I have attended two hearings and one business meeting. Serving on this commission elevates the reputation of SRU and advances important initiatives to enhance workforce development and long-term student enrollment. I have also been asked to serve on the Pennsylvania-Ireland Trade Commission. The first meeting is on March 25, 2025, and will know more as we move forward. On March 19th I served on a panel of women leaders at Gannon University "Still I Rise: Overcoming Obstacles for Aspiring Female Leaders".

I will be attending one of the strategic planning sessions hosted by Dr. Kate Shaw Executive Director of the Board of Higher Education on May 13, 2025.

We are currently working with PASSHE to ensure that all SRU activities meet federal guidelines.

As is customary, I'll leave you with a sampling of news about our university, students, faculty, staff and alumni:

Respectfully submitted,

Karen S. Riley, Ph.D.  
President

## **SRU ACCOLADES**

### **UNIVERSITY RANKINGS**

#### **[SRU is second most selective college in Pittsburgh area, according to Business Journals analysis](#)**

Slippery Rock University is getting recognized for selecting the best students who make SRU their first choice for a college destination — and there are data to support it. A recent [article published in the Pittsburgh Business Times](#) revealed SRU as the:

- #2 most selective colleges and universities in the Pittsburgh area, and
- #11 most selective colleges and universities in Pennsylvania.

#### **[Research.com recognizes SRU as a Best Value College and for best online education program in Pennsylvania](#)**

Research.com, a website that helps students find the best schools, academic opportunities and career paths, has recognized Slippery Rock University in several rankings for the 2024-25 academic year. Rankings include:

- # 4 [Best Value Colleges in Pennsylvania](#)
- # 17 [Best Value College in the Northeast](#)

#### **[SRU programs recognized on U.S. News' lists of 2025 Best Online Programs](#)**

Slippery Rock University was recognized on four lists for its online programs by the U.S. News & World Report in the publication's 2025 Best Online Programs rankings.

SRU ranked No. 132 for overall Best Online Bachelor's Programs, listed among regionally accredited institutions that offer online degree completion programs.

#### **[SRU named a 2025 Princeton Review 'Green College' for 16th Consecutive Year](#)**

Since 2010, The Princeton Review has recognized institutions across the nation for their environmental and sustainability efforts through its annual “Green Colleges” report. Slippery Rock University has earned a place on this list every year since its inception, including in the 2025 edition by demonstrating the University's continued commitment to sustainable practices. SRU received a Green Rating of 89 from The Princeton Review and is featured among more than 511 institutions included in the ‘Guide to Green Colleges: 2025 Edition.’

## **FACULTY SCHOLARLY AND CREATIVE WORK**

### **Jazaei publishes four articles in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers journal**

Robabeh Jazaei, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of engineering, recently published four academic papers in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers journal.

### **Beeching and alumni co-author melatonin study published in Physiological Reports**

Simon Beeching, a Slippery Rock University professor of biology, and Hannah Ruland and Katelyn Sparks, both 2024 SRU graduates with degrees biology, recently co-authored an article that was published in Physiological Reports titled “Effects of melatonin on planaria head regeneration are dependent on both timing and duration of exposure.”

### **Limon co-authors research articles published in the Gel Journal**

Shah Limon, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of physics and engineering, recently co-authored a research article that was published in the Gel Journal titled “Characterization and Machine Learning-Driven Property Prediction of a Novel Hybrid Hydrogel Bioink Considering Extrusion-Based 3D Bioprinting.”

### **Berdis has artwork featured at three exhibitions**

Eric Berdis, a Slippery Rock University instructor of art, is having his art exhibited virtually and across the state:

- His recent a solo exhibition titled “Paper Bullies and Friends of Dorothy” was on display at the Abington Art Center in Philadelphia, Jan. 16 to Feb. 24.
- Berdis was juried into the National Art Education Association Member Exhibition for his mixed media work titled “Bury My Bones Out Back.” This digital exhibition can be viewed online through April 25.
- His work is also being featured in Capacities of Care at the HUB-Robeson Center-Art Alley at Penn State University through June 1.

### **Eisenreich featured on new music album released by Soundologia**

Cassandra Eisenreich, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of music, recently had her work featured in a song composed by Federico Bonacossa, titled “Rest on Water.” Eisenreich played the flute on one of six tracks on the album Soundologia Anthology Volume 1: South Florida Contemporary Composers & Artists.

## **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Sport Management students work at Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans**

The Super Bowl of sport management experiences is, well, working at the Super Bowl. Eleven Slippery Rock University students did just that, serving as staff workers at Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans. The group worked Feb. 7-9 at the NFL Super Bowl Experience presented by Panini. As the NFL’s “football theme park,” the Super Bowl Experience featured interactive games, and opportunities for fans to get star player autographs and photos with the Super Bowl rings and the Vince Lombardi Trophy, as well as merchandise from the NFL Shop.

### **Lauren Mortimer selected to perform at SoloDuo Dance Festival in New York**

A Slippery Rock University student is performing on a New York City stage with selected dancers from all over the world. Lauren Mortimer, a senior dual dance and early childhood education major from Butler, was one of 33 dancemakers selected to have her work performed as part of the WHITE WAVE SoloDuo Dance Festival.

### **PRSA Pittsburgh recognizes SRU as a student chapter of the year**

Slippery Rock University was well represented at the Public Relations Society of America Pittsburgh chapter Renaissance Awards, Jan. 31. The awards recognize greater Pittsburgh-area organizations and communicators for their innovative work in the field of public relations and marketing communication. Rock PRSSA, the Public Relations Student Society of America chapter at SRU, received the PRSSA Chapter of the Year award, which recognizes the chapter that demonstrates outstanding leadership and commitment to the growth and success of its members.

### **Lemir named 2025 Student of the Year by Butler County Health Consortium**

Emma Lemire, a Slippery Rock University junior recreational therapy major from Groton, Connecticut, was chosen as the 2025 Student of the Year by the Butler County Health Care Consortium. Lemire was recognized for her work volunteering with a 3-year-old with cerebral palsy using play therapy and aquatics, and for her research study that involves helping people with Parkinson's Disease use adaptive horseback riding to address gait, posture, and other fall prevention measures.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT AND COLLABORATION**

### **High school students earn scholarships and awards for science projects at SRU**

A total of 316 high school students from nine counties came to Slippery Rock University, Feb. 22, to present scientific research projects as part of the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science's Region IX meeting. The PJAS is a statewide organization of junior and senior high school students that promotes interest in science through research projects and investigations.

In addition to presenting research in 13 categories of science, students competed for scholarships and cash awards funded by the SRU Foundation, Inc., and University departments and academic units.

### **Seventeen local high school students perform at SRU's Honors Flute Ensemble**

Seventeen local high school students honed their craft as flutists at Slippery Rock University, Feb. 22-23, as part of the annual Honors Flute Ensemble. The high school flutists participated side by side with the SRU Flute Choir members and attended masterclasses, workshops and rehearsals, before performing in a culminating concert.

### **SRU students and community members engage in Adaptive Sports Day**

Slippery Rock University students and community members played and learned together in an inclusive environment as part of the annual Adaptive Sports Day, hosted by the Recreational Therapy Club at SRU, Feb. 22, at the University's Aebersold Recreation Center.

### **Three high school choirs perform at SRU as part of ChoralFest**

Members of three local high school choirs recently came together at Slippery Rock University for the annual ChoralFest on Feb. 21, at Swope Music Hall, where students not only had their performances critiqued, but more importantly, celebrated the joy and community found in choral music.

### **SRU partners with Pittsburgh Children's Museum to host music events for early learners**

A partnership between Slippery Rock University and the Pittsburgh Children's Museum is bringing music experiences to children through a series of events at the museum. Two SRU music education students are leading "Sing.Move.Play" programs for early learners, Feb. 9, March 9, April 13 and May 11, at the nursery inside the Pittsburgh Children's Museum.

### **SRU President Karen Riley appointed to state commission to address rural population**

Slippery Rock University President Karen Riley was introduced and officially sworn in as an appointee of the Pennsylvania Rural Population Revitalization Commission, Jan. 10, at a news conference at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg. Riley, along with 15 other appointees from across the state, are part of the newly created commission to review and recommend solutions to attract and retain residents in rural areas of Pennsylvania.

## **FACULTY AWARDS**

### **Eisenreich named a Yamaha 40 under 40 music educator**

Cassandra Eisenreich, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of music, was named to the Yamaha 40 Under 40 Music Educators List. For each of the last five years, the Yamaha music and sound company has recognized 40 outstanding music educators under the age of 40 who exhibit action, courage, creativity and a commitment to growth while exceeding expectations in their music programs.

### **Artman and Gamza win Broadcast Education Association awards**

Nicholas Artman, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of strategic communication and media, and Joseph Gamza, a senior strategic communication and media major from Pittsburgh, recently won awards as part of the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts.

## **ATHLETICS UPDATES**

**MEN'S BASKETBALL** finished with a 15-14 overall record for the program's seventh consecutive winning season and the 15th such campaign in the last 17 years overall. The Rock finished fourth in the PSAC West and lost in the first round of the conference tournament to No. 5-seeded IUP.

**WOMEN'S BASKETBALL** finished with a 7-19 overall record and a 4-16 mark in the PSAC. Several key contributors from this year's roster are expected to return to the team next year.

**MEN'S INDOOR TRACK & FIELD** placed third place at the PSAC indoor championships, marking the 14th straight year that SRU has finished inside the top three in the team standings at the meet. Pole vaulter Drew Layton and shot putter Seaton Wozniak qualified for nationals.

**WOMEN'S INDOOR TRACK & FIELD** won its second straight and eighth overall title at the PSAC Indoor Championships, posting the largest winning margin at the women's indoor meet since 2012 after winning seven of the 17 events on the way to racking up 153 points. Anna Igims qualified for nationals in the 5,000-meter run.

## **Committee Reports**

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

Dr. Alfonso Angelucci chairs the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. In Trustee Angelucci's absence, Trustee Matt Lautman provided the report on his behalf.

Dr. Michael Zieg, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs, updated Council on the background and role of the new Associate Provost for Academic Innovation, Dr. Timothy Slekar, who will be starting in May. Dr. Christine Karshin, Dean of the College of Health Professions, provided an update on upcoming changes to SRU's Nursing program. It was clarified that these changes are a restructuring of the existing BSN program, rather than a new program.

Dr. Zieg concluded by reviewing recent and upcoming program changes, including innovative credentialing opportunities and programs that have been discontinued.

Michael May, vice president, Enrollment Management, provided final Spring enrollment and retention numbers as well as an update on enrollment for Summer and Fall 2025. The new nursing pathway has more than 100 applications to date while the new engineering programs are contributing to double digit increases in applications, offers, and deposits across the entire SRU engineering department. Information about FAFSA filing in Year #2 of the Better FAFSA was also shared.

Ken Bach, senior director, University Marketing and Communication, reported on collaborations with enrollment management to offset the negative influence of the enrollment cliff. A series of research initiatives are underway to develop a storyline that showcases core differentiators in a competitive marketplace. These include internal stakeholder research, external perception research, and competitive market analysis, as well as a market opportunity index, marketing audit, and collateral review. The foundational research began in January 2025 and will conclude this summer in time for a precision targeting campaign to launch in Fall 2025 with the new recruitment cycle.

Dr. Dave Wilmes, vice president, Student Affairs, provided updates on the Housing assignment process for the 2025-26 academic year. All is progressing according to schedule and in line with our forecasting. He also presented an update on the Student Health Center and the University's new relationship with Allegheny Health Network (AHN). While the transition has taken longer than anticipated, the University and AHN are headed in the right direction to provide excellent care to our students. Dr. Wilmes concluded by sharing some recent Rock the Weekend events which ensure that students are connecting with one another and building a strong affinity for SRU.

Chair Stoeber, this concludes my report.

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

Trustee Jeffrey Smith chairs the Finance and Administrative Committee who provided this report.

The Finance and Administrative Committee met at 8:30 a.m. on March 21, 2025, with committee members, Smith, Taylor, and Stoeber present. Lavalley and McCarrier were absent.

Carrie Birckbichler, vice president, Finance and Administration, provided a financial update for the first six months of the year. Revenues are slightly ahead of plan and the budget to actual appears favorable.

All Auxiliary budgets are on track with the Food Service budget well ahead of plan due to a larger than expected use by commuter students.

The committee had detailed discussions concerning the changes that have been made to the Tuition Technology Fee. While the fee remains tied to tuition increases, COT's may now do their own

increase in addition to, or in place of, any state increase. Slippery Rock has no plans to follow several PASSHE schools that have increased this student fee.

Carrie also presented information on the projected State Appropriation increases and their impact on Slippery Rock. The committee discussed how the current allocation formula impacts Slippery Rock and how it might be improved.

A comparison of actual and projected appropriation revenues to University employment showed that during the 4 year period from 2022 to 2026, appropriations have increased by \$18.6 million of which \$14.6 million was used for salary increases. While the actual employee headcount decreased during that period, the average personnel expenses rose 22% per person.

Carrie shared that the University had adopted a zero-based budgeting process which is having all departments take a hard look at their budgets rather than simply updating the previous budget with new numbers.

Scott Albert provided an update on the \$36 million dollars of facility projects that are or will be underway this year. He also presented the capital budget for this year.

The committee voted to forward the Capital Budget onto the full Council recommending it for approval.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Chair Stoeber this concludes my report.

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

Trustee Joshua Young, committee chairperson, provided the following report. The University Advancement Committee met this morning at 9:30 a.m.

Troy Miller, vice president for University Advancement, updated the Council on advancement priorities based on the annual development plan as found within the comprehensive campaign plan presented to the Council at the last meeting. The development plan, completed in October of 2024, concentrates on the following areas: development, campaign, alumni relations, annual giving, advancement services, and university events. In May 2025, the annual development plan for 2025/26 will be finalized.

Development priorities are based on activity metrics for development officers. As of February 14, 2025, 420 individual meetings were completed with alumni and friends of Slippery Rock University. Nearly \$4M was raised in contributions and pledges, and 64 major gift proposals of \$25K or more were presented during solicitations.

Campaign priorities were based on the campaign plan to raise \$30M by 2030. As of February 14, 2025, \$14,912,073.18 has been raised. This amount represents just under 50% of the total campaign goal with 24% of the scheduled campaign complete. A campaign marketing plan will be completed with the assistance of University Marketing and Communications. Otherwise, the campaign plan is complete. A campaign budget has been finalized and will be reviewed as part of the 25/26 budget process. Typically, a campaign budget will total between 5-10% of the campaign goal. The draft budget proposed is 1.3% of the total campaign goal. Finally, Tony and Regina Robinson are acting as campaign cabinet co-chairs, and they have been busy and effective. All affiliate cabinet members have been named, and the recruitment process is in progress. Campaign Cabinet training is scheduled for March 26, 2025.

Alumni Relations priorities are based on creating a baseline of alumni engagement, increasing engagement, and creating an overall culture of alumni engagement. The Alumni Relations board will speak to this during their presentation; however, the Alumni Relations Office did submit the annual CASE Alumni Engagement Report for the first time in 2025, and the results of this report will allow Slippery Rock University to compare our alumni engagement data with data in PASSHE, with data in comparable Universities, and with data across the country.

Annual Giving priorities are based on annual support of Slippery Rock University through direct mail, crowd-funding, and other techniques not including major gift solicitations. As of February 14, 2025, \$276,679.40 has been raised through annual giving. In addition, 358 new donors have supported Slippery Rock University thus far this fiscal year. The largest portion of our annual giving support is raised during our annual Giving Day, and Giving Day is taking place today. Giving Day is the University's largest one-day effort to support Rock students. The theme of this year's giving day is: IT'S GAME ON AT THE ROCK, and that theme is based on the video game phenomenon. I will provide an update on giving day at the end of the meeting.

Advancement Services priorities are based on our stewardship activities for supporters of The Rock. As of February 14, 2025, we have retained 1,002 donors thus far from last year. Many of those donors from last year will be retained today with their annual support of Giving Day. This represents a current retention rate of 31.82%. In addition, we have retained 78 first time donors from last year. Again, both numbers will increase throughout the rest of the fiscal year, and most especially during today's Giving Day activities.

Priorities for University events have been hampered by the resignation of the Manager of University Events. Since that resignation, those responsibilities have fallen on the shoulders of our Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations, Brandon Berns. However, that position posting closed at the beginning of this month and we have a robust pool of candidates. Our strategies for University Events include a comprehensive review of all events, the creation of an event resource website, and the creation of a new standard operating procedure to support events that includes the completion of an event form that outlines an event's purpose, proposed outcomes, budget, and planning strategy at least six months in advance.

Michael Zody, president, SRU Alumni Association, presented the CASE Alumni Engagement Metrics. He began with updating the Council on the purpose and mission of CASE, and then described the metric categories including experiential, philanthropic, communications, and volunteer. He explained that 5,767 alumni participated in the experiential category; 1,077 alumni participated in the philanthropic category; 443 alumni participated in the volunteer category; and that Slippery Rock University does not yet have the technical capacity to review communication participation metrics, but that we are working on completing this for the next fiscal year. The overall alumni engagement percentage for Slippery Rock University is 8.8% (without the communications numbers included). As you will recall, the development plan priority was to determine an engagement baseline and to create a 5-year alumni engagement plan to increase that percentage annually.

The recent Florida Alumni Trip, including events in The Villages, Tampa, Bradenton (Pirates Spring Training) and Southeast Florida is an example of alumni experiential engagement. The upcoming Alumni Weekend, June 6-8, 2025, is another great example. In fact, there were several upcoming alumni events reviewed during the presentation.

Mark Palmer, president, SRU Foundation Board, and Dave Hollenbaugh, executive director of the Foundation Board, provided an update on Foundation finances, student housing (Residential Suites), and other Foundation activities. Total Foundation assets increased nearly \$3M from December 31, 2023, to



December 31, 2024, and total net assets increased nearly \$1.5M during that same period. While the student housing total assets decreased by \$3M, the total net assets improved by nearly \$1M during that same time period. Endowment assets are \$49,834,527 as of December 31, 2024.

The Foundation then went into a more detailed presentation about SRUF Student Housing, LLC. The conversation began with a review of the balance sheet that shows a lessening of the total net assets deficit. It continued with a discussion on pricing and room configurations and ended with a comparison of revenues and expenses from 2017-2025. The Foundation also provided an update on other activities including scholarships, Cozy Homes, Dave Hollenbaugh's fundraising portfolio, and the Scholarship Stewardship Banquet being held on April 5, 2025.

Chair Stoebener, this concludes my report.

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

Trustee Elise Michaux, chair of the Governance Committee, provided the following report.

There were no presentations, one action item, and a two information items.

1. Following discussion, Council agreed to table proposed changes to the current SRU COT Bylaws until there is a full review of the bylaws. Council will make a motion to remove the item from tomorrow's business meeting agenda. Chair Michaux will work with her committee to develop a process and timeline to complete the Bylaws review.
2. At Chair Michaux's request, Council Chair Stoebener shared a brief overview that last time we talked about different ways for Council committee chairs to work and engage with University counterparts to promote Strategic Plan efforts and align our committee work with the four Strategic Plan Pillars. We know these engagements are occurring and we are open to further ideas to help with the process.
3. Chair Michaux reiterated that a Governance Committee meeting was held Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., via Zoom. It was good discussion about how we as trustees can engage in the SRU community and help with the Strategic Plan process.

### **Information Items**

- Calendar Mentions
- COT Bylaws

Chair Stoebener, this concludes my report.

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

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

## **ITEMS FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

### **Capital Budget Submission FY 25-26** **(TAB 14, Appendix H)**

Trustee Young moved, Trustee Severo seconded, approval of the Capital Budget Submission FY '25-'26. Motion carries.

### **Next Quarterly Business Meeting Date:**

June 12-13, 2025

### **Contracts: (TAB 10) (Appendix I)**

### **Facilities & Planning Active Projects List (TAB 11) (Appendix J)**

### **HR Personnel Items (Tab 12) (Appendix K)**

- Instructional Appointments: Effective Academic Year 2024-2025
- Administrator Appointments
- Management Appointments
- Support Staff Appointments
- Retirements
- Resignations

### **Budget/Financial Updates (TAB 13) (Appendix L)**

### **Committee Presentations (TAB 9)**

### **Divisional Reports (TAB 8)**

## **FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Trustee Smith: This is my quarterly thank you to those who have announced their retirements. "Retirement is a big life change and people deserve to be recognized when it happens." This quarter we have 11 people with a total of 309 years [of service to Slippery Rock University].

- Dr. Simon Beeching, professor, Biology, 34 years
- Dr. Sunita Peacock, professor, Languages, Literatures, Cultures, and Writing, 30 years
- Dr. Kurt Pitluga, assistant professor, Art, 29 years
- Dr. James Rodger, professor, School of Business, Management, 3 years
- Dr. Ann Romanczyk, assistant professor, Psychology, 35 years
- Dr. Michael Stapleton, professor, Chemistry and Environmental Geoscience, 29 years
- Dr. Steven Strain, professor, Biology, 29 years
- Ms. Virginia Kopko, associate director, Financial Aid and Scholarships, 19 years
- Ms. Lauren Lokash, Head Women's Volleyball Coach, 40 years
- Mr. Tod Horner, Architectural Designer, Facilities and Planning, 35 years
- Mr. Matthew Parr, Equip Specialist, Facilities and Planning, 19 years
- Mr. Raymond Tasker, Maintenance Repairman 2, Facilities and Planning, 7 years

Thank you for your service!

Trustee Michaux offered kudos for the great work that continues to be done at SRU. I am a proud ROCK alum!

President Riley offered congratulations to Elise on her new job!

Trustee Young asked VP for Advancement Troy Miller to give the audience an update on the numbers for Annual Giving Day, (drum roll), 560 donors, which is fantastic, \$415,443 raised thus far with 11 hours left to go! Great job everyone!

Chair Stoebener announced that we just found out Dr. Riley is a finalist for the 2025 Prestigious Business Leader Award by The Pittsburgh North Regional Chamber (PNRC). The winners will be recognized May 8 at their Annual Awards Gala. Congratulations Dr. Riley!

With no further business, Chair Stoebener called for adjournment. Trustee Young moved, Trustee Lautman seconded, to adjourn the Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees business meeting. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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