

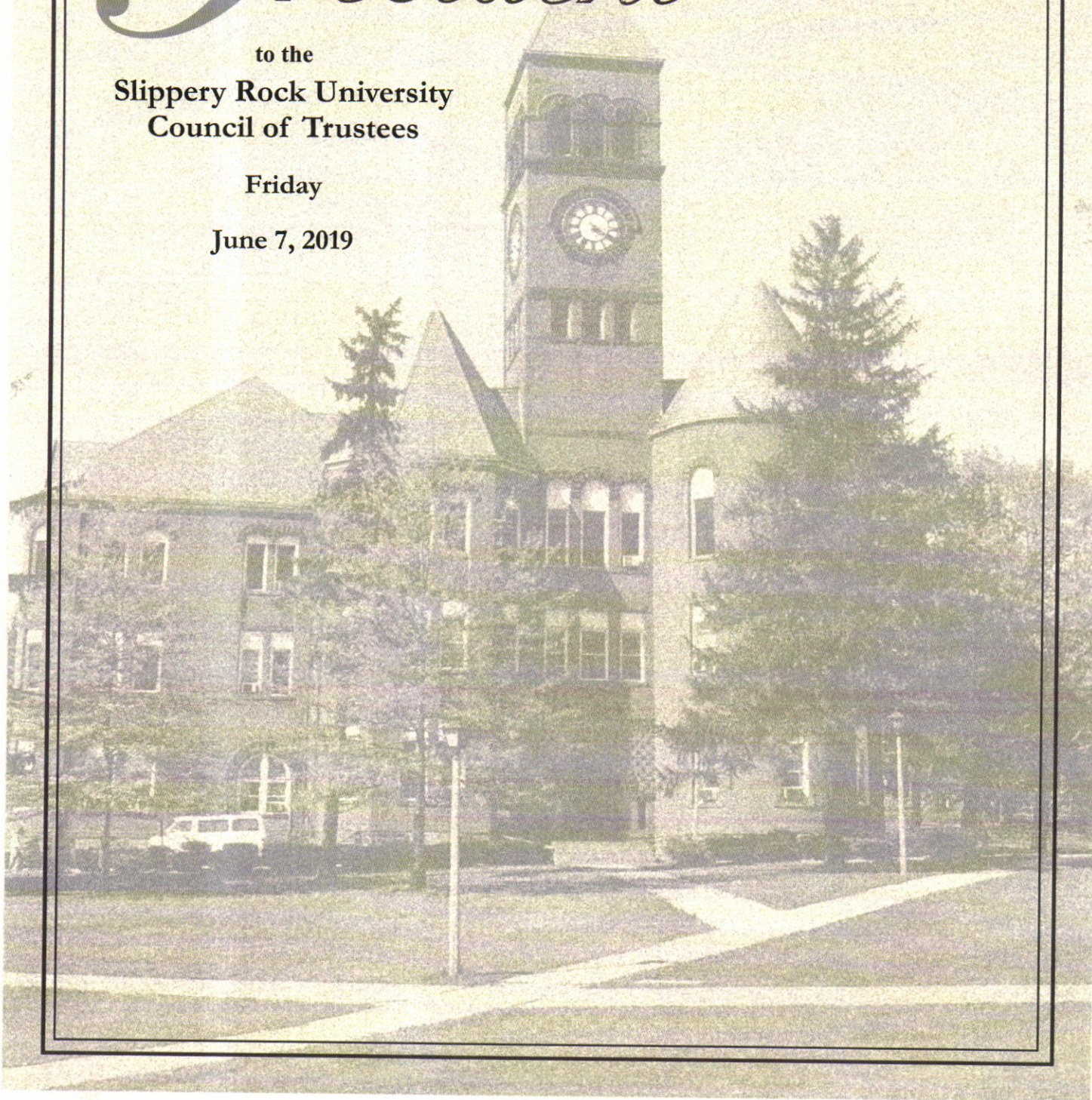
# REPORT OF THE

# *President*

to the  
Slippery Rock University  
Council of Trustees

Friday

June 7, 2019



# Slippery Rock University

## Council of Trustees

### President Report

June 7, 2019

It seems almost surreal that this time last year I was making final arrangements for my move to Slippery Rock University and today I am 341 days into my first year as president.

It's been an incredible year. One filled with moments of triumph and tragedy. At each occasion, we came together as a community to celebrate our accomplishments or to lift each other up and through our challenges. This is an amazing place. Leah and I remain so grateful for your trust, and for allowing us to join this extraordinary community. Indeed, as I end my first year, this strong sense of community continues to impress and sustain me. Thank you.

By almost any measure, The Rock is a success story. Our enrollments remain solid at a time when most others are falling. We are financially stable. Our graduates are getting good jobs and contributing to their professions. Our faculty and staff are leaders in their fields. And, our beautiful, welcoming campus is the envy of many.

It is tempting, quite tempting actually, to sit back, pat one another on the back and be satisfied with the status quo. Doing so would, of course, be a mistake. While it's important to celebrate our accomplishments, it's even more important that we constantly assess what we are doing, how successful (or not) we are doing, and how we can do things more effectively to deliver on our promise to provide a Rock-Solid living, learning and work environment for all.

A starting point for such an assessment begins at the top. It begins by asking critical questions such as: Are we organized for success? Are we working collaboratively to maximize the best use of human and financial resources? Are we poised to anticipate future challenges and are we agile and flexible enough to respond?

I've been asking those questions for the past year as I've met with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and business and government leaders. As a result of what I learned, coupled with best practices, I announced April 14 the first step in responding to institutional needs, the restructuring of my cabinet.

Key to that reorganization was realigning Amir Mohammadi's role to create a senior vice president for administration and economic development. Dr. Mohammadi has agreed to accept this new challenge as the University's chief innovation officer. This is a critical position that will help identify new sources of revenue and promote a culture of innovation that positions SRU squarely within broader entrepreneurial ecosystems. He will work to expand the University's partnerships regionally and beyond to promote economic growth and develop strategies to link programs to workforce needs. He'll also provide leadership for large-scale international partnerships and serve as the institution's chief contract negotiator across all segments of the University.

I also felt it important to flatten reporting lines so I have direct access to information critical to successfully achieving our strategic initiatives. This will entail having enrollment services, human resources and institutional research join the cabinet and report directly to me.

As a result of these changes, cabinet membership will now include the following positions:

- President;
- Provost and vice president for academic and student affairs;

- Senior vice president for administration and economic development;
- Chief communication and public affairs officer;
- Chief data officer;
- Chief enrollment management officer;
- Chief financial officer;
- Chief human resources officer; and
- Chief of staff.

The executive director of the SRU Foundation, Inc. will continue to serve as an ex-officio member.

After months of conversations with academic leadership, college faculty and APSCUF leadership, and in order to accommodate program growth and more accurately reflect its mission, the University's College of Health, Environment and Science has been reorganized to feature three schools and has been renamed the College of Health, Engineering and Science.

These moves will further enhance student and marketplace needs as over the past few years we've experienced significant growth, particularly in the areas of engineering and health. It was critical that we respond with the appropriate management structure that will allow continued growth and the flexibility to be innovative and agile as opportunities present themselves.

The College of Health, Engineering and Science will retain all current programs.

- **The School of Health Professions** will include the departments of: athletic training; exercise and rehabilitative sciences; nursing; occupational therapy; physical therapy; physician assistant studies; public health and social work; and recreational therapy. The Inter-Professional Education Collaborative and Storm Harbor Equestrian Center also will reside in the school. Kurt Schimmel will serve as the interim assistant to the dean for the School of Health Professions. Schimmel, a professor in the School of Business, formerly served as the dean of the SRU College of Business.
- **The School of Science** will include the departments/programs of: biology; chemistry; computing and cybersecurity; geography, geology and the environment; mathematics and statistics; parks and conservation; physics; and psychology. The School will also house the Center for Cybersecurity and Advanced Computing, the Macoskey Center and the Statistical Consulting Center. An assistant to the dean for the School of Science will be named at a later date.
- **The School of Engineering** will include the departments/programs of: civil; industrial and systems; mechanical; and petroleum and natural gas engineering. Steven Wei will continue to serve as program director. Wei is a professor of physics and engineering.

Establishing three schools within CHES, along with a realignment of programs within the School of Business to create the departments of: Accounting, Economics and Finance; Health Care Administration and Informational Systems; and Marketing and Management, is a testament to the vision and hard work of faculty and staff to develop and implement programs that continue to attract high-achieving students to the University. I'm excited for what the future will bring.

While taking care of business internally, we also took time this past quarter to honor the many individuals that contribute to the University's success. As part of the University's **Salute to Excellence** program, we recognized:

- **Becky Lubold**, a resident of Slippery Rock and manager of the Slippery Rock Farmers Market, received the Community Partner Award.

- **Nikol Damato**, a senior dual major in history and biology from Ellwood City, was awarded the President's Student Civic Leadership Award.
- **Lynne Motyl**, associate vice president for human resources and diversity, received the President's Civic Engagement Ambassador Award.
- **Brett Barnett**, a Slippery Rock University professor of communication, received the President's Award for Scholarly and Creative Achievement.
- **Becky Thomas**, an assistant professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy, received the President's Award for Excellence in Teaching.
- **Joanne Leight**, a professor of physical and health education, received the President's Award for Outstanding Academic Advising.
- **Patti Doyle**, a purchasing agent in SRU's Contracts and Purchasing Office, and **Catherine Massey**, professor of psychology, received the 2019 President's Awards for Outstanding Service.
- **Lalanda Stromp**, an assistant professor of hospitality, event management and tourism, was recognized for her 45 years of service along with 108 colleagues who were honored for their combined 1,870 years of service to the University.

Rising Star awards, sponsored by AVI Fresh and SRU's Office of Student Engagement and Leadership, were presented to:

- **Celine Halt**, a junior resort, recreation and hospitality management major.
- **Samantha Kochis**, a junior music education major.
- **Allison Kronyak**, a 2019 recreational therapy graduate.
- **Dillon Pusateri**, a freshman political science major.
- **Corinne Rockefeller**, a sophomore geography major.
- **Hannah Shumsky**, a junior secondary education major.
- **Alaina Stroud**, a senior music therapy major.

**Kennedy Moore**, a 2019 resort, recreation and hospitality management graduate, was named SRU's Student Leader of the Year.

If you took part in yesterday's annual inspection of facilities, I'm sure you realized that construction season is in full swing at the University. There are approximately 15 major construction projects either beginning or continuing this summer, totaling nearly \$38 million of improvements to buildings across our 660-acre campus.

Included among them are:

- The second phase of renovations to North Hall and ROCK Apartments. North Hall's second-floor student rooms will be renovated and windows and student doors throughout the building will be replaced. The kitchens and bathrooms in four of the eight ROCK Apartment will also be renovated.
- The Strain Safety Building reopened for classes in February after undergoing a \$7.5 million renovation project that began in 2017. This summer we are completing a few "punch-list items" of work totaling \$200,000.
- The largest expansion project in the 14-year history of the Storm Harbor Equestrian Center will be completed this month. The \$1 million project expands the facility by 23,700 square feet, including a larger indoor-riding arena and six additional horse stalls, along with a new viewing area, corridor, covered porch, storage space and restrooms.

- Boozel Dining Hall is undergoing a \$1 million renovation this summer. The work will focus mostly in the kitchen, but guests will notice several cosmetic changes to the dining area and food stations upon completion, which is scheduled for Aug. 12.
- Work on Old Main's roof will be completed this summer. The \$800,000 project that started in October included the replacement of slate shingles with asphalt shingles, gutter repairs and a metal cap on the cupola, all of which met the approval of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.
- Renovations to the performing arts buildings, which started last summer, will continue. The \$29.2-million project includes renovations to West Gym, East Gym and Miller Auditorium, with updated completion dates anticipated for August 2019, December 2019 and February 2020, respectively.

Several weeks ago I found myself in the middle of a social media firestorm when Dr. Phil, a popular TV psychologist and talk show host, in a People.com interview regarding the national admission's scandal, opined that the accused parents weren't really shopping for an education, but rather they were looking for status. He noted, "They don't want to say, 'My kid's going to the junior college.' They want to say, 'My kid's going to Harvard; my kid's going to USC or Yale.' I think it's bragging rights for them and they don't want to be the one parent that says, 'Well, yeah, my kid's going to, like, Slippery Rock.'"

Well, that toss-away comment about Slippery Rock University set off a frenzy of tweets and Facebook posts in support of the University. I posted an open letter to Dr. Phil in which I pointed out, "Education is the single most important means of improving mobility and leveling social and economic differences. Universities like Slippery Rock University are key to social mobility in America and should be applauded for their efforts to narrow the gap between the haves and have-nots."

To his credit, Dr. Phil quickly owned up to his mistake. He posted an open letter apologizing for his comment and praised SRU for its achievements.

"It was definitely not aimed at the real Slippery Rock University. It was from ignorance not intention, that I made the comments, as I was unaware of your school and intended to use a fictitious example. One hundred percent my mistake. I have since educated myself about SRU and couldn't be more impressed with your fine institution," he wrote.

Dr. Phil went on to say, "SRU is the real deal...it certainly deserves no slight from me or anyone else, intended or otherwise. I wish SRU nothing but the best."

I immediately responded, accepting Dr. Phil's "gracious apology" and inviting him to visit campus. He hasn't yet responded, but to be honest, if it wasn't for Dr. Phil, my message about SRU and how we open the doors to the American Dream for all qualified individuals regardless of ZIP code would not have reached more than 4 million people on Facebook and Twitter. Nor would the University have had the media attention it generated. He created an incredible platform for me to be able to talk about SRU, and I love talking about SRU. In fact as a result of the national discussion, I have been invited to participate at the Inside Higher Education national conference in July.

We also had some fun with Dr. Phil's comment about not knowing that SRU really existed. At commencement rehearsal I gifted each of the seniors present with T-shirt proclaiming, "**Yes, there is a Slippery Rock University.**" I have one for each of you as well that I hope you'll wear proudly.

Although Dr. Phil may have been confused about our existence, the University's commitment to excellence and effectiveness continues to be recognized nationally.

## HONORS AND ACCOLADES

Since March 2019, Slippery Rock University was:

- Recognized as one of the safest colleges in the United States by the National Council for Home Safety and Security.
- Ranked as one of the 25 most affordable music therapy programs in the country by [bestcounselingdegrees.net](http://bestcounselingdegrees.net).
- Ranked as one of the country's top 20 online master's degrees in English by [OnlineCourseReport.com](http://OnlineCourseReport.com).
- Ranked as one of the top 50 online master's degree in education programs in the country by [TheBestSchools.org](http://TheBestSchools.org).
- Recognized as having one of the country's best dance programs for 2019-2020 by [DanceUS.org](http://DanceUS.org).
- Ranked as one of the top 25 sport management degree programs in the country by [bachelorsdegreecenter.org](http://bachelorsdegreecenter.org).
- Ranked as one of the 20 most affordable online Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs in the country by [OnlineSchoolsCenter.com](http://OnlineSchoolsCenter.com).

As is customary, I'll leave you with a sampling of Good News being generated by our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

## STUDENTS

- **Marshall Tuten**, a 2019 dual business administration in economics and professional Spanish graduate, and **Dallas Kline**, a 2019 sport management graduate, received the Alumni Association's Outstanding Senior Man and Senior Woman Awards.
- **Austin Shirk**, a junior biology major from Elizabethtown, and **Anna Heasley**, a senior biology major from Volant, were accepted into research experiences for undergraduates this summer. Shirk will conduct a 10-week, paid REU at Boston College studying molecular biology, while Heasley will go to Old Dominion University for an REU to study the human impact on climate as it pertains to the world's oceans.
- The Slippery Rock University **women's track and field team** won its 16th Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference championship and its first since 2009.
- Running back **Wes Hills** signed a free agent contract with the Arizona Cardinals of the National Football League and became the seventh Slippery Rock University football player in the last five years invited to an NFL camp.
- **Ryan Polaski**, a junior dual major in political science and economics from Edinboro, presented a research paper at the All Politics Is Local Conference at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio.
- **Shannon Rose**, a senior chemistry major from King of Prussia, and **Anna Will**, a junior chemistry major from Allison Park, received the Outstanding Poster Presentation award for "Synthesis of Unnatural Amino Acids and Impacts on Peptide Folded Structures" at the 33rd Annual American Chemical Society Student Member Symposium at Duquesne University.
- The Rocket, the independent, student-run newspaper at Slippery Rock University, placed third for "Newspaper Overall Excellence," in the 2019 Society for Collegiate Journalists National Contest, while four students won first place for page design and quality of content, including: **Megan Bush**, a senior communication major from Stroudsburg, in the Feature Page category; **Steve Cukovich**, a senior communication major from Renfrew, in the Sports Page category; **Eric Davies**, a senior communication major from Harveys Lake, in the Editorial Page category; and **Adam Zook**, a junior communication major from Tyrone, in the News Page category.
- **Kyle Maraffi**, a junior mathematics major from Slippery Rock; **Adam Majewski**, a sophomore mathematics major from Erie; **Luke Pilarski**, a sophomore mathematics major from Pittsburgh; and **Mariah Kacey**, a junior mathematics major from Pittsburgh, won second place for their poster presentation at the Sigma Xi Regional Undergraduate Research and Creative

Accomplishment Conference for their research that dealt with statistical methods for sampling from a probability distribution.

- **Nico Russo**, a senior environmental geoscience major from Sarver, was one of three students selected to present research at the annual Student Night co-sponsored by the Pittsburgh Geological Society; the American Society of Civil Engineers, Geotechnical Division; and the Association of Environmental and Engineering Geologists.
- **Logan McIntyre**, a sophomore dual major in environmental geoscience and modern languages and culture from Volant; and **Miranda Filak**, a junior secondary education-Spanish major from Belle Vernon, presented papers at the XV Undergraduate Research Colloquium, a conference organized by the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pittsburgh.
- **Logan Thrush**, a senior homeland security major from Brookville, was awarded the Master Sgt. Kenneth C. Gillin ROTC Scholarship after he was selected from an applicant pool of the top junior cadets at Army ROTC programs in Pennsylvania.
- **Colleen Dougherty**, a senior mathematics major from Pittsburgh; **Kaila DeChristofaro**, a senior mathematics major from Girard, Ohio; and **Jessica Lefler**, a senior mathematics major from Allison Park, presented papers at the Pi Mu Epsilon Regional Conference at Youngstown State University.
- SRU students **Frances Orteza**, a junior music education major from Sharon, and **Samantha Kochis**, a junior music education major from Cranberry Township, won two of the 24 spots on the NFA Collegiate Flute Ensemble and will perform at the NFA convention in August.
- **Sydney Eastman**, a junior dual major in mathematics and music performance from Centerville, was selected to present a talk at the NFA convention titled "Hypermobility in the Fingers and Playing the Flute."

#### FACULTY/STAFF

- Slippery Rock University's third annual **Giving Day**, March 26, raised more than \$139,000, exceeding the campaign goal of \$100,000 and surpassing last year's total by 157 percent
- **Yvonne Eaton-Stull**, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of public health and social work, led a faculty-student research team that conducted a workshop at the Pennsylvania Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services' Annual Conference titled, "Enhancing psychiatric rehabilitation services through canine cuddles and community partnerships."
- **Cassandra Eisenreich**, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of music, was selected to serve as the conductor/clinician for the National Flute Association's High School Flute Ensemble and as chair of the NFA's Pedagogy Committee
- **Becky Thomas**, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy, co-authored a paper that was published for open access in *Conservation Science and Practice*, a journal of the Society for Conservation Biology.
- **Brett Barnett**, a Slippery Rock University professor of communication, had an essay published in a special edition of *Journal of Hate Studies*, the only peer-reviewed academic journal exclusively devoted to the study of what hate is, where it comes from and how to combat it.
- **Matt Meredith**, Slippery Rock University head women's tennis coach, was named Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference West Division Coach of the Year after leading The Rock to a 6-0 record in the PSAC West, 16 wins that were the team's most since 2009 and a berth in the NCAA Tournament.
- **Istvan Kovacs**, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of physical and health education, returned to his native Hungary as the only American presenter at the International Table Tennis Federation Sports Science Congress, which was attended by scholars, scientists and coaches seeking to advance the sport of table tennis.
- **Colleen Cooke**, a Slippery Rock University professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy, received The Red Nose Award from the Association for Applied and Therapeutic

Humor for her extraordinary volunteer service to the AATH mission to study, practice and support healthy humor.

- **Richard Wukich**, retired Slippery Rock University professor of art and former University trustee, was honored by the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts with the 2019 Outstanding Achievement Award. Wukich was recognized at the annual NCECA conference for his contributions and achievements that include the support of educator initiatives through the National K-12 Ceramics Exhibition Foundation and as founder of the Potters Water Action Group, an organization with global chapters that provide safe drinking water through the use of ceramic filters.
- **Jason Kush**, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of music, has accepted an invitation to be a guest saxophone teacher at Universidad de Antioquia in Medellin, Colombia, July 2-11.
- **Baek-Kyoo Joo**, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of business, received the Cutting Edge Research Award at the Academy of Human Resource Development's International Research Conference in the Americas.
- **Vaughn Bicehouse** and **Toni Mild**, Slippery Rock University assistant professors of special education, co-authored an article that will be published in the American Association for Employment in Education's "2020 Job Search Handbook for Educators."

#### ALUMNI

- **Ryan Beilstein**, a 2009 accounting graduate; **Grace Evans**, a 2013 dual mathematics and nonprofit management graduate; **Adam Katchmarchi**, a 2012 health and physical teacher education graduate; and **Elise Michaux**, a 2011 English literature graduate (undergraduate) and 2013 student affairs graduate (masters); were awarded Distinguished Alumni Awards by the SRU Alumni Association.
- **Nicole Stout**, '94, an SRU graduate with a degree in community health, was one of two individuals awarded the John H.P. Maley Lecture by the American Physical Therapy Association. The lectureship is presented annually to an APTA member who has demonstrated clinical expertise and significant contributions to the physical therapy profession. Stout is the chief executive officer of 3e Services, an information technology consulting firm, and a medical affairs consultant for health information technology and biotech firms.
- **Sabrina Anderson**, '16, '17M, and **Krista Caldwell**, '15, both SRU graduates in exercise science and former track and field athletes, competed at the Baltimore taping for the 11th season of the NBC television program "American Ninja Warrior."
- **Maraina Miles**, '18, an SRU graduate with a degree in environmental science-geology, recently completed a two-month research expedition in Antarctica as part of her graduate school studies at the University of Maine.
- The Slippery Rock University Alumni Association honored **Ryan Beilstein**, '09, **Grace Evans**, '13, **Adam Katchmarchi**, '12, and **Elise Michaux**, '11, '13M, at its Annual Awards and Recognition Banquet for demonstrating professional and personal accomplishments.

In closing, I am sad to report the University lost two wonderful friends this past quarter, **Wilma Cavill** and **Robert Lowry**.

**Cavill**, 88, a retired assistant professor of safety management, died May 15.

Born Dec. 15, 1930, in New Castle, Cavill began her nearly 60 years of affiliation with SRU when she enrolled as a physical education major in 1948. She was member of the gymnastics team, serving as captain her junior year. After graduating in 1952, Cavill taught physical education in New Castle and received her master's degree in education from Westminster College.



She returned to SRU in 1958, accepting a position supervising student teachers and as an aquatic specialist. Within two weeks of her employment, Cavill began a six-year run coaching gymnastics, serving as head women's coach and assistant men's coach. She was a pioneer for women's athletics at SRU and was also a founding member of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties, helping settling disputes as a faculty union leader.

Upon her retirement in December 2015, the University awarded Cavill an Honorary Doctor of Public Service. At the time of her retirement, she was the longest serving faculty member in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

**Lowry, 93**, a former acting president, died May 23 in South Carolina.

Born July 6, 1925 in in Armstrong County's Appelowd Borough, Lowry graduated from Kittanning High School before enlisting in the Air Force in 1943 where he was trained as a bombardier navigator on the B-17 Bomber. Following his service, in 1945 he enrolled at then-Slippery Rock State Teachers College where he earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics and met his future wife, Donna Beck. The couple were married in 1947 and moved to Kane where Lowry taught high school math and later became principal at Kane High School.

Lowry would go on to earn a master's degree from Penn State University and a doctoral degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He returned to SRU in 1957 to become director of admissions. In 1968, following the resignation of then-President Robert Carter, Lowry was appointed the University's chief administrative officer and later, acting president. In total, he spent 24 years at SRU, retiring in 1981 as the dean of the Graduate School.

The Lowry Center, which houses SRU's Department of Military Science and Army ROTC program, was named in his honor. It was dedicated June 7, 1988.

I know you join me in sending thoughts and prayers to their families and friends. They will be missed.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. Behre  
President