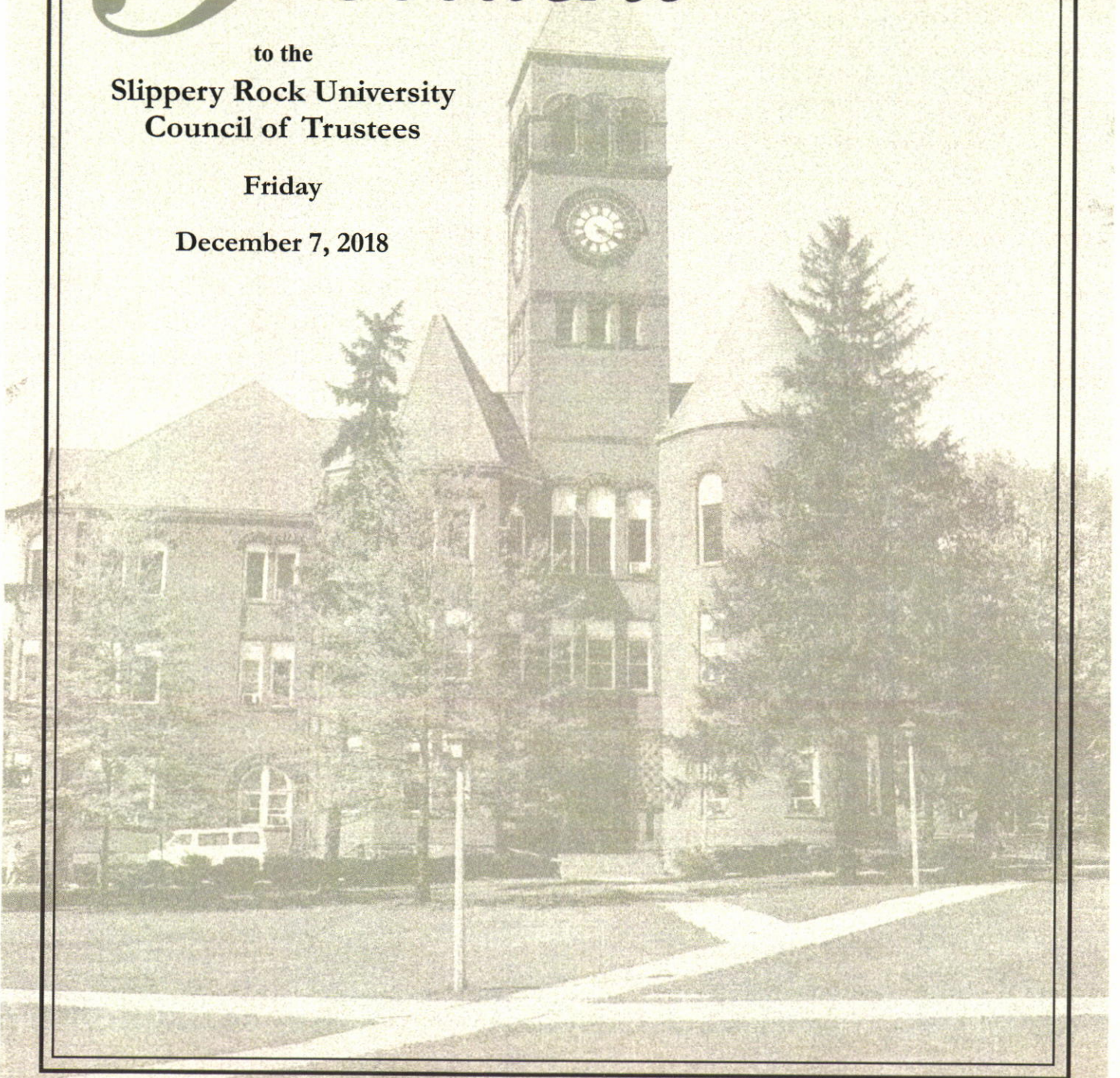


REPORT OF THE

President

to the
**Slippery Rock University
Council of Trustees**

**Friday
December 7, 2018**



Slippery Rock University

Council of Trustees

President Report

Dec. 7, 2018

Let me begin this report by again thanking the trustees for selecting me to serve as your president and for the 17-day celebration of SRU and my inaugural as the 17th president. It was an incredible, albeit somewhat exhausting, schedule of events spotlighting the academy, the arts, athletics and all the internal and external stakeholders that contribute to, and share in the success of, the University. Thank heaven I'm not the 25th president - I'm not sure all the student musicians who delivered such incredible performances throughout the celebration could have survived.

I'd also like to thank Coach Shawn Lutz and the ROCK football team for their great inaugural gifts: the Western Division Conference Championship and an exciting performance in the NCAA Division II football championship playoffs. Those ranked right up there along with my new "bling and four chevrons."

It's been 159 days since I began my tenure as president. Between July 1, 2018 and today, there have been 159 days, including 109 working days, 22 Saturdays, 23 Sundays and five federal holidays... or in a president's life, 159 work days.

I spent a significant percentage of that time meeting with students, staff, faculty, alumni, donors, community friends, business leaders and members of the media. I asked a ton of questions – what do you like about this place, what could we be doing better, what do I need to know, what are you willing to do to help me?

More than anything, I did a lot of listening to learn what makes this University strong, durable and versatile enough to suit many needs. And equally important, what is necessary to make it even stronger.

What I learned helped to inform my inaugural address, "Forging the Future Together," from which I draw some of this report, and in which I set forth five challenges I believe we must together face head on:

- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Affordability
- Accessibility
- Civility

I have heard — and have taken to heart — the message that we must do more to foster an environment of inclusion. How do we attract and sustain a population that better reflects the great diversity of our nation and create a culture that promotes opportunity for equal success? First, we need to pay attention to the story behind the story.

For example, our outcomes, though strong, are uneven. While our minority undergraduate 4-year graduation rate is 43 percent (well above the national average), this population trails the majority undergraduate 4-year graduation rate by 14 percentage points. We must attend to differences like this. We also must ask ourselves if we are doing enough to support all of our students. We must ask ourselves if our curriculum is designed and offered in a fashion that truly fosters our students' best work. We must ask ourselves if we serve the needs of nontraditional students well enough. In the same

vein, are students with disabilities embraced, as they should be? In other words, is the University versatile enough to suit many needs?

We must ask ourselves if the cost of a Slippery Rock education is too much for some of our citizens to bear.

With tuition and mandatory fees at less than \$11,000 per year, we are one of the most affordable four-year college options available. Still, for a student from Butler County, where the average income is less than \$32,000 per year, our costs might as well be a million.

We must refine our financial aid strategy in order to attract and sustain more students with financial need, as well as more ethnically diverse students. At the State of the University address, I shared that the University would add \$400,000 in aid to attract students from underrepresented groups. I am happy to announce that we have committed an additional \$800,000 over the next four years, with \$200,000 to be distributed annually.

Building a more diverse community is far more than just reaffirming our commitment to social justice. It is an important step towards expanding the worldview of our current students.

Currently only 142 out of our 7,500 undergraduates come from a state that is not contiguous to Pennsylvania. Only 91 come from abroad. This means that most of our students interact each day with others who look like them and have had a very similar upbringing.

College is about opportunity. I firmly believe that we cannot achieve our greatest strength without leveraging the experiences and perspectives of the broadest possible diversity of students, faculty and staff.

There's no question that the Slippery Rock University story is that of a community that has always been eager to make a difference and willing to be different. At Slippery Rock, we do work for the common good. Hardly a week has gone by since I arrived that students aren't sponsoring or participating in public service activities. I am still discovering the many ways in which our students, faculty and staff give back both locally and globally.

What is less clear is how we might improve our impact by leveraging resources and better coordinating our efforts to make sure opportunities and experiences complement one another so that students have a focused experience, and the University delivers on its promise to graduate students prepared to succeed in their careers and life, and to be good citizens.

As Booker T. Washington observed, "the best way to lift one's self up is to help someone else." To effectively do so we must actively engage community partners to help us develop public service projects that model for our students and our society ways in which giving back can become part of the fabric of one's life.

The University also must take an active role in healing our disturbingly fractured society. There's no doubt that our national dialogue is currently overheated by hyperbole, demagoguery and scapegoating. In a culture of sound bites, we have lost nuance.

In dialogs made up of memes, Snapchat, tweets and texts, we no longer talk. We speak past each other and WE SHOUT. Everyone has his or her own facts and it's always the "other" person who is wrong. Such elements are harmful and do nothing but deepen the divide rather than pull us together.

This lack of civil discourse is fueled in part by what some have termed the greatest moral issue of our time – the widening wealth gap between the “haves” and the “have nots”; It is a divide that is driving an economy of exclusion and inequality.

These are two areas where I believe that SRU is poised to help. First, we are able to add nuance to the conversation. We must underscore in our classrooms, research and commentary that the complex problems facing our nation necessitate complex responses. And, that formulating these responses requires more than a passing understanding of the issues at hand. Wherever possible, we must replace the 30-second sound bite with long-form discussion.

Second, we must recommit to access. Public higher education remains the greatest single force for social mobility in our society. It has been so for more than a century.

Slippery Rock must use public higher education as a lever for social mobility. This is a proud legacy that we continue today. We must expand opportunities for those who might not otherwise have one. We must assure that “have nots,” have the opportunity to become “haves”.

I am in awe of this place and its people.

By any measure, our outcomes are praiseworthy. Since September 2018, the University:

- Received the 2018 ACHIEVA Award of Excellence for Professional Service. The university was recognized for its transition programs, including the Rock Life and Transition Achievement Program programs, which provide college and high school students who have intellectual or development disabilities with life-skills training and prepares them for competitive employment.
- Ranked seventh among 328 institutions in the area of “Wellness & Work” by The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education in its Sustainable Campus Index.
- Earned 50 institutional and program specific badges of distinction including 13 in the top 5 percent nationally, 15 in the top 10 percent and 22 in the top 15 percent from College Factual, a data-driven college choice resource.
- Claimed a “Cool School” designation from the Sierra Club, one of the oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organizations in the U.S.
- Earned an “A+” ranking for our residence halls from niche.com. SRU’s residence halls were ranked No. 1 in Pennsylvania among a field of 103, and 21st in the nation from a group of 1,370 institutions.
- Ranked as one of 2019’s top master’s degree granting universities in the country by Washington Monthly.
- Named one of the 399 most environmentally responsible colleges in the country by the Princeton Review in its 2018 “Guide to 399 Green Colleges.”
- Named Pennsylvania’s best college for geography majors by zippia.com.
- Recognized as one of Pennsylvania’s best institutions for online learning by The Community for Accredited Online Schools.

Academic program recognitions included:

- The bachelor’s degree in sport management was ranked as one of the 30 best programs in the U.S. by Sports Management Degree Guide.
- The bachelor’s degree in safety management was ranked among the top 25 best value occupational safety and health degrees for 2019 by valuecolleges.com.
- Our online master’s degree in K-12 education was ranked as one of the 30 most affordable programs in the country by GradSchoolHub.
- The online master’s degree in special education was ranked among the nation’s Top 50 best degree programs by onlinemasters.com.

- Our master's degree in health informatics, was selected as one of the country's "Best Online Health Informatics Programs for 2018" by OnlineMasters.com.
- The master's degree in health informatics was ranked among the top 10 best programs by Computer Science Zone.

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

STUDENTS

- **Jordyn Minda**, a freshman exercise science major from South Park; **Madison Johnson**, a junior exercise science major from North Olmsted, Ohio; and **Brooke Testa**, a senior biochemistry major from Rochester, N.Y., were named to the 2018 United Soccer Coaches All-Atlantic Region Team.
- **Steve Gaviglia**, senior exercise science major from Cranberry, and **Henry Litwin**, a sophomore safety management major from Linesville, were named to first team Google Cloud Academic All-District honors by the College Sports Information Directors of America in recognition of their excellence on the foot field and in the classroom.
- **Liz Wolfe**, a senior recreation therapy and nonprofit management major from Lititz, was named to the second team and **Kayla Ulrich**, a sophomore exercise science major from Harrisburg, was named to the third team of the 2018 All-PSAC Field Hockey team.
- **Roland Rivers III**, **Wes Hills**, **Jeff Marx**, **Brad Zaffra**, **Jake Chapla**, **Steve Gaviglia** and **Colten Raabe** were named to first-team All-PSAC Western Division football honors.
- **Henry Litwin** was named the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Football Champion Scholar. Litwin, a sophomore safety management major from Linesville, currently maintains a 3.61 GPA.
- Volleyball standouts sophomore **Erinn Kahoe** and senior **Shayla Ray** were named to the 2018 All-Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Team,
- Men's soccer senior defender **Kenton Keeslar** was named to the 2018 Google Cloud Academic All-District Team.
- **Jordyn Minda** was selected as the PSAC's women's soccer Freshman of the Year and was a first team all-conference selection.
- Women's tennis standout junior **Lacey Cohen** won the 2018 PSAC women's singles championship.

FACULTY / STAFF

- **Dallas Jackson**, associate professor of physical and health education, was named Adapted Physical Education University Teacher of the Year by the Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- **Katherine Mickle**, associate professor of art; **Keshia Booker**, assistant director of multicultural development; and **Stacey Rice**, head women's softball coach, were recipients of the 2018 SRU Women and Allies of Distinction Award.
- **Anne Slanina**, associate professor of elementary education and early childhood education, released her latest children's book, "Annie Mouse's Second Route 66 Photo Journal: The Journey East," the eighth book in her "Adventures of Annie Mouse" series.
- **Stacy Hrizo**, associate professor of biology, and **Martin Buckley**, assistant professor of biology, in conjunction with **Mengqi Wang**, a 2018 graduate with a degree in biology, and **Annette Choi**, a senior biology major from Chuncheon, South Korea, had their article, "Visualizing cellular stress: A hypothesis-driven confocal laboratory exercise to identify compounds that activate heat shock factor binding at Hsp70 loci," published in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education Journal.

- **Heather Frederick**, associate professor of political science, was elected to the executive board of the Northeast Association of Pre-Law Advisors.
- **Nora Ambrosio**, professor of dance, was elected to the board of directors of the National Association of Schools of Dance.
- **Junko Yamamoto**, associate professor of secondary education/foundations of education, co-authored an article published in the "Pennsylvania Language Forum."
- **Molly Mercer**, associate vice president for finance, was appointed to the local operating board of the United Way of Butler County.
- **Tamra Schiappa**, professor of geography, geology and environment, was elected president of the Pittsburgh Geological Society.
- **Cassandra Eisenreich**, professor of music, was awarded the Modern Band Higher Education Fellowship by Little Kids Rock, a nonprofit organization that supports music education across the U.S.
- **June Edwards**, professor emerita of art, helped paint props for the upcoming movie, "You Are My Friend," which was filmed in Pittsburgh and stars Tom Hanks as Fred Rogers, the host of the popular children's television show "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood."
- **Tom Sparrow**, assistant professor of philosophy, published an edited anthology titled "The Alphonso Lingis Reader," a collection of writings by American philosopher Alphonso Lingis.
- **Keshia Booker**, assistant director multicultural development; **Amber Hamilton**, assistant director of transition programs; and **Earl Coburn**, **Julie Feringer**, **Emily McClaine** and **Sunshine Mushrush**, all student success coaches, earned InsideTrack coaching certification

ALUMNI / FRIENDS

- **John Butch**, '72; **Barbara Wood**, '76; **Michael Sharp**, '83; and **Ethan Nicholas**, '04 were named SRU Distinguished Alumni by the SRU Alumni Association.
- **Dyanna Haley-Rezac**, a 2001 Slippery Rock University graduate with a doctorate degree in physical therapy, received the Signe Brunnström Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching from the American Physical Therapy Association.
- **Steve Roach**, a 2005 graduate with a master's degree in sport management, was hired as the executive director of athletics and campus recreation at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.
- **Monica Lamar**, a 1995 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in elementary education, was appointed assistant superintendent for instructional leadership of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.
- **Devin Goda**, a 2012 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in safety and environmental management, made his debut as a model on the daytime television game show "The Price is Right".
- **Joe Lewandowski**, a 1999 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in secondary education-communication, was named the interim head men's basketball coach at Point Park University in Pittsburgh.
- **Shawn Patch**, a 1997 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in recreation, was named chief executive officer of the Stamford Family YMCA in Stamford, Connecticut.
- **Nate Wills**, a 2003 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in sport management, was promoted to deputy athletic director and chief operating officer at the University at Buffalo.
- **Sandra Ihlenfeld**, a 2010 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in exercise science, has been promoted to executive director of the Butler County Family YMCA.
- **Shawn Ford**, a 1989 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in secondary education, was recently hired as superintendent of Purchase Line School District in Commodore.
- **Leonard Pounds**, a 2008 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in information technology, was named the vice president of clinical operations at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

I am deeply honored by the trust you've placed in me to lead the efforts to forge our future together.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. Behre
President