

Dec. 9, 2016

To the University community;

For those of you unable to attend today's council of trustees meeting, I want to share with you an announcement I made to those present.

June 2017 will mark five years that Henry and I have been privileged to be part of the Slippery Rock University community. During that time, we've had many opportunities for celebration and faced a number of challenges – the perfect financial storm, the flooding of the Smith Center, the separating of the wall at Spotts and, yes, the recent strike. But, despite these challenges, this institution has continued to move forward.

Despite the economic issues plaguing Pennsylvania, Slippery Rock University has thrived. We are financially stable.

Despite the decreasing number of high school graduates in Western Pennsylvania, our enrollment has reached an all time high.

In response to the changing work force needs in our region, our institution has reinvented itself, growing our graduate programs to include a doctorate in special education, the physician assistant degree and a master in public health. We have also developed new and innovative undergraduate options such as homeland security, corporate security, the BFA in dance, and, of course, engineering.

We are indeed a public institution that exists for the good of the public. And the public is better because of Slippery Rock University.

More importantly, we have excelled as an academic institution, leading the way in Pennsylvania, the region and the nation.

Our students have attained record high levels of retention and graduation rates, our first Barry Goldwater Scholar was selected, in 2014 University Advancement cash donations set a record, last year our institution was awarded Green Ribbon status by the Department of Education – one of only 11 schools in the country to be so honored. And, four years ago, Slippery Rock University, for the first time in its history, had the highest ranking in the State System's Performance Indicators initiative. An achievement we've repeated two more times in the last three years, including this year.

Our degree programs are recognized nationally. We have been ranked in the top four publics in Pennsylvania and in the top 150 in the country. Yes, there is much to celebrate.

I said in June 2012 that Slippery Rock University is an institution rich in its history, strong in its roots and with unlimited potential for the future. Our history continues to be written, our roots are spread across the globe by everyone who has or is currently working and contributing to the institution and we are just scratching the surface of that unlimited potential.

Slippery Rock University has *never* been in a stronger position.

It is for all of these reasons, that my announcement today, is not made easily, but given after much thought and consideration.

Henry and I have decided that it is time for me to announce that I will be retiring as president of Slippery Rock University, July 21, 2017. We will be returning to our home in Denver to enjoy retirement with our family, being grandparents to our grandsons, perhaps competing in a few more triathlons, certainly spending more time dog training. And, on August 21st, in celebration of our 46th wedding anniversary, we'll be watching the solar eclipse from a mountaintop in Wyoming.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve you as your president. You have taught me much and I appreciate the lessons.

Trustees, thank you for your counsel.

Philip, Amir and Rita, thank you for your guidance and support, your energy and your vision.

Tina and Kelli, thank you for your friendship, patience, tears and laughter, you have been invaluable.

And, of course, Henry, without your love and encouragement, I would never have taken this presidential journey, love you.

To everyone at SRU, thank you for your genuine love for this institution, its students and belief in the value of education for we can only achieve what we believe.

May the sun always shine at Slippery Rock.

Cheryl Norton, president