

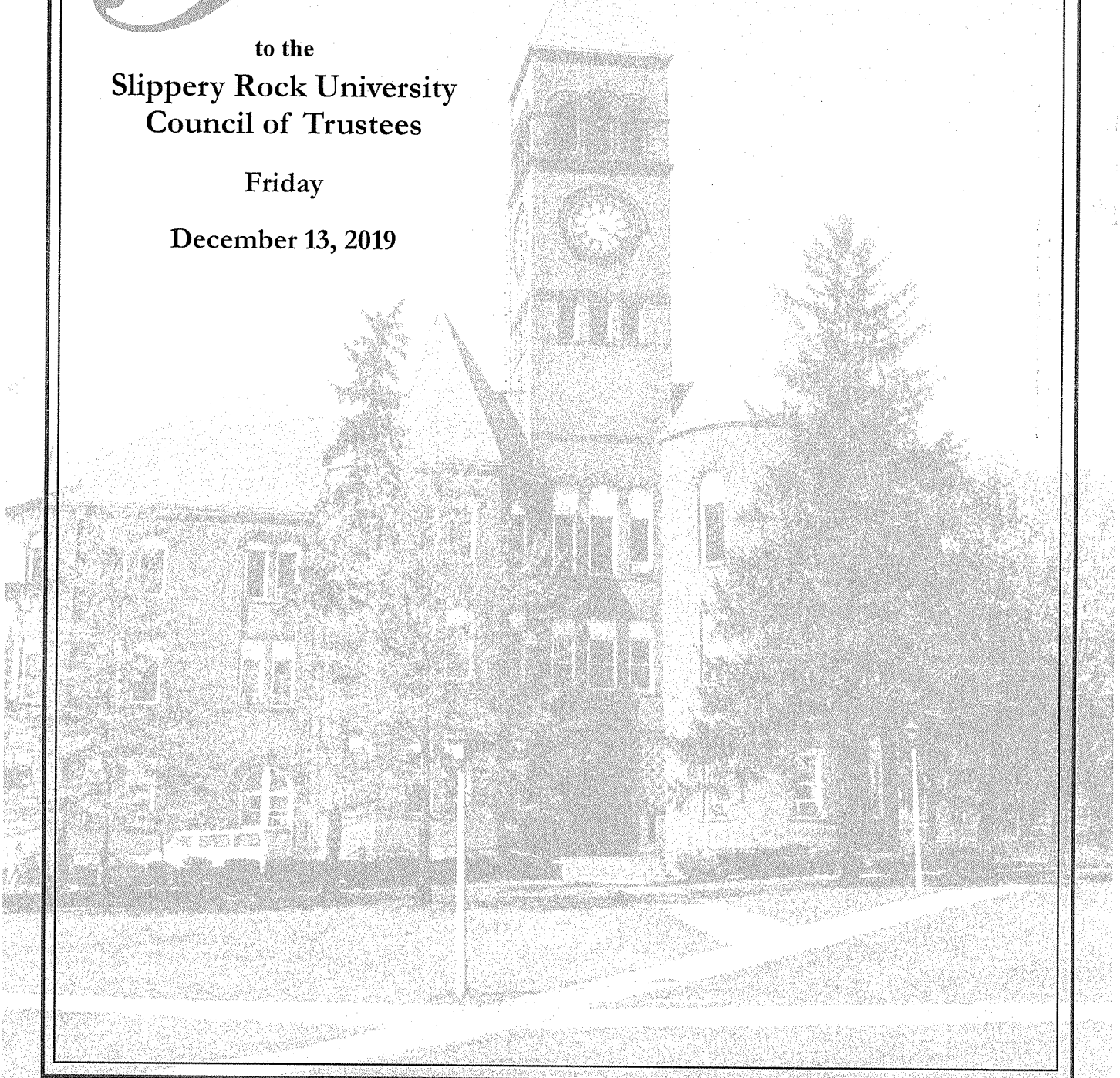
# REPORT OF THE

# *President*

to the  
Slippery Rock University  
Council of Trustees

Friday

December 13, 2019



# Slippery Rock University

## Council of Trustees

### President's Report

December 13, 2019

I once heard someone describe December as "the Friday of months."

I guess that is because December, like every Friday, provides us the opportunity to take stock in what we have accomplished and look forward to what is yet to come. There is a great sense of pride in pausing to reflect and realizing that all those small details to which we paid attention, resulted in big steps forward; that our successes reflect the decisions we made.

Yesterday we discussed in depth two matters that occupy a great deal of my time, enrollment and budget, and their symbiotic relationship. So, I will keep my remarks in those areas very short. Suffice it to say that we are in a strong position within the State System today because of the decision we made to create our preferred future through strong fiscal management, investing for success, and utilizing a data-influenced approach to guide our actions.

While it is important to celebrate our success in these areas, now is not the time to take our foot off the gas. We must continue to trust the data to guide us in making the bold, audacious decisions that will allow continued success, even in the face of untold challenges.

By any measure of success, 2019 was a great year for Slippery Rock University.

Our athletic teams were successful on and off the field. SRU football and women's soccer captured PSAC league championships, and football will be competing in the NCAA Division II Final Four when they host Minnesota State in a 12:30 p.m. matchup at Mihalik-Thompson Stadium tomorrow.

Three student athletes, soccer players Jordyn Minda and Emma Yoder, and Henry Litwin, a wide receiver on the football team, earned Academic All-America honors this past year. With Litwin's selection this past week, SRU broke the century mark. We now have a total of 100 student-athletes who have been named Academic All-America selections since the creation of the award, which ranks SRU seventh most among all NCAA Division II institutions.

Following Saturday's commencement, the University will have graduated more than 2,000 members of the Class of 2019. This is a special class, one somewhat defined as the class that took on Dr. Phil by sporting t-shirts proudly exclaiming, "Yes, there is a Slippery Rock University." ...and class that that has expanded that retort by declaring that "Yes, there is a Slippery Rock! WE LEAD. WE SUCCEED. WE ROCK."

Academically, our commitment to excellence and effectiveness continues to be recognized with a number of honors and accolades. During 2019 the University was recognized by U.S. News & World Reports, The Princeton Review, College Factual, The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Colleges of Distinction, Money and the SIERRA Club among others.

Since October alone, Slippery Rock University:

- Was named one of “Pennsylvania’s best online colleges” for 2020 by the SR Education Group.
- Was named one of the country’s “greenest colleges” for 2019 by Princeton Review.
- Earned Gold level designation for “Exercise is Medicine” program from EIM on Campus.
- Was named a “Guard Friendly School” by the Pennsylvania National Guard Associations.
- Was ranked third in Best Master’s in Data Science Degree programs with special distinction as a “Best State University” by intelligent.com.
- Was ranked third in Best Master’s in history degree programs with special distinction as a “Good Value” by intelligent.com.
- Had its RN to BSN program listed among 2020’s “Best Online Degree Programs” by intelligent.com.
- Had its history program listed among 2020’s “Best Online Degree Programs” with special distinction for being the “best for small class size” by intelligent.com.
- Had its master’s in special education degree program named among 2020’s “Best Online Degree Programs” by intelligent.com.
- Had its online master’s in special education, ranked 22nd, among “Low Tuition” schools by intelligent.com
- Had its master’s in criminal justice degree program listed among the 2020 “Best Online Degree Programs” with special distinction as a “Best State University” by intelligent.com.
- Was named as having one of the country’s best online master’s in history degree programs by mastersprogramguide.com.

The University has received more than 150 unique citations of excellence this year. A great testament to our outstanding faculty and staff.

This year, as a result of that group, the University was also named to the Chronicle of Higher Education’s Great Colleges to Work For Honor Roll. While the University has earned Great Colleges to Work For honors several times, for the first time in the history of the program SRU grabbed a spot among the nation’s elite 42 institutions.

Our people-centric culture is at the core of why this is a great place to work. People at every level come to work and stay at SRU because they believe in our mission and are empowered to make a difference. In fact, a consistent narrative among employees is that they came to SRU with the intent to stay for a short time and end up staying a lifetime. Certainly providing good wages and benefits add to the institution’s attractiveness, but its real value is how people are respected and engaged in the life of the University. And those are the result of decisions we’ve made as to the value of our people.

This past quarter I found myself on the road accompanying alumni and Foundation staff as we connected with donors and alumni around the country. I rather enjoy these opportunities to listen and learn from our friends in the field. Inevitably, I’m questioned about the health of the University; or a favorite faculty member; or even asked the occasional, “have you ever thought about this?” I love these exchanges because they often lead to ideas I bring back to The Rock to challenge my team with how we might look at opportunities in a new way.

Sometimes those encounters provide an opportunity to change the trajectory of the life of a student, or in a rare situation, the University itself. Such was the case with Elliott and Rhonda Haverlack who recently gifted the University \$1 million – the single largest gift in the history of SRU.

If you ask members of the Haverlack family, they will tell you that Slippery Rock University has played a big role in their lives. Brothers Stewart and Elliott graduated from The Rock in 1979 and 1980 respectively, and Elliott’s grandson, Zane, earned a degree from the University in 2008.

Now, the Haverlack family is stepping up to play a big role in the life of Slippery Rock University; one could even say a leading role, by establishing the Frank and Margaret Haverlack Good Citizen Scholarship, named in honor of Elliott's late parents.

Frank and Margaret Haverlack, who passed away in 1976 and 2004, respectively, operated a general store near Slippery Rock in the 1970s and served the community through sponsoring scouting and church organizations. They left a legacy of caring, kindness and social awareness, especially for their sons.

Elliott, who earned a bachelor's degree in environmental science at SRU, now resides in Estero, Florida, with Rhonda. He spent a majority of his 39-year working career in the pet industry, before retiring in 2012 as the president and chief operating officer of Ainsworth Pet Nutrition, a Meadville-based company that owned the Dad's Pet Care line of pet food products. In retirement, he founded a continuing education, consulting and executive coaching company and serves as a board member and adviser for CY Foods and Targeted Pet Treats, respectively.

The Haverlack Scholarship will be awarded to one incoming first-year student each year starting with the 2020 fall semester. The scholarship will cover up to half of the recipient's tuition and will be renewable for up to four years. In addition to meeting a required high school GPA of 3.0, candidates must demonstrate a commitment to community service. Examples include working as an emergency first responder, a volunteer with a nonprofit organization, or as a member of a scouting or religious organization. Upon receiving the Haverlack Scholarship, students must maintain good academic standing and serve as a campus leader at SRU by completing at least 10 hours of service per week during the academic year.

Finding suitable candidates for the scholarship won't be an issue. The commitment of our students to community service is well documented.

One recent example is Kyle Lewis, a 2018 graduate with a bachelor's degree in safety management. Kyle, who graduated magna cum laude, was, like most, a budget-conscious college student. So, when the opportunity for free housing came calling as he entered his final semester at SRU, Kyle answered. But in doing so, he had to be prepared to also answer another type of call — the kind that comes in the middle of night — when the Slippery Rock community needed him as a first responder.

Kyle was the first SRU student to take advantage of a live-in program created by the Slippery Rock Volunteer Fire Company and Rescue Team. For the fall 2018 semester, Kyle lived in a 400-square-foot bunk room inside SRVFC's 5,500-square-foot Rescue Building near the corner of Elm and New Castle streets. The SRVFC provided his housing in exchange for Lewis remaining on call for four overnight duty periods per week.

The Haverlack scholarship will help students like Kyle nurture their commitment to public service and will complement the Bonner program which the University recently launched to "transform students, communities and campuses through service."

I am humbled by the generosity of the Haverlacks and grateful for their commitment to providing life-changing opportunities to future generations of SRU students through this gift.

In support of our Academic mission, I was excited yesterday to announce the appointment of Dr. Abbey Zink as the University's new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Abbey comes to SRU from Sam Houston State University where she serves as Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. She has great energy and a passion for excellence. I look forward to having her join my

leadership team. I expect to name the Vice President for Advancement before the end of the year. Looking forward to 2020 as it will be great to have a full complement on the cabinet.

Several other items of note from 2019 include:

- We launched our first University-sponsored lecture series and hosted political pundits Donna Brazile and Ana Navarro on campus. The pair brought their political clout, unparalleled insights from the world of politics and candid stories from behind the scenes to deliver an entertaining and practical talk about today's hottest political topics. What was especially important about their presentation was their ability to model for our students how people with different points of view can disagree in a respectful and civil manner.
- The Marching Pride, performed at the 2019 St. Patrick's Day Festival in Dublin, Ireland and captured the event's "Best Adult Band" and "Best Overall Band" parade awards.
- Gov. Wolf visited campus to showcase the work we are doing to address sexual violence through the "It's On Us" campaign. We also hosted the Governor's task force on Suicide Prevention, which was organized to look closely at this issue so state and local governments, treatment systems and support networks are informed and prepared to help people who are at risk.

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

## STUDENTS

- **Michael Shimmel**, a senior political science major from Philipsburg, and **Janco Swart**, a senior political science major from Harrisburg, were selected to participate in the prestigious The Harrisburg Internship Semester program. Shimmel worked in the office of state Rep. Michael Sturla, D-Lancaster County, and Swart worked in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, a bipartisan agency of the state Legislature.
- **Brianna Dillon**, a senior health science-public health major from Shelocta; **Rosemary Franklin**, a senior dual recreational therapy and dance major from Milan, Michigan; and **Gabrielle Cunningham**, a senior recreational therapy major from Tarentum, helped older adults from two local assisted-living/nursing homes prepare care packages for homeless people in Pittsburgh. The "life roles" intervention was part of a service-learning project in their Recreational Therapy for Older Adults class taught by Betsy Kemeny, associate professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy.
- **Roland Rivers**, a senior communication studies major from Ellenwood, Georgia, was featured in the Oct. 21 issue of Sports Illustrated. Rivers, the quarterback of the nationally ranked SRU football team, was included in the "Faces in the Crowd" section.
- **Lindsay Boettner**, a freshman dual secondary education and social work major from Slippery Rock, participated in the first-ever virtual reality debate competition at Shenandoah University, representing SRU's Debate Society team in a debate about VR technology from a virtual auditorium viewed by judges using VR headsets.
- **Kathryn Jones**, a senior biology major from Baden, and **Jacob Palmer**, a senior chemistry major from Spartansburg, won first place in their respective poster categories at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Chemical and Biological Sciences.
- **Gianna Polichena**, a junior dual public health and health care administration and management major from Ravenna, Ohio; **Leah Bailey**, a senior dual public health and health care administration and management major from New Eagle; **Brianna Dillon**, a senior public health major from Shelocta; and **Alison Toth**, a senior public health major from Harrisburg, conducted a program for local girls in grades 3-5 at the Slippery Rock Community Library to address self-esteem, wellness and healthy relationships. The SRU students were the first in statewide cohort

in the Area Health Education Center's AHEC Scholars Program, a federally- and state-funded program that prepares college students in health profession and allied health majors to transform the health care system and provide care for people in rural and underserved areas.

- **Kunj Champaneri**, a sophomore computing major from Sewickley, was among 150 students worldwide selected to attend SC19, the International Conference for High Performance Computing, Networking, Storage and Analysis.
- **Nathan Endres**, a senior dual marketing and accounting major from Trafford; **Gerad Greco**, a senior accounting major from Pittsburgh; **Marcus McGee**, a senior accounting major from Monessen; and **Alex Micknis**, a senior accounting major from DuBois, placed second at the Institute of Internal Auditors and Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants Fall Case/Presentation Contest.
- Cadets from **Slippery Rock University's Army ROTC** program placed third out of 46 teams at a recent Ranger Challenge at the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. SRU's Frontier Battalion competed among ROTC battalions from nine states in the Northeast that comprise the U.S. Army Cadet Command's 2nd Brigade.
- **Leslie Peterson**, a graduate student majoring in physical therapy from Pittsburgh, qualified for the 2020 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships after placing third in the 18-24 age group at a recent qualifying event in Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- **Abadallah Bangura**, a sophomore from Freetown, Sierra Leone; **Dan Schearer**, a freshman criminology and criminal justice major from Canonsburg; and **Alejandro Fernandez**, a freshman industrial and systems engineering major from Madrid, Spain, earned first-team All-PSAC West soccer honors, while **Mo Kanani**, a sophomore psychology major from Nazareth, Israel received second-team accolades.
- SRU football standouts **Henry Litwin**, a junior safety management major from Linesville and **Austin Wayt**, a junior safety management major from Canton, Ohio were named first-team Academic All-District honors by the College Sports Information Directors of America. In order to be eligible to be nominated for the Academic All-District team, a student-athlete must be at least a sophomore in athletic and academic standing, must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.30 and must be a starter or reserve with legitimate athletic credentials.
- **Nicole Dunlop**, a Slippery Rock University junior corporate security major and president of the Slippery Rock Student Government Association from Latrobe, was named to the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.
- SRU women's soccer player **Rachel Edge**, a sophomore biology major from Pine Grove was named the PSAC West Athlete of the Year and **Madison Johnson**, a senior exercise science major from North Olmsted, Ohio was named the PSAC West Defensive Athlete of the Year to highlight SRU's 2019 All-PSAC West selections. In addition to their athlete of the year awards, Edge and Johnson both earned first team All-PSAC West honors along with **Jordyn Minda**, a sophomore exercise science major from South Park and **Brooke Riefenstahl**, a freshman exercise science major from Hellertown.
- SRU earned 14 selections on the All-Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Western Division team headlined by Offensive Athlete of the Year **Roland Rivers III** and Coach of the Year **Shawn Lutz**. Rivers was selected as the first-team quarterback for the second year in a row and took home the Offensive Athlete of the Year honor after finishing his two-year stint as the SRU starting quarterback with a perfect 14-0 record against the PSAC West. Lutz earns his second consecutive PSAC West Coach of the Year honor after leading The Rock to back-to-back PSAC West regular season titles with perfect 7-0 records. Lutz also guided SRU to the 2019 PSAC West championship, a perfect 11-0 regular season and No. 1 seed in the NCAA Division II playoffs. Currently in his fourth season at the helm of the program, Lutz has guided SRU to a 37-10 record, two PSAC West titles and two NCAA playoff appearances. Rivers III has also been named as one of the eight national finalists for the Harlon Hill Award, presented annually to the top Division II player in the country. The winner will be announced Dec. 20.

- **Chris Larsen**, a senior safety management major from Erie and left tackle for the SRU football team, has been named one of the eight national finalists for the Gene Upshaw Division II Lineman of the Year Award. Senior offensive and defensive linemen from all schools in Division II are eligible to be nominated for the award, which is voted on by the nation's sports information directors. Larsen becomes the seventh finalist for the Upshaw Award since its inception in 2004, including the fifth finalist for The Rock since 2014. Former SRU defensive end Marcus Martin won the award in 2017 while former offensive lineman Brandon Fusco won the award in 2010.
- **Emma Yoder**, a sophomore mathematics major from Marietta, Georgia, and **Jordyn Minder** of the SRU women's soccer team were named to the 2019 CoSIDA Academic All-America Team. The CoSIDA Academic All-America honor is one of the most highly regarded accolades a student-athlete can earn because it requires extraordinary performances in academics and athletics. In order to be named to the CoSIDA Academic All-America team, a student-athlete must be at least a sophomore academically, own a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.30, have significant athletic credentials and be a first team CoSIDA Academic All-District selection.

#### FACULTY/STAFF

- **Laura Smiley**, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of theatre, was awarded the Kennedy Center Gold Medallion by the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Region II.
- **Jason Kush**, an associate professor of music, recently performed at a rather noteworthy concert, playing saxophone in an orchestra that backed Hugh Jackman in an Oct. 9 concert at Pittsburgh's PPG Paints Arena. The concert was part of Jackman's "The Man. The Music. The Show." world tour.
- Katrina Quinn, professor of communication, received the 2019 Hazel Dicken-Garcia Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Journalism History.
- **Aksel Casson**, assistant professor of interdisciplinary programs; **Laura Kelley**, assistant professor of elementary education/early childhood; **Kathy Melago**, associate professor of music; **Timothy Michaels**, instructor of communication; **Jeffrey Roth**, assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice; and **Mark Zeltner**, associate professor of communication received Open Educational Resources grants for the fall semester to revise their courses by using free or low-cost materials instead of traditional textbooks.
- **Chris Frye**, instructor of public health and social work, was elected mayor of New Castle following the Nov. 5 election.
- **Theresa Antonellis**, instructor of art, is having her artwork, "Point Reyes Volute," a 30-by-30-inch ballpoint ink drawing on cotton paper that is inspired by breath work and yoga, exhibited at the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh's 107th Annual Exhibition, Nov. 9, 2019, to Jan. 26, 2020, at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art in Greensburg.
- **Molly Mistretta**, assistant professor of counseling and development, recently co-authored a book about self-care for educators experiencing compassion fatigue and burnout. The book is titled "Overcoming Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Schools: A Guide for Counselors, Administrators and Educators."
- **Chris Niebauer**, associate professor of cognitive science and leadership, recently had his book, "No Self, No Problem: How Neuropsychology Is Catching Up to Buddhism," published by Hierophant Publishing.
- **Colleen Cooke**, professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy, coauthored a book titled "The Fun Encyclopedia For Therapists: Proven Activities for Therapists."
- **Fadoua Loudiy**, instructor of communication, won the 2019 Pennsylvania Communication Association's Donald Ecroyd Research and Scholarship Award, which honors a PCA member

who has a commitment and a sustained record of research and publication in the field of communication.

- **Pragati Rawat**, assistant professor of political science, recently had a paper published in the Journal of Environmental Studies and Science. The paper provided a participatory approach for actions related to social-ecological resilience and how they affect sea level rise.
- **Shawn Davis**, assistant professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy, presented at the first meeting east of the Mississippi River of the Climbers for Bat Conservation, a collaborative of rock climbers, land managers and bat biologists.
- **Becky Thomas**, assistant professor of parks, conservation and recreational therapy, was recently elected to the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators board of directors as PAEE's Southwest Region director.
- **Abdou Karim Jallow**, associate professor of health care administration and information systems, hosted a three-day e-government workshop in The Gambia. While he was in the West African country, he also helped organize the Deep Learning IndabaX The Gambia, a data science and machine learning conference at the University of The Gambia.
- **Toni Mild** and **Eric Bieniek**, assistant professors of special education, have been certified as Youth Mental Health First Aid instructors and have subsequently trained more than 165 SRU education majors to provide mental health response when they become teachers.
- **Allison Peiritsch**, assistant professor of communication, recently had her paper, "Starbucks' Racial-Bias Crisis: Toward a Rhetoric of Renewal," published in the Journal of Media Ethics. The paper examines the coffee company's crisis response to the April 2018 arrests of two black men waiting for a friend in one of the chain's Philadelphia locations.
- **Joseph Harry**, associate professor of communication, recently had his research article, "A Curious Case of Semiotic Deja Vu: The Hypoiconic Diagram and Symbolic Reminiscence," published in the Semiotic Society of America Yearbook, "Semiotics 2018: Signs of Resilience."
- **Mary Eberhardinger**, instructor of communication, wrote an article about internet memes that was published in the Peirce Studies, a peer-reviewed journal that celebrates contemporary applications and methodologies of the work of Charles Saunders Peirce, the late American semiotician and philosopher.

#### ALUMNI

- **Krista Wolfe**, '99, an SRU graduate with a degree in athletic training, was appointed to the Pennsylvania State Board of Physical Therapy for 2020 by Gov. Tom Wolf.
- **Devin Goda**, '12, who last year made his debut as a model on the daytime television game show "The Price is Right," showed SRU some love on national TV Nov. 27 by sporting a Rock football jersey during the show's "College Rivals Day" episode.
- **Lawrence Firestone**, a 1981 Slippery Rock University graduate with a degree in business administration, was named chief executive office of Eastside Distilling, Inc., the first and only publicly traded craft distillery in the U.S.
- **Gary Aldrich**, '83, an SRU graduate with a degree in physical education, was recently named an assistant coach for the U.S. men's track and field team for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.
- **Theodorea Regina Berry**, '85, an SRU graduate with a bachelor's degree in communication, was recently named vice provost for teaching and learning and dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Central Florida.
- **Grascen Shidemantle**, '18, an SRU graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology, was awarded the 2019 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship for her work as a doctoral student at Binghamton (N.Y.) University.
- **William Killmeyer**, '16, an SRU graduate with a degree in criminology, won "Best Brief" in the Burton D. Wechsler National First Amendment Moot Court Competition. Killmeyer, a third-year student at Cleveland State University's Cleveland-Marshall College of Law.



- **Nicole Nichols**, '08, an SRU graduate with a degree in secondary education-Spanish, was named an assistant coach for USA Cheer's U.S. National All Girl Team.
- **Richard Mishock**, '95, an SRU graduate with a degree in business administration, was promoted to principal at HBK CPAs & Consultants, a financial services firm with 16 offices in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey and Florida.
- **Jeff Podobnik**, '89, an SRU graduate with a degree in sport management, was promoted by the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team to vice president of Florida and Dominican Republic operations.
- Two SRU alumni, **Cathy Burnheimer**, '96 (communication), and **Larry Kelly**, '75 (elementary education and communication), presented at separate events this fall as part of the Alumni Speaker Series. Burnheimer owns a gourmet popcorn business in Sarver and Kelly is an attorney from Ellwood City.
- **Brandy Niccolai-Belfi**, '04, an SRU graduate with a degree in dance, was named chair of the Fine Arts Department at Tarrant County College, a two-year college based in Fort Worth, Texas.

As we prepare to bring this decade to a close and address the challenges of the 2020s, I want to say how immensely grateful I am to our students, faculty, staff and administrators for all they do every day to add to the richness of this University. And I am also grateful to you, our trustees, for all you do, for your trust in me to lead the University in a time of unparalleled challenge, and for the hundreds of ways your efforts will translate into our ability to continue to be one of the best public universities in the commonwealth.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. Behre  
President