



REPORT OF THE
President

Slippery Rock University

President's Report

March 22, 2024

10:00 a.m.

Russell Wright Alumni House and Conference Center

The focus of the past three months has been on evaluating the systems that undergird the university operations, while putting the final touches on the Strategic Plan.

Enrollment:

We continue to focus on enrollment for fall of 2024, while diligently attending to the retention and persistence activities that support our current students. The information provided is as of March 5, 2023. These numbers change slightly and as such the numbers presented in the presentations may vary from those listed below.

Currently, we are up domestically by 81 deposits, and it is important to note that we are up 90 deposits in Western PA. If this holds, the demands on course registration and housing will be increased. Provost Zieg is working with the deans to ensure that we have enough sections for all of our courses. Faculty contracts and obligations have been set with an understanding that things could change. The number of students who have signed up for orientation is up by 139 (848 in 2024, compared to 709 in 2023), which represents a 7% increase in yield for deposit to orientation. Both spring orientation programs are closed. We will offer additional sessions in the summer to ensure that we are meeting the demand of our incoming students.

As compared to the same time last year, total freshman (FR) applications are up by +339 and FR offers are up by +17. FR deposits are up by +73. FR domestic applications are up by +273 (domestic deposits +81). Domestic applications in our primary market are up by +201 (primary market deposits +90). Domestic out-of-state applications are up by +42 (OOS deposits -11). Eastern PA applications are up by +40 (Eastern PA deposits +2). Underrepresented minority (URM) applications are down by -45, mostly Eastern PA and OOS (URM deposits are down -4). International FR applications are up by +66 and deposits are down by -8.

Transfer total applications are down by -71 and deposits are down by -40. Although we have added several transfer articulation agreements, the decline in community college enrollment has had a significant impact on this transfer pool.

Graduate summer applications and deposits are a small number and reflect the national landscape. Summer applications are up by +7 and deposits are up by +2. Graduate fall applications are down by -81 and deposits are down by -9. The decrease is primarily in Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy. This again reflects the trend nationally in these programs. We are exploring ideas to increase the enrollment, including but not limited to offering a modified tuition rate to those students who are

from out of state, who complete their undergraduate degrees at SRU and who want to pursue graduate degrees at SRU. For example, we are losing students who go back to Ohio for grad school. They would rather stay at SRU, but the tuition stick price continues to be a barrier.

Financial Picture/Budget Scenarios: Updates on the budget and the CPP planning will be covered in executive session. We are currently engaging in various scenario planning and will complete a budget when all of the collective bargaining agreements have been signed. Currently, we have reached a tentative agreement with APSCUF regarding faculty, but that is not the case for coaches. The budget must balance, and we are engaged in activities now to ensure that this occurs. It too will be amended once additional compensation information is available.

Construction Projects: There are several projects that have been completed and/or are in various stages of completion. Planning has been completed for the renovation of Kasnevich Field (women's softball) and it is clear that the \$3 million budget will not cover the entire project. We are exploring philanthropic options to complete the project, including a press box and lights. The lights are essential to extend the use of the fields and create a revenue generator for the softball program and the Athletic Department. Please find the additional information on the back log of deferred maintenance for athletic facilities. Reportedly, the previous CFO instructed our facilities group to treat athletic facilities as an auxiliary and that they were responsible for their own deferred maintenance. This has created a significant backlog of projects that require immediate attention. The table provided lists the current priorities and the estimated costs.

The renovations to the University Union/Campus Success Center are progressing with an estimated occupancy date of July 1, 2024. This is ahead of schedule, which is a positive for everyone involved. We continue with subsequent discussions regarding the cascading impact of moving units to the renovated facility. There is ample space and as such requests and goals regarding relocation of various units are in the active planning stages.

We will be moving the Police Station into the Campus Success Center. We are currently drafting blueprints for the space. There will be an additional cost for this; however, it is very necessary given the conditions of the current Police Station.

The Governor's Blueprint for Higher Education: The Governor's Blueprint was shared with the COT and has been shared broadly across the SRU community. I am pleased to be a part of these discussions, and it is important to reiterate that we are in the very early stages of discussions. We are very happy that the Governor and his team want to invest in higher education. The implications for SRU or any of the universities and community colleges are currently not clear. During our meetings, I ask questions and share my suggestions and concerns as the President of SRU and as a member of this community. I have had several conversations with my PASSHE colleagues and have had discussions with my community college colleagues as well. Dr. Nick Neupauer, president of Butler County Community College, and I continue to have a very good working relationship and will continue to collaborate effectively to serve the students and families within Butler County. We continue to be early in these discussions and I will continue to update all of you as more information becomes available. PACT

President Rich Frerichs has offered to the governor's team to arrange a session with COT chairs and PACT reps if they want to gather input from PASSHE trustees in one place, but at this time I am not aware of any meetings that have been scheduled.

Strategic Plan: The work to complete the narrative and implementation structure for the Strategic Plan has been completed. The matrix has been presented to each of you, and the overall narrative will be sent to you once the formatting has been completed. The graphic representation of the plan was created by our students in Dr. Doris Short's advanced graphic design course.

Pillar #1 Commitment to a Robust, Supportive, and Inclusive Culture

Ensure that all faculty, staff, and students have the support and resources necessary to thrive.

Investing in our leaders and emerging leaders is an important step in ensuring the overall success of the university, now and in the future. We have had two meetings for the Administrative Council comprised of managers at the 200 level and above. This group will be involved in communications training with BCW, our public relations firm. The training will involve best practices in leadership communication as well as training to ensure that our managers are aware of current issues and risks associated with various forms of communication. The deans and the Athletic Director will complete a fundraising training course with our consultants from BFW, our fundraising and philanthropy firm. If we are going to reach the goals for our comprehensive campaign, we will need to ensure that this group has the skills necessary to be effective fundraisers.

Use marketing and communication to advance the university.

We have launched the plan to move to a digital format for The Rock magazine. In the spring of 2024, we will provide the print version to all SRU alumni. This edition will include more invitations to consume digital content, like QR codes linking to videos that accompany stories. We will inform readers that future print editions will only be sent to those who opt in starting in spring of 2025. In the fall of 2024, we will launch the digital version for online stories and a temporary landing page. The spring of 2025 edition will be the first issue that is mailed only to those who opted in and other key audiences, such as Alumni Association members. The fall of 2025 will make the first issue of The Rock using a permanent vendor solution. In subsequent years we will continue publishing reduced print issues twice per year and evaluate reader preferences each year. The new format will allow us to publish content with a flexible schedule, which will drive more viewers to the website. We will publish long-form articles, videos, and other content under a "stories" section of the website that could essentially replace what is known as a "digital magazine." We will start with a short-term vendor option while we prepare ourselves for a longer-term vendor. We currently do not have the infrastructure necessary for the long-term option and as such this is a more economical and strategic approach. Moving to a digital format will not only increase the engagement of our readers with dynamic content, but it will also save the university approximately \$484,000 over a five-year period. These cost savings do not account for inflation and as such are considered a low estimation of savings.

Pillar #2 Commitment to Academic Discovery and Human Growth

Support the expectation of excellence and goal attainment.

Offer a mission-driven and market responsive mix of academic programs.

A feasibility study was completed which suggests that adding an MA to our Occupational Therapy program would not be prudent at this time. We will wait to add this additional program and will explore other related areas of study.

The nursing accreditation visit was completed, and the exit interview did not provide any areas of concern. We are now focusing on adding additional pathways and degree offerings in nursing. UPMC is exploring a large partnership with PASSHE to increase their workforce pipeline. We are one of four universities who will be involved in this partnership.

Engineering is exploring several additional programs, including but not limited to electrical engineering. They are pursuing partnerships with our business school and more details will be provided as these programs are solidified. Within the business school we are putting together a proposal for a certificate program in project management that can be completed within a baccalaureate degree program or as part of a post-baccalaureate program.

The Office of the Provost is also continually monitoring programs that have low enrollments and will be working with deans on solutions. Once these solutions have been formalized, we will present the approach to the COT.

Provide premier student experience.

Provide state-of-the-art facilities and technology.

We are in the final stages of approving a project to turf the intramural fields. This is a project that has been of interest to many across the campus for several years; however, the cost has always been prohibitive, given the other deferred maintenance projects. This project, as proposed, will be initially funded by SGA. SGA is part of the newly formed Affiliate Work Group that is tasked with bringing together all aspects of the university in order to take SRU to the next level. This collaboration is also designed to ensure that we use our resources in the most effective and strategic way. The project will provide an additional space for students who engage in intramural sports and club sports. Athletics will also be able to use the fields, but this will not be their primary usage. The addition of a second turfed field will take some of the pressure off the stadium, thus decreasing maintenance costs. We also think that we can rent out the space to outside sports organizations to generate revenue. The ARC will assume responsibility for maintenance and management of the space. The SGA board will hold a final vote before the end of April. The estimated cost of turfing the fields is approximately \$2.5 million. More information will be provided once the project has been fully approved by SGA.

Expand learning experiences and opportunities to meet the needs of varied learners and groups.

We are currently exploring the options of creating partnerships with a couple of local school districts to offer concurrent enrollment. These discussions are in the early stages and would require a deep discussion with APSCUF. We are also exploring ways in which this can be funded. One possibility is to access EITC (Education Improvement Tax Credit). This fund was accessed in the past; however, we had allowed our application to lapse several years ago. Dave Hollenbaugh is working with the various university partners to reinstate this funding opportunity. This is clearly an additional revenue stream that we want to continue to explore and could also be captured within Pillar #4.

Pillar #3 Commitment to Community Impact and Collaboration

Expand educational learning and growth opportunities that add value to external constituencies.

Increase engagement, partnerships, and reciprocal relationships with K-12 schools, health care facilities, government, and business and industry at the local and state levels.

On Jan. 24, we hosted a reception at Fogo de Chao in Pittsburgh. In 2020, University Advancement had planned an event with this establishment and had paid a non-refundable deposit. The managers of Fogo de Chao allowed us to carry this balance forward for several years but let us know that if we did not use it, we would lose the deposit. As such, we scheduled a meet 'n' greet event with the additional sponsorship of the SRU Foundation. From this event we have had follow-up conversations and have hosted campus visits or have them scheduled with several potential partners, including but not limited to the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, Caterpillar – Pittsburgh Automation Center, SteelBridge Labs, Carlow University, and the Pittsburgh River Hounds. We have also hosted campus visits with MSA, who is considering a new gift to the university; Westinghouse, who is also considering various partnerships; and are scheduled to host Zurn in the next couple of weeks. We are also working with UPMC as previously mentioned on new nursing pathways and are in early discussions with West Penn Energy on possible areas for collaboration.

Patrick Joyal, who is regional director, from Governor Shapiro's office, will be on campus April 1 to meet with me and to take a campus tour. There is some discussion of a campus visit by the Governor and we should know more about this possibility after the April 1 visit.

Pillar #4 Commitment to Financial Sustainability and Resource Stewardship

Structure the University for success.

Implement policies and practices to optimize unit-level performance, including the acquisition and allocation of technological, financial, and physical resources.

Athletics now reports to the President. Accounting and procedural practices within the unit currently present significant risk to the university. A small task force is working to create new practices and procedures to ensure financial compliance with the reporting and accounting practices as well as within the travel procedures. It is clear that the management of the business aspect of the Athletics Department is very complicated and requires additional staff support. We will be adding an additional staff member to the Budget and Finance group to set up the new systems and to ensure compliance. This will save money and time in the long run and will allow the coaches to have a clear understanding of their budgets so that they can make good decisions for their teams.

Ensure alignment and efficiency between and within the affiliated entities.

One of the initiatives that will have a huge impact on the university as a whole is the Affiliated Entities Work Group. We continue to meet and to work on creating a deeper understanding of the individual roles of each entity as well as their roles in advancing the collective goals of SRU. One outcome of this collaboration appears to be the funding of the intramural fields. SGA funding something of this magnitude is a huge step forward in strategic collaboration. We will hold our third meeting in the next couple of weeks as we continue to learn more about how each group operates.

Diversify revenue streams.

Increase revenue streams through sponsored programs, grant awards, fundraising efforts, and other endeavors.

We are in the process of relaunching a comprehensive campaign. We are currently working with BWF on the foundational structure. We are listening to our constituent groups on the opportunities within our community as well as the prioritization of our needs. They have interviewed cabinet and will be on campus April 3-5 to conduct additional listening sessions. COT members will be invited to participate in these sessions. Bob Taylor has graciously offered to serve on the leadership team for the campaign. The initial campaign priorities are focused on these broad areas: general scholarships, endowed athletic scholarships, endowed chairs for each college, naming opportunities across campus, athletic facilities, including but not limited to improvements to the stadium, as well as enhanced academic facilities like a new sim lab to expand our nursing programs.

We have brought together a small workgroup to begin a mini-campaign to improve the Mihalik-Thompson Stadium. The group is exploring design options as well as funding possibilities. The group is comprised of alumni led by two former coaches, Drs. George Mihalik and Stan Kendziorski. We will continue to update you on the progress of the workgroup.

We are also submitting appropriations requests to Senators Casey and Fetterman. We are early in the process and will reach out to members of the COT once we have had our formal conversations with the representatives from the senators' offices. As previously mentioned, we are also seeking funds through the EITC. We will continue to explore every avenue to increase funding to SRU.

As is customary, below you will find a sampling of news about our university, students, faculty, staff and alumni,

Respectfully submitted,

Karen S. Riley, Ph.D.
President

PUBLICATIONS

[Eshak co-authors study published in the National Library of Medicine](#)

Tarek Eshak, an SRU professor of public health, recently co-authored an article that was published in the National Library of Medicine titled "Syndemic of Substance Abuse, Depression, and Type 2 Diabetes and Their Association with Retention in Care Among People Living with HIV."

[Zullo publishes book about sports administration](#)

Robert Zullo, an SRU instructor of sport management, hospitality and tourism, recently co-authored the second edition of a textbook titled "Administration of Intercollegiate Athletics."

[Lengyel and Maltman co-author article about new bacterial species](#)

George Lengyel, a Slippery Rock University professor of chemistry, and Christopher Maltman, an SRU assistant professor of biology, co-authored an article titled, “Gordonia metallireducens sp. nov., a tellurite- and selenite-resistant bacterium isolated from the sediment of an acid mine drainage stream.”

PERFORMANCES

[SRU theatre recognized at Kennedy Center regional festival](#)

The Slippery Rock University Theatre Department’s production of “Grecian Burns” was one of five invited productions selected to be performed at the Region 2 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, Jan. 27, at the Byham Theater in Pittsburgh. The play, performed at SRU in October, was directed by Aaron Galligan-Stierle, assistant professor of theater.

[Galligan-Stierle and Goldsmith performing in Pittsburgh CLO’s ‘A Musical Christmas Carol’](#)

Aaron Galligan-Stierle, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of theatre, and Lisa Ann Goldsmith, an instructor of theatre, played the roles of Bob Cratchit and Mrs. Cratchit in the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera’s production of “A Musical Christmas Carol.”

[SRU marching band performs at London’s New Year’s Day Parade](#)

Slippery Rock University’s marching band performed in London’s New Year’s Day Parade on Jan. 1. More than 140 members of the Marching Pride and staff traveled to England’s capital city, Dec. 28 to Jan. 3, after SRU’s band was selected to perform in one of world’s largest New Year’s Day parades.

[\(Photo gallery\)](#)

GIFTS AND GRANTS

[SRU receives record \\$2 million estate gift to support RockTEACH program](#)

SRU has received its largest-ever planned estate gift. Dave and Judy Phillips, ’66, pledged a \$2 million bequest that will fund scholarships and programming through RockTEACH, a program at SRU founded in 2018 that promotes teacher education as a career path for underrepresented minority students.

[SRU receives state grant to recruit campus police officers](#)

Slippery Rock University is one of 93 nonprofit organizations in the state to receive funding through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s Nonprofit Security Grant Program. The PCCD, chaired by Lt. Gov. Austin Davis, recently approved \$19 million in funding that includes a \$21,000 grant to SRU for recruiting police officers on campus.

[Zanin-Yost receives grant for research on phytomedicine](#)

Alessia Zanin-Yost, an SRU assistant professor of library systems, received a grant of \$2,000 from the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Medical Library Association Research and Assessment Committee to

investigate the knowledge, consumption and perceptions of phytomedicine of consumers living in the United States and Italy. Phytomedicines are herbal medicines with therapeutic and healing properties.

[Bui and Jirasakuldech receive grant for research on elderly housing in rural Pennsylvania](#)

Thuy Bui and Benjamas Jirasakuldech, SRU professors of accounting, economics and finance, received a grant of \$15,000 from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania to provide a comprehensive analysis of supply and demand for senior citizen housing in rural Pennsylvania.

AWARDS AND RANKINGS

[SRU recognized among nation's best online programs in U.S. News & World Report's 2024 rankings](#)

Slippery Rock University was recognized by U.S. News & World Report on its 2024 Best Online Programs rankings. SRU ranked 138th on the list for Best Online Bachelor's Programs.

[Hamidi named Professor of Year by ASCE Pittsburgh Section](#)

Sajad Hamidi, an SRU associate professor of physics and engineering, was named 2023 Professor of the Year Award by the American Society of Civil Engineers, Pittsburgh Section, at an awards ceremony, Feb. 17, in Pittsburgh.

[Tsai earns RCRA Excellence in Research award](#)

Frank Tsai, a Slippery Rock University assistant professor of sport management, hospitality and tourism, was recently selected for an award by the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association. Tsai was selected for the Excellence in Research award because of his valuable contribution to selected pieces of research that were presented at the RCRA Research Symposium at the National Conference.

[Four SRU students win Society of Illustrator awards](#)

Four Slippery Rock University students had their artwork recognized in the 2023 Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators' Student Scholarship Awards competition.

[Pastore wins Butler County Symphony competition](#)

Taylor Pastore, a Slippery Rock University junior music education major from Canonsburg, was the 2024 winner of the Collegiate Concerto Competition, sponsored by the Butler County Symphony Association.

APPOINTMENTS

[SRU appoints Erin Bryer as interim vice president for university advancement](#)

Slippery Rock University announced Feb. 13 that Erin Bryer has been appointed interim vice president for university advancement. Bryer has worked at SRU since 2011 and most recently as director of advancement services and donor communication.

[Preston named president-elect of the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators](#)

James Preston, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of elementary education and early childhood development, was recently named the president-elect of the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

[SRU sport management students reflect on their experience working at the Super Bowl](#)

Fifteen Slippery Rock University students worked at Super Bowl LVIII in Las Vegas after the NFL selected the SRU sport management program to work at the league's marquee event. SRU students are staffing the Bart Starr Awards Breakfast, engaging with fans at the NFL Fan Experience, and providing hospitality at Allegiant Stadium during the game. SRU was one of only a handful of schools in the country invited by the NFL to staff the event with college students. Twelve sport management majors were selected by department faculty based on an application process for limited spots.

[SRU partners with Hill District organization to share Pittsburgh's history](#)

The history and culture of Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood is being preserved and shared with a wider audience thanks to a recent partnership with Slippery Rock University's History Department. Aaron Cowan, an SRU professor of history, and graduate students from his Public History course, recently helped the Hill Community Development Corporation launch the Hill District Digital History Project, available online at hillhistory.org.

[SRU business students place 10th in global business simulation competition](#)

A team of students from Slippery Rock University placed 10th in the MikesBikes Advanced global business strategy simulation competition hosted by Smartsims. The semester-long competition challenged student teams to run a public-listed bicycle company and make decisions concerning marketing, production and supply chain. More than 500 universities and several thousand teams compete across the globe. The SRU team achieved the Hall of Fame listing and was invited to the Championship Rounds, an achievement only given to fewer than 50 teams.

ATHLETICS UPDATES

[Roxanne Dunn wins 2024 NCAA Inspiration Award](#)

Former SRU pole vaulter Roxanne Dunn, '20, was presented with the 2024 NCAA Inspiration Award during the NCAA Convention in Phoenix. The Inspiration Award is presented to a coach or administrator currently associated with intercollegiate athletics or to a current or former varsity letter winner at an NCAA school. It honors those who used perseverance, dedication and determination to overcome a life-altering situation and become role models, giving hope and inspiration to others.

[Lewandowski named head coach of USA 3x3 Olympic Team](#)

SRU alumnus Joe Lewandowski '99 was named as head coach of the 2024 USA Men's Basketball 3x3 Olympic Team for the upcoming summer games in Paris. Lewandowski, who has been coaching and advising the USA Basketball 3x3 program since 2014, will lead a team of men making its 3x3 Olympic debut as the sport prepares for its second appearance in the Olympics.

Men's Basketball 2023-24 Season Recap

The SRU men's basketball team concluded its 2023-24 season with a 16-14 overall record that included a 13-9 mark in PSAC competition. The Rock qualified for the PSAC Tournament as the No. 3 seed in the Western Division and snapped a five-year postseason winless drought by defeating Seton Hill in the first round of the conference tournament. This year's Rock team also posted a 13-1 record inside Morrow Field House, which is tied for the third highest single-game win total at Morrow Field House in program history. SRU has now recorded six consecutive winning seasons, five of which have come under the direction of head coach Ian Grady. Maceo Austin and Jomo Goings were named to All-PSAC honors.

Women's Basketball 2023-24 Season Recap

The SRU women's basketball team finished with a 2-23 overall record and a 2-20 mark in the PSAC under first-year head coach Ryenn Micaletti. Regan Atkins was named the PSAC West Freshman of the Year after voting by the league's head coaches.

Men's Indoor Track & Field 2023-24 Season Recap

The SRU men's indoor track and field team finished second at the 2024 Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Indoor Championships. The runner-up finish marks the 13th straight year The Rock have finished inside the top three in the final team standings at the indoor championships. SRU won four events with Kanye Thompson winning the 60-meter dash, AJ Virata winning the 200-meter dash, Matthew Crow winning the 60-meter hurdles and Bryan Dworek winning the long jump. Virata was named the Most Outstanding Track Athlete of the meet and Joshua Gose was named the PSAC Champion Scholar Award winner for owning the highest GPA among all men competing at the championship. SRU had eight individual men earn All-Region honors for posting one of the top five marks in the Atlantic Region in their respective events.

Women's Indoor Track & Field 2023-24 Season Recap

The SRU women's track and field team won its seventh indoor PSAC title in 2024 and completed a calendar sweep of PSAC titles in the process. The Rock women won the 2023 PSAC outdoor title, the 2023 PSAC cross country title and the 2023-24 PSAC indoor title. Regan Johnson was recognized as the PSAC Champion Scholar for owning the highest GPA of all female athletes competing at the meet. Anna Igims won the mile, the 3,000-meter run, the 5,000-meter run and anchored the distance medley relay to a win. She was named the Most Outstanding Track Athlete and the Most Outstanding Overall Athlete at the meet. Sarah Corrie won the shot put and Kendall Grossman won the pole vault to give SRU wins in six different events. Grossman went on to earn All-America honors in the pole vault while representing SRU at the 2024 NCAA Division II Indoor Track & Field National Championships in Kansas. SRU has eight individual women earn All-Region honors for posting one of the top five marks in the Atlantic Region in their respective events.