



# THE rock

Slippery Rock University Magazine

Summer 2017





# View from the ROCK

Dear Friends,

Commencement is always a bittersweet time at the University. This was especially true for me this year as I presided at my final ceremony and conferred degrees for the last time. After more than 40 years in higher education I am retiring and will leave the presidency of Slippery Rock University July 21.



Since making my decision public last December, I've had many opportunities to meet with students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends and I have appreciated all of your congratulations, kind words of support and even the invitations to reconsider my decision.

But, as I said to the Class of 2017 at commencement, now is the time to move on: Graduates to the challenges and rewards that await them on the next leg of their journey, and me to a retirement that provides time for playing with my grandsons and training for my next triathlon.

I have heard people refer to life's activities as the meaning of the "dash" – you know that symbol that connects your birth year with the year of your death – the dash. A small line that symbolizes all that you have accomplished in your life and the meaning that your life has had for others. The part of my "dash" spent at Slippery Rock University was indeed special.

Since joining the ROCK family in 2012, we've accomplished much together.

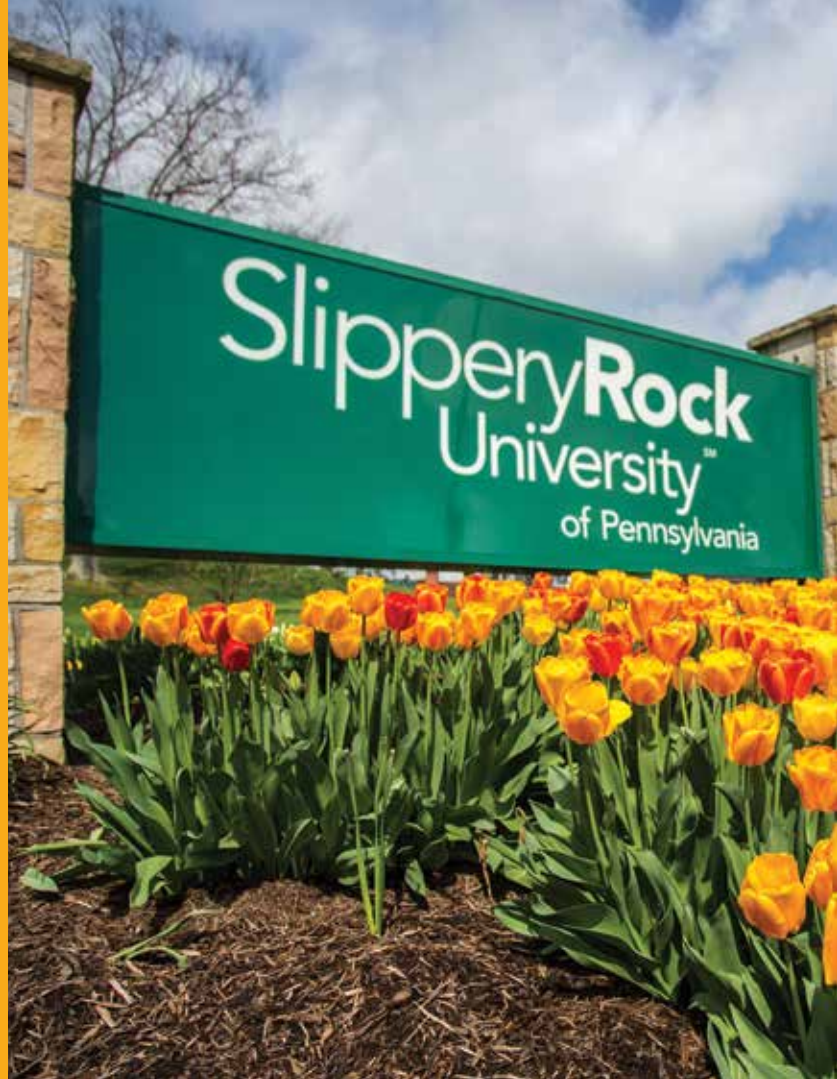
In the past five years, Slippery Rock University has seen a rising rank in U.S. News & World Report, been named a Best College in the Northeast by the Princeton Review, named a "Best Value Institution" by Money magazine, was recognized as a national, regional and public "College of Distinction" and has been applauded by The Chronicle of Higher Education as a "Great College to Work For;" among many accolades.

We led the State System schools in achievement on performance indicators three times, and consistently received a "green" or low risk ranking on the State System financial dashboard. We implemented new programs and opportunities as a way to serve the needs of our changing student population and regional employers – including introducing 15 new academic programs since 2013. And, I am especially thankful that with your help, private support to the University increased 32 percent from 2010-11 to 2015-16.

I had a fantastic time serving as your president and there are many, many people and things I will miss. However, as tough as it is to leave SRU, to paraphrase Winnie the Pooh, "how lucky I was to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

SRU will always have a special place in Henry's and my hearts. We thank you for the memories.

Cheryl Norton, president



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of Pennsylvania

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**The ROCK**

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**ABOUT THE COVER:**

Cheryl Norton came to Slippery Rock University as president in 2012 ready to lead. As the University's first female president, she accepted the administration mantle and launched a mission to bring new academic programs and possibilities to the University. As we approach her July 21 retirement, we take a look back on her SRU career. (See story page 22).

Cover photo by Mike Schnelle.

## 'The White Coats are coming!'

For hundreds of years, the white coat has been a symbol of physicians and medicine. And for many students, receiving a white coat is a rite of passage in the journey from layman to healthcare professional. For 52 Slippery Rock University graduate students taking part in the University's April 9 White Coat Ceremony, it also marked their place in history as the first group from SRU's physician assistant studies program to accomplish the feat. SRU's program is a 24-month program that combines academic and clinical instruction to prepare graduates for evidence-based practice, case management and wellness services. The program, housed at SRU's Harrisville Building, includes 13 state-



of-the-art labs and equipment that simulates real-time patient care, including an interactive mannequin that produces mock vital signs. Four exam rooms include cameras for professors to monitor student progress.



## SRU gets 'gold star' from Middle States Commission on Higher Education

You did great, Slippery Rock University. In fact, you did really great. So said the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in accepting SRU's Periodic Review Report that reaffirms the University's accreditation. In notifying SRU of its acceptance, the MSCHE commended the institution for the quality of its Periodic Review Report.

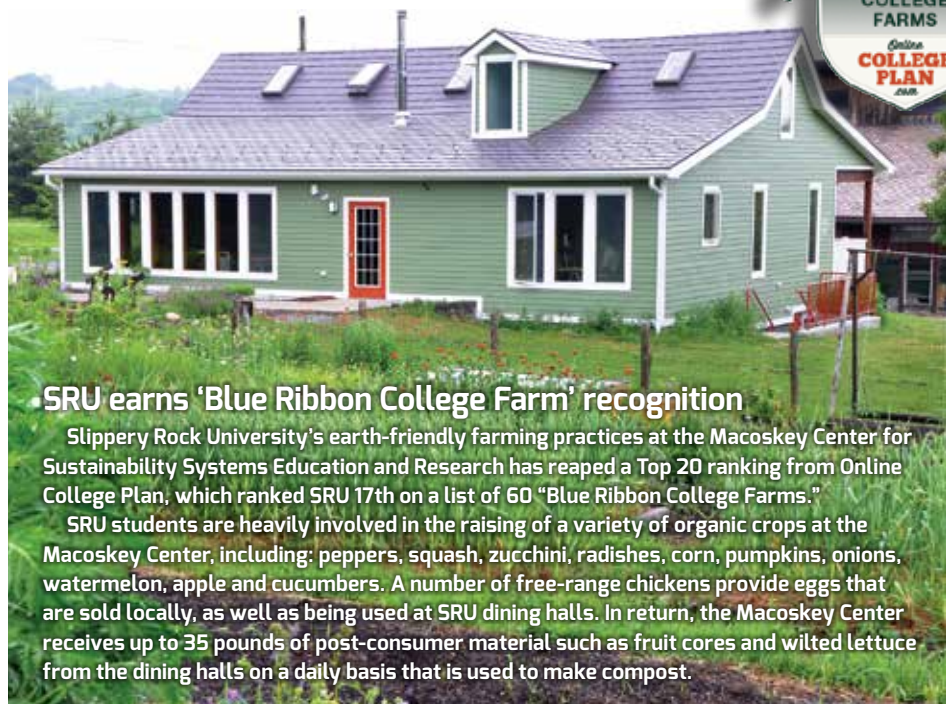


The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, regional membership association that serves higher education institutions across five states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

MSCHE's accreditation process ensures institutional accountability, self-appraisal, improvement and innovation through peer review and the rigorous application of standards within the context of institutional mission. MSCHE accreditation helps to assure students and the public of the educational quality of participating institutions.

## SRU spring enrollment continues positive gains

Despite a decline in the number of college-bound students at colleges and universities across the country, Slippery Rock University again bucked the enrollment trend this spring. When 15-day enrollment numbers for the spring 2017 semester were released, SRU boasted 8,317 students, an increase of 1.43 percent when compared to last year's figure of 8,200. Graduate student headcount increased by 83 students (7.62 percent), from 1,089 to 1,172; while undergraduate headcount increased by 34 students (.48 percent), from 7,111 to 7,145.

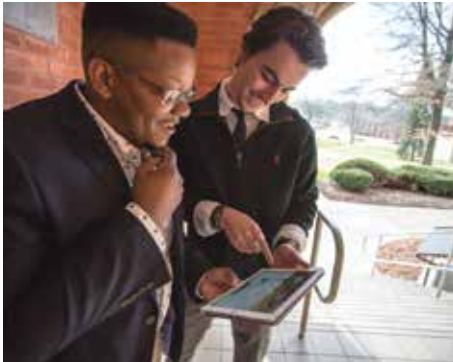


## SRU earns 'Blue Ribbon College Farm' recognition

Slippery Rock University's earth-friendly farming practices at the Macoskey Center for Sustainability Systems Education and Research has reaped a Top 20 ranking from Online College Plan, which ranked SRU 17th on a list of 60 "Blue Ribbon College Farms."

SRU students are heavily involved in the raising of a variety of organic crops at the Macoskey Center, including: peppers, squash, zucchini, radishes, corn, pumpkins, onions, watermelon, apple and cucumbers. A number of free-range chickens provide eggs that are sold locally, as well as being used at SRU dining halls. In return, the Macoskey Center receives up to 35 pounds of post-consumer material such as fruit cores and wilted lettuce from the dining halls on a daily basis that is used to make compost.

## SRU students hope Twitter feed will satisfy classmates' stomachs



Finding the best deal on local food and drink isn't always as easy you might think. Even with a laptop or smartphone, it's easy to spend more time than you want to combing the web for discounts on a deep dish pizza or a few bucks off a burger.

Fortunately for students at Slippery Rock University, Zach Haris, a marketing major from Brownsville, and Anthony Billheimer, a business major from Gibsonia, have a solution – SR Billboard.

The Twitter feed – which can be found by the handle @SR\_Promotions – advertises “the best deals in town on food, shopping or any local events.”

The concept is simple. SR Billboard seeks out, solicits and partners with local businesses, including Dominos, McDonalds and Bobba Tea Shop; develops exclusive discounts for SRU students; and promotes them via social media. All that is required to reap the rewards is a student ID card at the time of purchase.

## The Rocket captures multiple student newspaper awards

The Rocket, the independent, student-run newspaper at Slippery Rock University, captured six awards in the news and design divisions of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association's 34th Gold Circle Awards for outstanding collegiate journalism. This year's competition drew more than 4,100 entries produced by students at colleges, universities and secondary schools throughout the U.S.

The Rocket also captured six Student Keystone Press Awards. The Student Keystone Press Awards, sponsored by the Pennsylvania News Media Association, recognize high school and college journalism that provides “relevance, integrity and initiative in serving readers.”

The Society of Professional Journalists recognized The Rocket with five Region 4 “Mark of Excellence” awards, which honor the best of collegiate journalism from a calendar year. The Rocket won three awards for photography, one for breaking news reporting and one for its website. The Society for Collegiate Journalists bestowed 22 awards on the paper through its 2017 Annual National Contest. The SCJ, the nation's oldest organization designed solely to serve college media leaders, honors work submitted by its 100 active chapters and 1,200 members from across the nation that was published during the previous calendar year. Finally, The Rocket earned two national awards each from The American Scholastic Press Association and The Society of Professional Journalists.



## SRU biology majors emerge from woodland with major find

The names Bauer, Gette and Signor may not be as familiar to the science community as Mendel, Pasteur and van Leeuwenhoek, but a trio of Slippery Rock University biology majors are making discoveries that may very well garner them attention.

The trio – Jennifer Bauer, a senior from Tionesta; Gabby Gette, a senior from Fairview; and Erica Signor, a senior from Harrisburg – have identified 11 species of lichens that were previously unknown to grow in Lawrence County.

A lichen is a composite organism that arises from algae and/or cyanobacteria living among filaments of a fungus in a symbiotic relationship. The combined life form has properties that are very different from the properties of its component organisms.

The group made their discoveries through hiking trips to McConnells Mill State Park, going far beyond the mill itself and deep into the woods along Slippery Rock Creek.

## Super experience: SRU student earns spot on 'Big Game' sideline



When Katerina Fissore offered to guide SRU President Cheryl Norton through the process of posting a selfie to her Twitter account, even she never imagined where that “teaching moment” might lead.

Fissore, a communication: integrated marketing major from Saxonburg, was

recruited by SRU's Communication and Public Affairs Office to help develop the University's social media content and campaigns, as well as produce and host a web-based “SRU News” video segment.

Her newfound skills and enthusiasm caught the attention of her uncle, Mark

Fissore, a 1989 SRU graduate and graphics technician with FOX Sports. When the network rolled into Pittsburgh to televise the Nov. 13 Steelers vs. Dallas Cowboys game, Mark, a five-time Emmy Award winner, contacted Kat Fissore to gauge her interest in working as an assistant to sideline reporter Erin Andrews during the broadcast.

Producers were so impressed by her skills during the broadcast, and during a return visit for a Dec. 4 game, they spoke to Kat Fissore about joining the production team in Houston for the 2017 Super Bowl.

Kat Fissore then spent Jan. 31-Feb. 6 traveling to and from Houston, logging hours as a sideline assistant during the game and working with associate producers to view, log and cue tapes for various pre-game and in-game elements and the broadcast's digital presence.



## Harry Norton, '85 Bachelor of Science, Recreation

**HOME:**  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

**PROFESSION:**  
Certified parks & recreation professional for Manheim Township.

**HOBBIES:**  
Fishing, pickleball and reading.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**  
Being a father to my two sons, Evan and Andrew. One graduated from college and the other from high school in May; celebrating 25 years of wedded bliss to my beautiful wife, Nancy, with a celebratory trip to Punta Cana; and a successful 30-year career in my field of study at Slippery Rock State College/University (I was there during the big transition.)

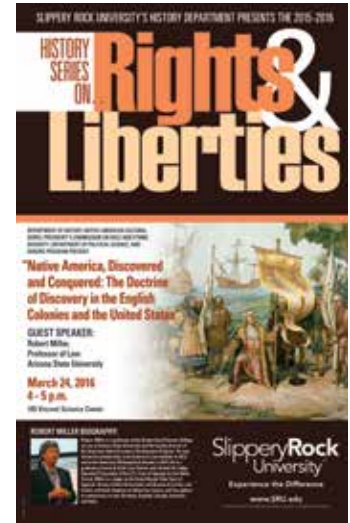
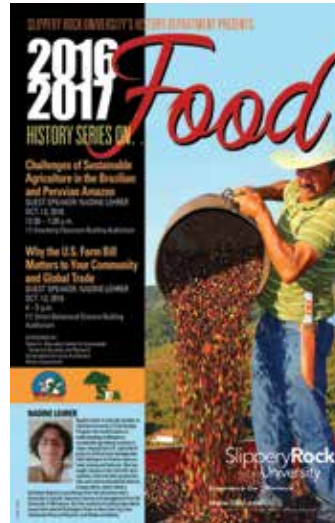
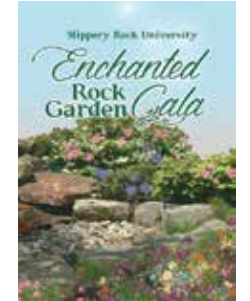
**WHY I GIVE:**  
I have been blessed and am fortunate to be able to pass on the blessing. As a board member on the Landon Family Foundation – whose motto is “Givin’ while you’re livin’, so you’re knowin’ where it’s goin’” – we are able to allocate monies to educational, humanitarian and medical efforts. SRU provided me with a sound education and lifelong friends through my involvement with the men’s soccer team and dorm life, so I am glad to be able to invest in a student and assist them in achieving their goals through my scholarship.

## 'And the winners are...'

Slippery Rock University's Office of University Communication and Public Affairs will need to invest in a new departmental trophy case if this kind of thing keeps happening. CPA staff and student designers were the recipients of 41 awards for a variety of in-house produced communication projects, including posters, magazine ads and videos promoting a myriad of campus events.

The accolades began with nine CUPPIE awards, presented by CUPRAP, the creative excellence in marketing and communications organization, as part of its annual awards competition; and were followed by 10 Collegiate Advertising Awards; 18 Educational Advertising Awards – including four Gold Awards – before bringing home three national Educational Digital Marketing Awards. The EDMAs recognize the best educational websites, digital content, electronic communications, mobile media and social media.

"It's an incredible honor to be recognized with so many regional and national awards through these distinguished competitions," said Rita Abent, executive director for communication and public affairs. "Our staff is phenomenal and it's great to see them recognized for the work they are doing."



## SRU art major 'exhibits' art across London

Zachary Rutter, a Slippery Rock University junior fine arts major from West Mifflin, decided the time was right for an "intercontinental exhibition" when, as part of an SRU study abroad excursion to London, England, the aspiring artist from Pittsburgh "dropped" 35 original works of art throughout the city.

Rutter received 20 "exuberant" text responses from Londoners that came across his works in addition to various Instagram and Twitter posts expressing gratitude for his works. One of Rutter's recipients included a guard of the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom.

Rutter placed his paintings at renowned tourist attractions including Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and Abbey Road.



## 'Special' recognition



Special Olympics Pennsylvania recently named Slippery Rock University its first "Unified Sports Center of Excellence." The award was part of SOP's Youth Summit, a daylong leadership program for western Pennsylvania students with and without intellectual disabilities, and recognized SRU for its work in championing inclusion of athletes with intellectual disabilities through sports and providing critical resources and program support.



**Special Olympics**

## Former SRSGA president appointed to State System BOG

Former Slippery Rock Student Government Association President Logan Steigerwalt attended his first meeting as a member of the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education April 5. Steigerwalt, '17 from Northampton, joined Shaina Marie Hilsey, president of the Student Government Association at California University and Brian Swatt, president of the Student Government Association at Indiana University as student members of the BOG. The three student members were selected from among the sitting student government presidents at the universities at the time a vacancy occurred. Appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate, student



members may serve until they graduate. The three student members participated in all discussions of the board and had the same voting rights as all other members.

## SRU scores prestigious \$100K NEH grant

With funding challenges forcing many institutions across the country to either scale back or consider cuts to liberal arts programming, Slippery Rock University's Humanities



Ladder program has received an infusion of capital courtesy of a \$100,000 Humanities Access Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



SRU's Humanities Ladder program, a 10-week initiative that launched in fall 2015, introduces underserved high school students at Aliquippa High School to topics not normally covered at the high school level, including: art history, gender studies and philosophy. The program served 25 high school sophomores in its first year and has followed those participating students into their junior year while welcoming another class of 30 sophomores this academic year.

Funding from the NEH grant will allow for expansion of the program to additional area school districts that, like Aliquippa, lack funding for humanities education.

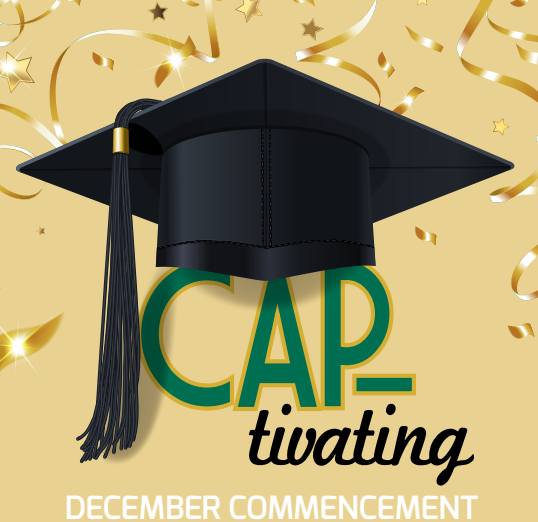
The Humanities Ladder program is part of SRU's Stone House Center for Public Humanities.



## Destination unknown

Twenty-two University-based and public teams took part in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's "Race to Anyplace" stationary bike race March 4 at the Abersold Recreation Center, raising an estimated \$20,000 in the fight against leukemia and lymphoma. Team "Tour de Friends" raised the most money, contributing more than \$2,500. The Rock Athletic Training team, which included athletic training majors: Emily Butler, a freshman from Gibsonia; Elizabeth Chobany, a senior from Johnstown; Martin Doyle, a freshman from Slippery Rock; Cara Maciag, a freshman from Webster, New York; Heather Cooper, a junior from Sarver; Katelyn Lieu, a sophomore from Export; Kirstin Gondol, a junior from Pittsburgh; Brandon Rea, a freshman from Slippery Rock; Kylee Proudfit, a senior from St. Marys; Trevor Lotz, a senior from Pottsville; and Angelia Vendetti, a freshman from Seven Fields, combined to bike the longest distance, pedaling 210 miles.

*-Photo by Benton Palermo, a junior communication major from Beaver.*



DECEMBER COMMENCEMENT



### SRU lands Division II Festival; will serve as official host institution for 12 NCAA events between 2018-20



The NCAA has announced that Slippery Rock University has been selected as the host institution for the 2018 Division II Fall Festival, along with the 2019 Division II men's and women's soccer national championships and the 2018 and 2020 Atlantic Regional cross country championships. SRU will co-host with SportsPITTSBURGH, the sports branch of Visit Pittsburgh, to stage most of the championship events in the city.

As part of the festival, SRU and SportsPITTSBURGH will serve as the hosts for the Division II men's and women's soccer, women's field hockey, women's volleyball and men's and women's cross country national championships. All events will take place between Nov. 25 and Dec. 1, 2018. SRU will host the 2018 Atlantic Regional and National Championships in cross country at its home course at Cooper's Lake Campground, which last hosted the national meet in 2008. The Rock will also host the 2020 Atlantic Regional meet at Cooper's Lake. The course at Cooper's Lake was also announced as the host site for the 2019 Division III regional meet and the 2020 Division III National Championships, which will be hosted by Carnegie Mellon University. In addition to the 2018 championship events, SRU and SportsPITTSBURGH were selected to host the 2019 Division II men's and women's soccer national championships.

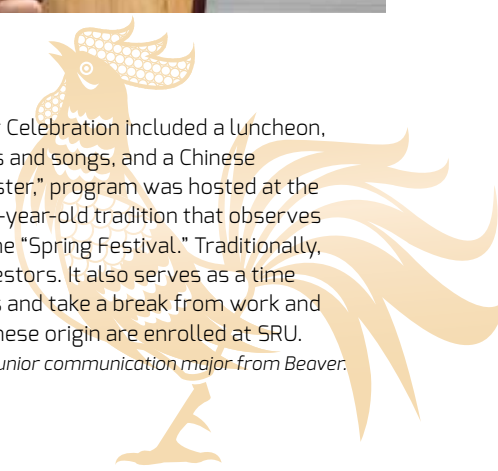
The 2018 and 2019 soccer championships will be played at Highmark Stadium in Station Square. The 2018 field hockey and volleyball championships will be played at a venue yet to be named.



### Something to crow about – Chinese New Year

Slippery Rock University's Feb. 12 Chinese New Year Celebration included a luncheon, interactive children's games, traditional performances and songs, and a Chinese calligraphy demonstration. The free, "Year of the Rooster," program was hosted at the Slippery Rock Township Building in honor of the 4,000-year-old tradition that observes the start of the new lunar year and is also known as the "Spring Festival." Traditionally, the festival was a time to honor deities as well as ancestors. It also serves as a time to reconnect with family and friends, launch fireworks and take a break from work and responsibility. Nearly 30 international students of Chinese origin are enrolled at SRU.

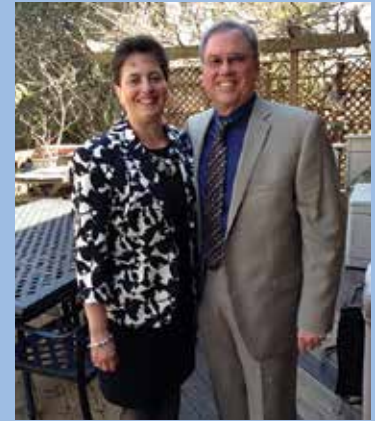
-Photo by Benton Palermo, junior communication major from Beaver.





## 'Hey, Jude,' SRU was up 'til 2

A contingent of Slippy Rock University students stayed "Up 'til 2" at the ARC to support St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The event, which celebrated its 11th year, surpassed its goal of raising more than \$18,000 for Memphis, Tennessee-based St. Jude, which annually treats more than 7,500 children suffering from childhood cancer and other life-threatening diseases. The 5 1/2-hour program - which included games, prizes, food and music - featured participating students raising \$100 or more to compete in hourly activities and challenges in support of St. Jude patients. More than 75 percent of St. Jude's funding comes from public contributions. Families never receive a bill for treatment, travel, housing or food.



## Michael Bachuchin, '76 Bachelor of Science, Physical Education and Maria Bachuchin, '76 Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education

**HOME:**  
Chesterton, Indiana

**PROFESSIONS:**  
Maria and Mike Bachuchin recently retired after 40 year careers - Maria as a kindergarten teacher and grade level coordinator; Mike as a YMCA director, high school special educator and algebra teacher. The Bachuchins coached the Chesterton (Indiana) High School girls' gymnastics team for 25 years and owned Lakeshore Gymnastics and Dance.

**HOBBIES:**  
The Bachuchins are still active in teaching and gymnastics, as tutors and officials. They love travel, music, visiting SRU, rooting for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Penguins, Pirates and of course, Rock football.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**  
Maria Bachuchin has been responsible for initiating more than 1,500 kindergarten students' educational experiences. Mike Bachuchin loved seeing his struggling math students succeed on the Indiana State Algebra Assessment. As coaches, the Bachuchins were four-time Indiana Coach of the Year award recipients and received a nomination for National Coach of the Year (2000).

**WHY WE GIVE:**  
"Our professional and personal lives would not have been possible without the great education, extra-curricular activities and resources available to us at The Rock. We give so that young adults can begin their own successful journeys - as students, as athletes and as career professionals."

## 'Paws' and Relax



Sponsored by Slippy Rock University's President's Commission for Wellness, therapy dogs, Bella and Sookie, visited students in Patterson Hall. The duo, owned by Deborah Hutchins, assistant professor of recreational therapy, is registered with Therapy Dogs International, a volunteer organization "dedicated to regulating, testing and registration of therapy dogs and their volunteer handlers for the purpose of visiting nursing homes, hospitals, other institutions and wherever else therapy dogs are needed." Studies have shown that animal-assisted therapy can promote human improvements in physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive function.



# PASSION FOR *(theatrical)* fashion

All good costume designers know inexpensive corduroy looks like plush velvet on stage and that clothes for a period production can often be found at thrift stores. Talented Slippery Rock University theatre technical and design graduates are getting to use their extensive costuming knowledge in innovative ways at venues stretching from coast to coast.

Their abilities are on display in everything from school and non-profit community theaters to the professional stage. The know-how and imaginations of Rock graduates also are providing costume ideas for a wide genre of productions, including new and traditional theater, lavish extravaganzas and the currently expanding cosplay arena.



**Crystal Goettler**, a Pittsburgh native, started her SRU life as a dance major, but realized early on she wanted to supplement that degree. "I wanted to add something else," she said. "My sophomore year, I added a theatre major, concentrating in technical design. I graduated in 2016 with a double major.

"I really liked design. I had started making my own costumes while still in high school for cosplay, which for those who don't know, is broken down from 'costume play.' You make a costume representing a character from television, a movie or book, comic books, or even Japanese manga or anime (Japanese

sponsorships and invitations to conventions. I have been able to get my name out there in a number of areas," Goettler said.

"I recently went to Katsucon, a worldwide convention in Maryland, and there is one called 'Tekko,' an anime convention in Pittsburgh that is focused on Japanese pop culture. I will be attending professionally in costume. It is a great place to meet other cosplay enthusiasts," she said.

"Rather than sketch a costume, I pull all of the reference pictures of the character I can find online. I look at the photos and then make lists of what materials and what skills I will

conventions; then there are anime conventions, gaming conventions and streaming conventions all for the nerd/geek community. Cosplayers show up at all of them."

"The costume part, of course, translates well to theater because of what I do and how I can create unusual costumes," she said, adding, "Those who participate in medieval fair reproductions are also cosplayers.

"My dream job is to create costumes and props for Cirque

# Crystal Goettler



animation, characterized by vibrant colors and fantasy themes). A popular one might be Wonder Woman. For many, dressing up for Halloween is cosplay, but I, and many others, do it year-round professionally. It is a different route for sure," she said.

The costume genre, she said "came to prominence about a decade ago, but became more mainstream about three years ago as the general public began closely following their 'heroes.' Also, more people started doing it as a profession. Those who watch TV's popular 'Big Bang Theory' often hear about going to 'Comic-Con' – that is really a cosplay convention."

"There was also a TV show, 'The Heroes of Cosplay,' that helped bring cosplay to the forefront," she said.

"Professional cosplayers are often able to live off of their own artwork, selling prints and as entertainers. They are often self-employed artists as well as costume-makers. They receive commissions to make cosplay costumes for other people. They can also find

need to pull off the design," she said.

"I have this character from 'The Legend of Zelda' series, specifically the 'Twilight Princess,' an action-adventure game by Nintendo, with a character named 'Midna,' who is the protagonist. She is my favorite, but has a very complex costume," Goettler said.

"It was a challenge for me. It was my first time learning to do body paint, working with thermoplastics, learning to mold, and air brushing as well. It required very different skills, but I taught myself by looking at tutorials. The end product looks almost perfect and just what I was looking for. It gave me a huge sense

of accomplishment that I have carried to additional costumes," she said.

Cosplay has Facebook forums and a cosplay online community where people share ideas, Goettler said. "We keep in touch as part of a worldwide following. In addition, there are about 10 different conventions every weekend all around the world. There are also Comic-Cons, which are the more mainstream

du Soleil, which is headquartered in Montreal," she said. She plans to move to Canada this coming summer.

While a theatre major, Goettler never acted on stage, concentrating instead on costume and tech shop work. Her designs were seen in an early SRU production of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," directed by David Skeeel, professor of theatre. "I was charged with creating the Ghost of Christmas Future. Dr. Skeeel wanted the character to be menacing and eerie double the size of a normal human. I created very long and menacing hands, using my knowledge of cosplay," she said.

"I was the assistant costume designer for two SRU shows and truly enjoyed it," she said. "Rebecca Morrice [associate professor of theatre and now department chair] was my inspiration. She was truly my primary motivator. I was self-taught in sewing before college. It was great to learn the proper way to do the work. She greatly improved my costuming technique. There is always a better way to make something, and she showed me how. I like making the costume, rather than designing it."

*"I really liked design. I had started making my own costumes while still in high school for cosplay, which for those who don't know, is broken down from 'costume play.'"*

# April McKinnis



**April McKinnis**, a 2000 SRU theatre graduate, has taken a more traditional route in her long-running costuming career, a journey that led her to designing dresses for a major Broadway holiday production.

"I am a draper with the American Players Theatre in Spring Green, Wisconsin. The draper takes the design from the costume designers and basically makes the patterns for the costumes, then does the fittings and oversees getting the product finished. I have been with the APT for 20 seasons, having



started work during summers when I was still attending SRU," she said.

APT offers nine productions each season, mostly Shakespeare works outdoors and other classical plays and more modern plays indoors.

"There can be two to 70 costumes, depending on the show. I work with a team of about six. Others do what we call 'crafts,' the millinery, wigs and shoes. There is a staff of 35 people in our costume shop," McKinnis said.

Typical productions run 11 to 30 performances, with a few shows offering student matinees. The 1,200+-seat outdoor amphitheater and a smaller 'black box' theater provide the venues. "We are located near Madison, Wisconsin, but we draw people from all over the country, including Chicago and Minneapolis. We draw thousands during the summer season," she said.

The 2016 holiday theater season gave McKinnis her first chance to design and make costumes for a major Broadway production as part of a musical update titled "Holiday

Inn, The New Irving Berlin Musical." Most remember the iconic 1942 film version of the holiday show, starring Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale.

The film and play include Berlin's ageless holiday songs "White Christmas" and "Easter Parade."

"I had worked with Broadway costume designer Alejo Vietti here at APT on our production of Noel Coward's 'Private

Lives.' He called me asking if I was interested in building the dresses for Berlin's 'Blue Skies' number in the Broadway production. I jumped at the chance," McKinnis said. She provided all 10 dresses and a robe for the ensemble chorus for the number, part of the Studio 54 production that ran during the 2016 Christmas season.

McKinnis said she did not have to travel to New York for the costume work, adding, "I sent them mock-ups, and I was then able to build the costumes and send them to New York."

She said she did not even get to go to Broadway to see the results of her work, but was able to live-stream the production on Broadway HD for her and her family to see.

McKinnis developed her interest in clothes from her grandmother. "She taught me to



sew when I was very young. I picked it up naturally, and I was always making clothes for dolls," she said.

The professional draper said costumes, such as dresses "are made very similarly to those that would be offered in clothing stores, but often because they have to withstand extended wear, they are just built sturdier. They sometimes have to be adapted for quick changes. In dealing with men's suits, I sometimes build them from scratch. With other plays, they may only require alterations. It always depends on what the designer thinks is most important," she said.

"At SRU, Rebecca Morrice, who joined the faculty during my sophomore year, was the

*The 2016 holiday theater season gave McKinnis her first chance to design and make costumes for a major Broadway production as part of a musical update titled "Holiday Inn, The New Irving Berlin Musical."*

things and that is always fun. There are many dresses, for example, I have redone multiple times," she said.

While an SRU student, McKinnis worked closely with Morrice in the SRU Costume Shop. Her work included such productions as "Our Country is Good," Shakespeare's "Pericles" and Aristophanes' "Lysistrata." She said, "Working on 'Merisol,' a play by Jose Rivera, where I had to make corsets, is often close to what I do now."

Costumes are clearly her niche. She has been happy to stay behind the scenes, having only one on stage role during her entire theater career. "I was onstage for SRU's production of 'Shrew,' an adaptation of Shakespeare's 'The Taming of the Shrew' that we workshopped and wrote at the University," she said. "I played the on-stage stage manager, yelling at the cast."

Some of her costuming expertise was included in the recent book "Much Ado: A Summer with a Repertory Theater Company" by Michael Lenehan, after he spent time in 2014 chronicling the APT's then-upcoming production of Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing."

"Lenehan followed the process from start to finish. It is really good," she said, adding, "Costumes for that play, which I have done several times, are my favorite."

one who got me out here. I started here as a stitcher, just one season, and I have been here ever since," she said.

McKinnis recently relocated to Spring Green after having worked for the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. "I started there after graduating from SRU. I have also worked at a couple of different theaters in the Milwaukee area, and I have done a little of everything in the costume area."

"I have made quite a variety of costumes over the years, but my favorite is working on women's dresses. I have made some very fantastic women's dresses from the 1920s and 30s. I also enjoy tailoring men's suits.

"We presented a fun production of the play 'Liberace,' where I got to re-create a bunch of his really fantastic clothes. I have made some pretty great costumes for different Shakespeare characters. We have a large stock of costumes that get reused and rebuilt. Often, they get turned into new



*Kelly Myers*

**Kelly Myers**, now in her second year of graduate school at Ohio University, the 2011 SRU theatre tech graduate is working on her master of fine arts degree in costume design. "Every summer since graduation from SRU, I have been working at American Players Theatre in Wisconsin with April McKinnis," she said.

"I have worked multiple jobs on a variety of plays. It will be my seventh season this summer. My intro to the company was doing wardrobe, actually being a dresser. I worked in a lot of APT's bigger shows. One of the first was 'Taming of the Shrew,' by Shakespeare, and we do a lot of Arthur Miller and other classic plays," Myers said. "I will be going back for my third season as an assistant designer, and I do work on their black box theater, a smaller theater, which presented 'An Iliad,' an adaptation of 'The Iliad,' and was my first assistant's job."

"Last year, we did the Greek story, 'Eurydice,' with a modern telling. The playwright, Sarah Ruhl, gave us permission to throw out the stage directions and rethink the entire story. There was a lot of communication with other designers and the director determining what things would work and which would not," Myers said.

"The main costume was for Eurydice. She is in a wedding dress for most of the play and the big story line is she ends up falling into Hell or the Underworld. The wedding dress becomes a prop piece. At one point, she takes it off to use as a pillow. We had to give the actress the costume in early rehearsals to see how she could work with it," said Myers.

"Another part has three characters from the Underworld called 'Stones.' We put them in raincoats so everything was in gray scale and very wet. We made the raincoats in our costume shop and figuring out how to work with rubber



and other materials using glue rather than stitching was interesting to learn.”

“This summer, I will be working on ‘Pericles,’ another Shakespeare play, my first big Shakespeare play as assistant designer,” she said.

“At Ohio University, I am designing ‘The Rover,’ a play written in the 1600s by one of the first female playwrights [Aphra Behn]. It takes place at Carnival in Italy. We have set it with an all-female cast, with women playing both the men and women. It is mostly about the roles of women in the 17th century. There are 13 actors and 17 characters and lots of them will have multiple costumes. There may be 25 costumes to prepare. We will need lots of masks and lots of hats,” Myers said.

The work will involve handmade masks, a skill Myers said she learned at SRU as part of a theater history class and her final project.

“I do tech sketches for costumes. I am not the one physically making costumes. As the designer, I talk with the other designers and the director and then come up with the actual design. I will do sketches and what is called ‘the rendering’ before passing that information to the costume shop manager and the draper, who then figure out how the costume will actually be put together. They physically build the costume for me,” she said.

At SRU, Myers worked on Ibsen’s “Hedda Gabler,” set



# Kelly McBane



where we are moving toward having students make most of our play’s costumes. I have gathered a group of dedicated students and the culture is changing, but it takes time,” she said.

“We’re going into tech for a show titled ‘The International,’ [author: Anne Washburn] that I am designing, and the costumes will involve modern business wear. We have already pulled and purchased nearly all of the necessary costumes, so it was easy. However, we just completed work on a massive-build show, a South Korean historical drama, which made its United States premiere at UT, called “The King and the Clown” [author: Taewoong Kim],” she said.

“That play required an adaptation of



**Kelly McBane**, a 2009 SRU theater design and technology graduate, selected Ohio University’s graduate school to further her theater studies. Since earning her degrees, she has been employed in a number of positions, including work with regional theater at Columbus’ [Ohio] CATCO, where she served as a costume shop intern. She is now a theater technical specialist and costume shop manager at the University of Toledo.

At UT, she is responsible for costumes for its four yearly productions and teaches nearly 200 students in “Introduction to Theatre” and “Introduction to Film” classes. UT’s theater department is similar in size to SRU’s.

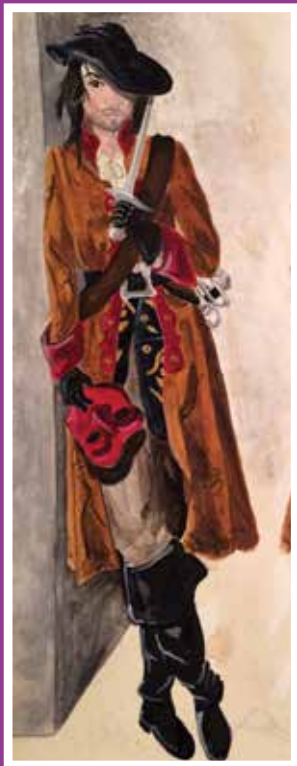
“I have 15 students in the costume shop,



traditional Korean formalwear and peasant wear from the 1600s. The designers had to do a lot of research into Korean court-wear and what peasants looked like by looking at historical paintings and drawings as first-source material from the era,” McBane said.

Throughout her career, McBane’s costume work has covered the spectrum, ranging from Shakespearian plays to “The Seafarer,” “Murders,” “Evie’s Waltz,” “The Mystery of Irma Vep” and a long list of others. There were also musicals, one-person shows and stage extravaganzas.

She recalls CATCO’s production of “Irma Vep” with humor, saying, “It was a quick-change spectacular. We did more than 100 quick



in the Victorian Era, and undertook costume work for "Fat Pigs." "They asked me back as a guest designer after I graduated for Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice,'" she said.

"I was very well prepared for graduate school. I waited a few years after SRU before enrolling because I thought it was very important to have some real-life experience," she said. "Before OU, I did work with the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and its production of 'A Little Night Music.' I also did considerable wardrobe work, which is a good way to introduce yourself to a theater company, including City Theatre Company. I was also involved in costume coordination for the Eugene (Oregon) Ballet Co. as part of its performance of 'The Nutcracker,'" she said.

"In a graduate props class, I got to make a sword from scratch by welding all the pieces together. I also made a big neck piece out of sheet metal. I actually learned to weld at Slippery Rock University," she said, explaining it was part of a sculpture class.

After graduating from OU, Myers said she plans to "look at Chicago, since it is only three hours away from Wisconsin, and a lot of my contacts are in Chicago. They have a lot of great theater companies there. In my third year, I will be doing an internship, and I am looking at doing something in film or a television show."

costume changes each performance with only two gentlemen in the cast. Playing multiple characters, each time they came into a room, they wore a different costume. It required real choreography backstage. At one point, the actor literally ran as the draper threw his dress in the air so he could run into it as others quickly secured the costume's closures and he was quickly back on stage." Most quick changes were done with the aid of Velcro.

At the other extreme, McBane said, while she primarily made costumes at CATCO, she also handled design for the season's one-person show, "Pierce to the Soul" (author: Chiquita Mullins Lee), requiring only one costume – that of an African-American folk artist.



just getting started, and I found out what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. When I did the show again at the University of Toledo, I realize how far I had come. And, I really love the show," she said.

As an SRU student, McBane was involved in "Cabaret," "This is Our Youth," and won a national award for work on "Macbeth."

"Rebecca Morrice saw that I had a knack for making things, and she made sure I knew that designing costumes was not the only option in costume shop work. She helped me figure out that career path. I was lucky to know early in my college career – my sophomore year – where I wanted to go," she said.

"A whim," McBane said, took her to Las Vegas after graduate school. "I thought I would find work, which I did, including a number of production companies in the entertainment industry providing costumes for both local and international productions.

"My primary job was working for produced night club acts: Everything from the classic Vegas showgirl costume to light-up LED costumes for women rolling around in giant hamster balls. It was always something new, never the same thing twice. It was rapid paced. Sometimes we would get a morning call and I would have costumes ready the next day," she said.

While in Pittsburgh, McBane completed an internship at the Pittsburgh Public Theater and worked for the Unseam'd Shakespeare Co.

Currently, SRU offers majors in acting, arts administration, and design and technology, as well as a minor in theatre.



At OU, she earned her Master of Fine Arts in Costume Technology and Crafts. "There was a large quantity of work. We did four shows a year, and I was a draper helping actors into their costumes. I was also teaching undergraduate classes. My thesis project was about (Stephen) Sondheim's musical "Assassins" and managing a costume shop with a pretty large team of people," McBane said.

Her favorite plays include "Little Shop of Horrors" (author: Howard Ashman) that she worked on while a student at SRU and at her current post at UT. Second comes the production of "Irma Vep," which she calls, "A lot of fun – and work.

"I think 'Little Shop' was fun because I was

*Waking up to 'sell' the*

**offee**

**Professor's brew biz  
supports people,  
the planet and plumage**



***Black. Cream and sugar. A splash of Irish whiskey or chocolate liqueur. Cappuccino. Espresso. Caffè latte. Short. Tall. Grande. Venti.***

These days there are as many ways to take your coffee as there are stars in the sky. It's enough to make a person's head hurt. But then again, that's what the caffeine "punch" is for, isn't it?

For Julie Snow, Slippery Rock University professor of geography, geology and the environment, there is only one way she takes her coffee – straight off a Nicaraguan bean farm.

As the driving force behind Rock Roast coffee, it only makes sense that she does.

Rock Roast is a self-funded, nonprofit, organic coffee company that returns sales proceeds directly to a coffee collaborative in Nicaragua to support research, conservation efforts and education. Current research focuses on rainforest regrowth at coffee farms as a path for carbon sequestration, biodiversity protection, habitat growth for migratory birds and improved wellness of the Nicaraguan farmers.

It is Snow's hope that future sales volume will lead to the establishment of a fund to support research, conservation and education projects at the farms. These funds would be available for SRU faculty and staff who are interested in working on

research related to the goals of the project ranging from sustainability and ecology to economics and public health. Joining Snow in the endeavor are SRU students Clare Clark, an environmental science major from Brookville, and Joseph Pounds, a computing major from Alexandria, Virginia.

Interesting to be sure, but it certainly begs the question, "How exactly does an academic from SRU wind up in Central America, picking beans and learning to be a java czar?"

"About three or four years ago, on my way to a family campout in West Chester, I stopped at an artisan market and struck up a conversation with a gentleman who was selling a blend that was fair trade, organic and tasted amazing, said Snow. He told me that his





That man was John Sacharok, owner and CEO of Golden Valley Farms Coffee Roasters, a family owned and operated artisan coffee roaster based in West Chester. The company has more than 30 years of experience in coffee sales, national distribution and branding. It roasts a large selection of organic, shade-grown, bird-friendly and fair-trade coffees and teas. They provide hot beverage solutions for small private label retail programs to larger scale food service customers.

"Our conversation just 'spoke' to me on many levels," said Snow, "but at the end of the day, I'm an atmospheric chemist. I know nothing about business. But what I did know is that it sounded like an amazing opportunity because there were so many positives about what John was doing and the program he was running."

Through the Golden Valley program, the company supplied funding to undergraduate students at Widener University and Lycoming College to conduct sustainability research in developing nations through the sale of its coffee blends and working with Nicaraguan farmers to rebuild the rainforests surrounding their farms.

Knowing her business acumen was a little light, Snow reached out to SRU's Sustainable Enterprise Accelerator for guidance. The SEA is a resource for students and entrepreneurs to jump-start or grow a business with sustainability in mind by providing guidance in transforming promising ideas into thorough business plans and early-stage businesses. For those operating an established business, the SEA delivers help identifying opportunities for improving value creation and assistance in developing solutions for high-priority business challenges. Additionally, it helps grow regional employment and increase economic development. The SEA assists in developing competencies for students seeking green jobs.

"For me, it was never about making money, but rather making a global difference," said Snow. "I thought it would be amazing for our students to get involved in such an endeavor and they collectively agreed to take it on as a project."

"However, it's been a slow build over the past three years. My original hope was that by making Rock Roast a student-run business, we'd be able to make a more immediate impact. But with student turnover occurring every semester, the company was not significantly moving forward.

"It was like driving an old, used car. It would get so far, then stall out and you'd have to get it out and start it up all over again. Sometimes it had to get towed all the way back to the garage. It just wasn't working."

That lack of movement is what has seen Snow and Co. take the

business out of the classroom and become a client at the SEA; register Rock Roast as an official Pennsylvania business; create a board of directors; and start selling the coffee.

"Working with dedicated students has been a very rewarding experience," said Snow. "Joe is an incredible web designer with skills I can't even fathom, and Clare's commitment to making positive change in the world is truly inspiring. To top it off, they are both fluent in Spanish which helps on our farm visits."

Together, the trio has not only been able to move the project forward in rather rapid succession, Rock Roast has been available for sale online since November, but they partnered with Robert Rice, a scientist at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, to obtain a bird-friendly certification for the brew. That certification guarantees every bean was grown under the canopy of a rainforest. In addition, Rice helped the trio select a farming cooperative from which to purchase their beans, San Juan del Río Coco. The cooperative is comprised of 133 small family farms, with 22 percent of those owned by women.

"Being involved with this particular cooperative has been a great learning experience," said Snow. "Not only were we attracted to it because of the large female presence, but with our partnering on the bean purchases, they were more than open to agreeing to conduct sustainability research with us."

Part of that research agreement included a 2016 study abroad visit to the region by a Snow-led group of 12 SRU geology, environmental science and environmental studies students. As part of the excursion, the group spent two weeks backpacking across Nicaragua, learning about the rainforests, conservation efforts, visiting volcanoes and watching sea turtles hatch on the beach in addition to visiting with local coffee bean farmers.

"Part of what we're doing is about helping the people," said Clark, who noted that \$1 to \$1.60 from every bag of coffee sold will go back into supporting student research and the farms from which the beans are purchased.

*"For me, it was never about making money, but rather making a global difference. I thought it would be amazing for our students to get involved in such an endeavor and they collectively agreed to take it on as a project."*

—Julie Snow, professor of geography, geology and the environment

"It's hard to really understand the true nature of the poverty there until you visit," she said. "We got the chance to visit with some of the families and it was a very intense experience. They have so little and are dependent on the farm to provide everything for them including food, housing, health care and schooling for their children."

"You're working with people who live in little shacks with maybe one table and a dirt floor," added Snow. "You really see how life can be affected by the little choices we make like what coffee we buy."

Snow was referring to the difference between sun coffee, which comprises the majority of what is sold in the U.S., versus bird-friendly coffee such as Rock Roast. While bird-friendly coffee is best described as shade-grown, where the beans are grown under the canopy of the rainforest; sun coffee is grown as the result of scientifically-developed hybrid beans that can grow in full sun conditions, yielding significantly more product.

There are approximately 6 million acres of coffee-producing



farmland worldwide. Since 1972, about 60 percent of that land has been deforested to make room for the hybrid, full-sun variety of coffee plant. In Nicaragua, roughly 87 percent of the rainforest has been removed to date.

Clear-cutting of the tree-canopied forests to increase coffee bean yield upsets the ecosystem, creating a critical survival problem for millions of birds, including hummingbirds, orioles, hawks, warblers and many more, as well as other animals that depend on these forested areas.

"Most of the sun coffee sold today is literally killing hundreds of thousands of songbirds," said Clark. "Not to mention destroying a sustainable method of farming that supports those rural communities in Latin America and keeping the farm workers and their children away from toxic chemicals."

For Snow, the conditions hit close to home.

"Many of the children we saw were alone for most the day," she said. "We met a 7-year-old boy whose father had died. His mother spends



her days working on the farm while he sells little turtles made from shells to help support their family. Most of the children we met will never go to school.

"It's a completely different world. That is why our slogan is 'Profits for people, the planet and plumage.' We don't just want to make a difference; we believe we have to."

Purchasers of Rock Roast will be doing more than simply enjoying a unique blend of coffee. Every bag sold will help to save the shade-grown farms from being cut down; protecting winter bird habitats; help rebuild the Central American rainforest; and support the farmers who are making positive global decisions.

Additionally, Snow hopes to see Rock Roast grow big enough, through eventual sales at grocery stores, including Giant Eagle and Whole Foods, to work with a variety of future farmers.

"The most important aspect of the company is the positive impact it can and will have on helping save the planet for future generations, including my daughter's," she said. "That is something I can be really proud of. Rock Roast gives me, and every coffee drinker, a way to directly lessen climate change. Just talking about it is no longer enough. We need to take action."

To learn more about Rock Roast, visit: <http://www.rockroast.org/>. To purchase Rock Roast, which is available in medium or dark roasts, visit: [http://www.goldenvalleyfarms.com/RockRoast\\_s/1858.htm](http://www.goldenvalleyfarms.com/RockRoast_s/1858.htm).

**USDA Organic** certification is a process for producers of organic food products. In general, any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurants. Requirements generally involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

- Avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives), irradiation and the use of sewage sludge;
- Avoidance of genetically modified seed;
- Use of farmland that has been free from prohibited chemical inputs for several years (three or more);
- Keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail);
- Maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products; and
- Undergoing periodic on-site inspections.



**Fair Trade Certified** products are made with respect to people and planet. The rigorous social, environmental and economic standards work to promote safe, healthy working conditions; protect the environment; enable transparency; and empower communities to build strong, thriving businesses. FTC products are certified by Fair Trade, USA; increase profits for farmers; and reduce the number of business steps between farmers and consumers.



**Bird Friendly** certification means that the coffee purchased comes from farms in Latin America that provide good, forest-like habitat for birds. Rather than being grown on land that has been cleared of all other vegetation, "Bird Friendly" coffees are planted under a canopy of trees. Because of the shaded, forest-like setting, coffee produced this way is known as shade-grown.

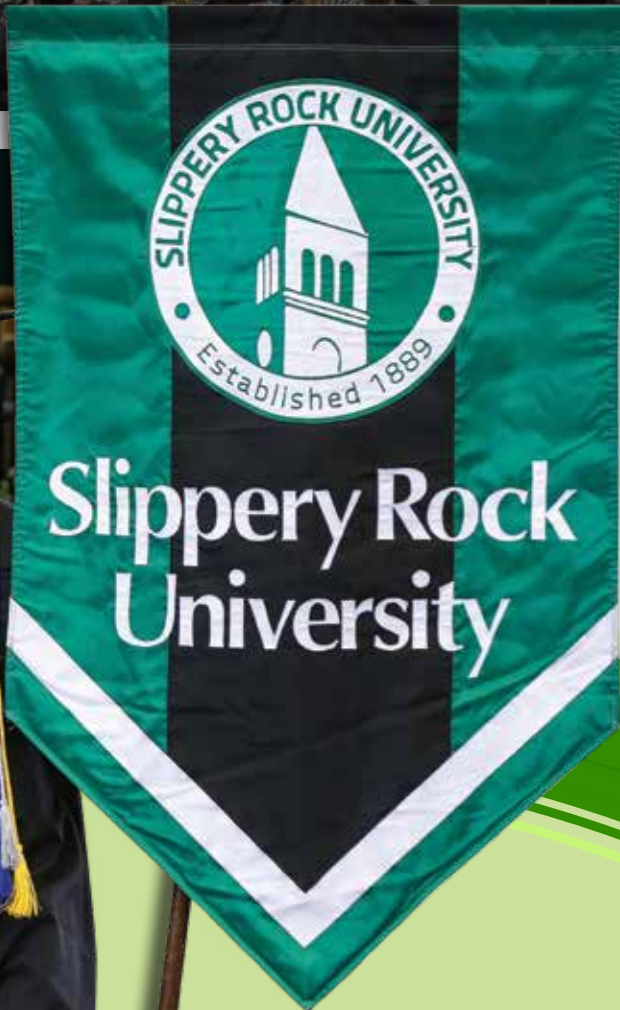




# Graduation Celebration



Graduates, families and friends gathered at Slippery Rock University May 12-13 for a trio of commencement ceremonies at Morrow Field House. The two-day celebration saw the conferring of more than 1,500 undergraduate and graduate degrees and the hooding of 53 doctoral candidates. While SRU's graduate student commencement occurred May 12, undergraduates crossed the stage May 13 in a morning ceremony for the College of Health, Environment and Science and the College of Liberal Arts, and in an afternoon ceremony for the College of Business and the College of Education.





President Norton says

# Goodbye

to SRU



Cheryl Norton came to Slippery Rock University as president in 2012 ready to lead. As the University's first woman president, and with one presidential appointment in her past, she accepted the administrative mantle, quickly launching a mission to bring new academic programs and new academic possibilities to current and potential SRU students. During her five years of leadership, she was guided by a vision of fulfilling the University's promise of providing lifelong-learning opportunities.

As her leadership period comes to an end, it can be summarized in two words: Mission Accomplished.





“Despite the economic issues plaguing Pennsylvania, Slippery Rock University has thrived. We are financially stable ...our enrollment is at an all-time high.”

Without question, her leadership brought a myriad of changes that have clearly benefitted the University, its students, staff and faculty, as well as the local and regional community, the entire State System of Higher Education, the region’s workforce, business and commerce. SRU alumni and numerous additional constituencies, said Frank Brogan, chancellor of Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education and Norton’s boss.

With the long list of goals on her performance evaluation successfully achieved and the pathway charted for future development, Norton decided there would never be a better time to step away from life in higher education. She notified the Council of Trustees and the campus community of her intention Dec. 9, 2016, saying she had made her decision, in part, because “Slippery Rock University has never been in a stronger position.” Her retirement is effective July 21.

“Despite the economic issues plaguing Pennsylvania, Slippery Rock University has thrived. We are financially stable ... our enrollment is at an all-time high.

“Our degree programs are recognized nationally. We have been ranked in the top four public institutions in Pennsylvania and in the top 150 in the country,” she said.

Under her leadership, SRU has received countless accolades, awards, rankings and honors, as well as extensive approvals by a variety of prestigious academic-accrediting bodies.

Norton has enjoyed solid relationships with students and others in the University community; made new friends among alumni, state legislators and other officials, both statewide and internationally; while working diligently to strengthen the quality of education SRU offers students. She has worked consistently to increase the value of a Slippery Rock University diploma.

She has devised and led significant changes, both in the organization and operation of the top administration, as well as within the academic departments of the University’s four colleges and its critical areas of student support. She simultaneously pushed for, and implemented, expansion in the number and quality of SRU graduate programs as well as international

connections and exchanges.

These important changes have brought about new areas of academic study, and, in turn, opened SRU to new groups of potential students, bringing the benefits of higher education to both them as individuals and to the community at-large.

Despite her oft-repeated, and fun, catch phrase, “The sun always shines at Slippery Rock University,” President Norton recently sat during a blustery-cold, windy snow day, for an extended recap and reflection of her years at SRU’s helm. She offered insights as to what motivated her and what strengths she believed she brought to the job. She also outlined her future retirement plans.

Among her proudest accomplishments at SRU, Norton said, “I think it was establishing new degree programs for the institution that are allowing Slippery



*Norton paused during her inauguration ceremony to let her grandson, William, admire her medallion.*



# Cheryl Norton

Rock University to be seen not only as a 'Best Choice, First Choice Undergraduate Program,' but also as a quality graduate school as well. We have added programs that have addressed not only student needs and interests, but also workforce needs in western Pennsylvania, since, as a regional comprehensive institution, our primary role and mission is to be an educational service to our community and to help ensure, not only the educational advancement of the community, but opportunities for career development as well."

Also high on the "accomplishments list" is "shaking hands with nearly 10,000 SRU graduates at commencement ceremonies" as they launched into their chosen careers.

"The results of adding significant graduate and new undergraduate degrees in areas that we had not been involved with previously, such as homeland security, corporate security, engineering, petroleum and natural gas engineering and industrial and system engineering, are that we've reinvented the campus and given the institution a new identity," she said.

"The addition of graduate programs especially in the health care professions, such as the physician assistant program, the master's in public health, the master's in health care informatics, along with the expanded athletic training program, continue to help make this institution, as a public institution, one that exists for the good of the public. What better way is there to help the public than by supporting its health and servicing its health care needs," she said. Also added was a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance degree.

**"This is an institution that is strong in its roots, rich in its history, with unlimited potential for the future."**

"The results of this work have been a stronger institution, one that has reached all-time highs in enrollment; one whose financial stability has been strengthened; and one whose national reputation has been enhanced. Slippery Rock University truly is meeting lifelong learning needs in our community, not just through these degree programs, but through the way in which we are providing education, by complementing our on-campus programs with online opportunities as well," she said.

In talking about what might be her legacy, Norton said, "Every president hopes to leave an institution stronger, better, more established than how they found it. I certainly found an institution that was strong when I came here. In fact, I have said many times, 'This is an institution that is strong in its roots, rich in its history, with unlimited potential for the future.' My job was to reach into that



*Norton stops to join a group of runners following the completion of the inaugural President's 5K Run/2K Walk in 2012.*

potential and help mature the institution for the 21st century. And I hope that is what I have done."

Norton especially pointed to the new engineering programs begun at SRU under her tenure, saying, "I think the engineering programs, because they stretched us in a way that we truly believed would be important to the community and workforce development, are very important to the University. And the new physician assistant program, because there is so much need to provide health care to an aging population that is common in western Pennsylvania, is equally important. PAs, as you know, work well with the aging population. It is a program that is wonderful for the students, while it also strengthens our community.

"The PA profession is a real asset to the community. Let me say that the doctorate in special education that has a focus in autism is another area of which I am proud. I believe it not only continues to put our stake in the ground as a teachers' college of note, but also truly addresses one of the major concerns or issues education is dealing with at this point in time: not only how we deal with the person who learns easily, but how we deal with the person who learns in a different manner," she said.

"We also put a stake in the ground for health and wellness. We really focused on activity, starting with the President's Inauguration 5K Run to the mini-triathlon that came a year or two later. I really hope the program Exercise Is Medicine, spearheaded by our exercise science area, for which we are internationally known, continues to thrive and grow and is contagious. I hope our campus continues to be on the move.

# President Norton earns accolades for accomplishments

## FRANK BROGAN Chancellor Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education



When I think of the quintessential university president, I think of Cheryl Norton. Her bold leadership; sense of mission and personal commitment on behalf of the students, faculty and

staff of Slippery Rock University are evident in every decision she makes. A few years ago, she sat alongside me during the annual budget hearings in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and 'wowed' them with her ability to navigate incredibly thorny issues. We are losing an amazing leader and a remarkable person as she prepares to enjoy her well-earned retirement.

## SEN. MARY JO WHITE Member, Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees



I first met Cheryl at a dinner party. She told us of her early days as a pioneer female competing in marathon running, which was then considered a male sport. We also shared a mutual love of dogs and, in fact, she and

Henry had raised Alaskan sled dogs. When I was given the opportunity to serve on her council at Slippery Rock University, I jumped at the chance. I had served on academic boards in the past, including Westminster College, University of Pittsburgh and Clarion University, and thought I could be helpful to a new president. As it turned out, she needed very little help. She approached the job with intelligence, energy and humor. She tackled a large project, the new Performing Arts Center, which was largely planned before she arrived, and was able to reconfigure the project to fit the budget and

**"When I think of the quintessential university president, I think of Cheryl Norton."**

*– Frank Brogan, Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education chancellor*

the needs of the University. It will be one of her greatest legacies, and I hope we will see her at the dedication.

## AMIR MOHAMMADI Vice President for Finance, Administrative Affairs and Advancement Services



I have worked at four institutions of higher education in the past 30 years and served with nine presidents. I can say that Dr. Norton has been, by far, the most ethical public servant. In

working with the assistant vice presidents in my division, they have mentioned that Dr. Norton will not only be remembered as SRU's first female president but also as compassionate and kind, and a student-centered leader who transformed the University during a very tumultuous time in higher education in Pennsylvania.

## PHILIP WAY Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs



President Norton has embodied the SRU vision of excelling as a caring community of lifelong learners connecting with the world throughout her five-year tenure. She has striven to make

SRU excellent on all fronts – including academics, student development and finances. She has put students at the center and promoted diversity, inclusion and civility on campus. She has pushed for increased learning opportunities beyond the baccalaureate level. She has advocated for experiential learning, especially international study. She has publicized SRU to external stakeholders to advance our reputation and increase our resources. No small wonder SRU is the envy of its peers.



*The Nortons with former Rock and current NFL offensive lineman Brandon Fusco at his SRU number retirement ceremony in 2016.*

As I have said to others, "If you don't take care of your body, where will you live?," she said.

Norton also oversaw the 2015 yearlong celebration of SRU's 125th anniversary, marking the community's founding of the Normal School at Slippery Rock. The 1889 founding was celebrated with a myriad of campus events, including a fundraising gala, founders' picnic, special homecoming events, a student showcase extravaganza and the sealing of a time capsule, among other festivities recalling SRU's history.

While president, Norton had opportunities to travel extensively – including countless, four-hour, 250-mile drives to PASSHE headquarters in Harrisburg, which she quickly came to dislike.

"For me," she said, "there were only two types of travel I enjoyed. One, traveling nationally to visit with alumni and strengthen those ties with people who have gone before while updating them on the current activities of the institution; the second was international travel under-

taken to develop new partnerships. In terms of our national travel, it has been essential for me to listen to alumni, hear their stories and understand what SRU means to them, especially in

terms of career development. I have gained a wonderful appreciation of their lifelong devotion to this school. They are indeed 'Rock Solid' graduates. They are an amazing group of people who contribute not only to their

**"Our alumni certainly epitomize what an education can do, how it changes lives, and how education can be the factor that makes all the difference in who a person becomes."**

professions, but also to their communities.

"Our alumni certainly epitomize what an education can do, how it changes lives and how education can be the factor that makes all the difference in who a person becomes. So many of the conversations I have had with alumni highlight the caring community they found at Slippery Rock University," she said.

"I am amazed at the number of people they remain connected to, whether it be fellow students, faculty or staff, or even individuals who embraced them and helped them to be more as a graduate than they were as a freshman," she said. "They are forever grateful for their connection with SRU and that this was their college of choice – some by accident, some by intent.

"None of the alumni I have met said they regretted their decision. In reality, they definitely feel they owe SRU a debt of gratitude," she said. "So hearing their stories has been important for me throughout the years to recognize that who we are today was built on the shoulders of the past community members and that our hope, our dream, our aspiration, is to continue to pass on that exceptional educational experience that our alumni talk about with great reverence.

"The international travel experiences undertaken as president have given me



*Norton and Shen Jiufu, president of China's Xi'an Fanyi University, signed a trio of agreements between the two institutions in 2014, including one that allowed professors and students from each university to visit the other for a semester abroad.*

an opportunity to really look at the global engagement of our institution in a much more expanded way. Typically, when we look at international programming, we are assuming this is a student-to-student exchange: either students participate in an institution exchange, with students from a foreign country coming to SRU, or we send our students abroad – and we will always do that. It is truly important that our students have an experience outside of western Pennsylvania, because they are students of the world, not just the commonwealth," she said.

"We have expanded that vision to look at international educational partnerships that will allow us to partner, not individual-to-individual, but institution-to-institution. In this

## **KEITH DILS** Dean, College of Education



Dr. Norton and I worked together to get PASSHE board of governors approval for SRU's College of Education's first-ever doctoral degree in special education. She quickly understood the details and significance of the proposed program. She was terrific in her presentation to the board. As a result, we received a unanimous vote of approval. Dr. Norton is a true servant-leader. She combines a strong intellect with a deep caring for the success of others. I will miss her.

## **JERRY CHMIELEWSKI** Dean, College of Health, Environment and Science



Because of Dr. Norton's leadership, the University has never been in a stronger position. During her tenure as president, the College of Health, Environment and Science has developed graduate programs in physician assistant studies, data analytics, health care informatics, athletic training, and public health. It was Dr. Norton's support of faculty through the process and her vision for the institution that facilitated the development of these programs. In truth, it has always been Dr. Norton's goal to provide the educational opportunities that our students both need and deserve.

## **Jennifer Keller** Interim dean, College of Liberal Arts



My personal appreciation of Dr. Norton pertains to role-modeling and genuine care for our environment. It would not be uncommon to bump into her in the early morning hours and see her picking up trash from the street, or to see her stop to pick up litter as she walks across our campus. She is someone who 'walks the

walk' and doesn't just 'talk the talk.' We all know her famous phrase 'Botox the campus' and the additions we've had to our signage and flowerbeds are small, but tangible, evidence that everyone on campus can appreciate each day. Thank you for your service.

## **LOGAN STEIGERWALT, '17** President and CEO, Slippery Rock Student Government Association, marketing major from Northampton

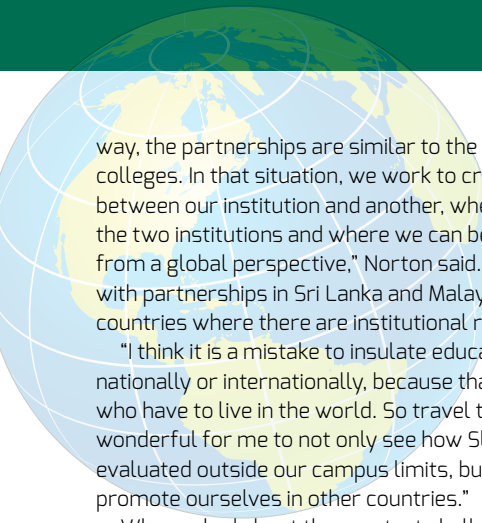


I have had the pleasure of working very closely with Dr. Norton as SGA president for the past two years. Her commitment toward SRU students was very clear to me in everything she did, from coming up with ideas on how to make our campus community feel more inclusive, to answering student's questions, (which were sometimes difficult) and even to attending our late-night Monday meetings. Having a president who cares as much as she does about the students, and one who is open to listening to ideas, made my job much easier. Thank you, Dr. Norton.

## **LISA HOLMES, '88** President, Slippery Rock University Alumni Association, management graduate



It has been a great pleasure to share my time as "a President" with "THE President," Dr. Norton! She has a great way of greeting, meeting and really getting to know alumni and friends of the University. We, the SRU Alumni Association board of directors, often hear from alumni how important it is for them to feel connected to The Rock, even when they are miles away. Her willingness to attend and speak at alumni events in far away locations has helped tremendously in keeping those alumni connected. We appreciate very much her open communication with our board of directors and her support of our efforts. I'm honored to consider her a friend, and I'm confident The Rock will always have a special place in her heart, just as it does in the hearts of thousands of alumni!



way, the partnerships are similar to the way we work with community colleges. In that situation, we work to create seamless curriculum between our institution and another, where students can move between the two institutions and where we can better understand education from a global perspective," Norton said. "In particular, we have worked with partnerships in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, although we have many countries where there are institutional relationships – 27 at this point.

"I think it is a mistake to insulate education from what is going on nationally or internationally, because that is a disservice to our students who have to live in the world. So travel teaches one a lot. It has been wonderful for me to not only see how Slippery Rock University is evaluated outside our campus limits, but also a moment of pride to promote ourselves in other countries."

When asked about the greatest challenges during her presidency, without a second's pause, Norton said, "Financial."

"I would be hard pressed, I believe, to speak with any other president of a college or university who would not put financial challenges, if not at the top of the list, in the No. 2 slot. I must admit that I was taken a bit by surprise my first few months at Slippery Rock University when the extent of the financial challenges became amazingly apparent," she said. "It was obvious to me that we needed immediate action in order to ensure the stability and continued strength of the institution.

"While the initial action was to reduce the budget – that is, expenditures – because that was an immediate response to the financial need, I never believed that was the long-term solution. What we did at that time, which fortunately has proven, I believe, to be the right course of action, was that some of the money cut, in terms of expenditures, was reinvested into the institution in strategic directions that have allowed this institution to grow. That has resulted in new degree programs that continue, to this day, to attract new students," she said.

"I don't know that we will ever be in a situation, at least in the commonwealth for the near future, where finances will not be

something we deal with on a daily basis. Until the economy of Pennsylvania moves in a more positive direction, there simply is not substantial additional money to allocate to higher education. It is for that reason, when I first came to Slippery Rock University, I indicated we needed to look at this institution as a private institution. We needed to take care of ourselves and not rely simply on the

commonwealth to support our funding needs. We needed to promote Slippery Rock University and allow it to stand on its own brand, on its own academic excellence and set its own future in that regard," she said.

"You know there have been many other challenges on campus throughout the almost five years I have been here. They are not challenges unique to Slippery Rock University. There are challenges on all campuses. Certainly the changing face of international and national politics have affected college campuses as they have other communities. We are trying to rise above rhetoric that would separate individuals rather than encourage them to work together," she said.

Norton often used the term "Botox" for campus improvements, saying such projects provided a great deal of benefit at little cost and helped make the campus more inviting. Such undertakings as flower and shrubbery plantings; new, strategically placed park-like benches and waste containers; and visitor-friendly directional signage were added at low cost, but provided high impact.

While budget, academics, campus appearance and enrollment numbers were always major concerns, Norton said there was also the constantly gnawing issue of campus safety.

"It has been interesting living on a campus. Living in the President's Residence, you are part of the campus life, and so when we have beautiful weekends in the spring, and perhaps this is because I am a mom, I worry whether our students will always act appropriately and be safe. We are fortunate to live in a very safe college town. However, having said that, it is always important to ensure that we provide a safe and healthy campus for our students to live, to learn and to enjoy. So we are always reassessing what we can do better, how we can support our students, or how we can provide an environment, second to none, that allows for their safety."

Even with multiple precautions taken, there are sometime glitches. "It seems that we still have water breaks [a reference to a major 2016 weekend waterline break in the Robert M. Smith Student Center that caused serious damage]. Sometimes, as a president, you have to deal with the unexpected; you have to be flexible. When we found the wall in Spotts World Culture Building was falling off the building. [The foundation settled, tearing an outside wall away from the structure and taking the building offline until repairs could be made.] We had to act immediately, so much of this responsibility is not routine. There is always a surprise around the corner," she said.

**"We are fortunate to live in a very safe college town. However, having said that, it is always important to ensure that we provide a safe campus and a healthy campus for our students to live, to learn and to enjoy."**





“When you are dealing with a population of 10,000, you are dealing with a small town or city. So flexibility and the willingness to realize that all days are not created equal is important. Sometimes you find you have very, very, very late nights and very early mornings. You don't get to march to your own drummer because your responsibility is to serve others and what their needs are,” she said. “A lot of people think that presidents have a lot of power. I am not sure I agree. We have a lot of decisions and we have a lot of responsibility. Maybe we can influence people to do good, but we cannot control them. That is why this has been an amazing community that has worked together as a public institution for the good of the public. I am the fortunate one who gets to tell the story.”

Norton clearly brought an abundance of leadership and management skills to the post. She had served six years as president, and was the first woman president, at Southern Connecticut State University before joining SRU. She had also been provost and vice president for academic affairs at the 20,000-student Metropolitan State College of Denver, where she had started in the department of human performance, sport and leisure studies.

Asked what had best prepared her for the position, she said, “I can go back all the way to when I was in Denver. The institution that I worked at there for 28 years was a non-traditional institution. We were very flexible. We worked hard at trying to bring education to the student rather than necessarily expecting the student to fit into the space that was traditional for education. So we utilized a lot of opportunities to address educational needs that gave people a chance at lifelong learning. The most significant one was online.

“When I was provost in Denver, we grew our online program from 179 students to 14,000 students, and what I learned from that experience is how important it is to do in-time, on-time learning, so individuals can move through a degree program at their purposeful speed. And this was very important for graduate programs where you have students who often have a family, perhaps a job, and are involved in their community and they are still trying to wedge in education. So I think that a lot of the kinds of ways we are looking at what we are doing here to allow students to take winter and summer session courses online, which resulted in more than 50 percent of our incoming students graduating in four years or less, is undoubtedly, for me, gratifying. My experience in Denver gave me the confidence that this is a solid educational tool,” she said.

Norton, a native of Cleveland, earned her bachelor's degree in physical education and recreation at Denison University along with three degrees from Teachers College, Columbia



“So much of this responsibility is not routine. There is always a surprise around the corner.”





“The sun always shines at Slippery Rock University.”

University. She also has master’s degrees in applied physiology and education as well as doctorate of education in applied physiology. She has undertaken work at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education and was named a fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine for her work in sports medicine, including work as president of related state and regional professional organizations.

In discussing what she had actually expected in her role at SRU, Norton said, “Actually it was more than I expected. I knew the institution was a solid institution. I knew that it had great potential. What surprised me was how quickly we were able to tap into some of that potential. Obviously, there was a need because of financial problems that were facing the commonwealth so we needed to act quickly, but just because there is a need does not mean you can always satisfy that need. The ability to pull together as a community, reinvent ourselves by adding the graduate programs without diminishing the strength of our undergraduate programs and our residential presence, I think, was an ‘ah-ha’ moment for me – and a moment of extreme pride.

“Our sister institutions, frankly, are asking, ‘How did we do this?’ There is no golden bullet, but there is a community here that is golden,” she said.

As her remaining SRU time dwindles, Norton is looking forward to retirement.

“I don’t have any specific plans,” she said, “Except, I can tell you, I am not looking for another presidency. I had always said when I came here that I would retire as president from this institution. I am not looking for another presidency – two is plenty. I have been president or provost of large institutions for almost 20 years now, and I think it is time to find some other way of spending my day. We will be returning to our home in Denver, Colorado and will also travel to Lake Forest, Illinois, near Chicago, to see our son, grandsons and daughter-in-law. We are looking forward to seeing his family more frequently,” she said.

“Our younger son lives about three miles away from where we will be living. I hope we can do some other traveling as well. There is a lot of the West we have not seen even though we lived there for 30 years. But, at this point, besides a trip to Wyoming to watch the solar eclipse on Aug. 21, which will be our 46th wedding anniversary, we don’t have any defined plans, she said.

Norton and her husband, Henry, met and married while attending Denison University. “Since 1983, we have owned two acres of horse property close to the Golden [Colo.] area. We have scrapped the house that was there, the one we lived in before we moved to Southern Connecticut State and while I was here at SRU, and we are now building and watching that house become a home. It is kind of scary, not being there to see how it looks at each step and whether our choices are the right ones. But hopefully, it is all going to work out and will be ready in July. We did this in Connecticut and it was done in five months. So far, our general contractor has been great,” she said.

“Our goal for this home, through lessons we learned here at SRU too, is to try to make it as environmentally sustainable as possible. We have our own septic system and leach field. We are putting in a geothermal heating system and solar. It is a stucco house, which is very energy efficient, with a metal roof that is a long-lasting and energy efficient,” she said. SRU has long been distinguished nationally as an environmental leader, including its Robert A. Macoskey Center for





Sustainable Systems Education and Research that models energy-efficient projects, including use of solar and wind energy.

"We happened to buy this particular house because of our dogsled team at a time when we needed to be in a place zoned agricultural with more than an acre of land so we could have as many dogs as we wanted. For a short period, with our sled team, we had 22 dogs," she said. However, the Nortons will not be returning to sled racing. "We dispersed our kennel in the late 1980s and recently sold some of our other equipment.

"The new, western-style house, has its primary living space all on one floor, in anticipation of steps becoming harder and harder with age. Our No. 1 need is to get the house finished," she said.

"My brother-in-law gave me some good retirement advice. He said, 'Just sit back and see what happens. Don't rush into anything. Don't make plans. And Cheryl, don't go looking for anything.' He said, 'My guess is, it will find you,'" Norton said.

Asked about the possibility of teaching at the university-level somewhere in Colorado, Norton said, "No, probably not. So right now, as I see it, the world awaits."

A future book? "I have not considered that, but I feel very strongly that women are still emerging as leaders. I am wondering if there is something I might do at some point to help other women in their journey as they move through their careers," she said.

"There is still not an abundance of women who have been a university president, and I have had the good fortune of being president at two universities. So, if there is some way I can help other women, I would like to do that. I am not suggesting that I know everything about being a leader, nor that I am the best person ever to guide others, but I am one person who has had an experience. If my experience can be helpful to others just because I have a listening ear, or I can give some advice because I have had the same issues or problems, I may do that," she said.

And there will be time for exercise, an area Norton emphasized at SRU.

**"I really want to thank the community for embracing Henry and me and for making us part of their family. After all, we were strangers in a strange land in some ways, but no one treated us as if we did not belong. If anything, they were warm and welcoming to a degree we had never experienced."**

"I definitely know I want to increase my training for triathlons. One of my frustrations has been the lack of time that is necessary to really enhance my ability to attack that sport. And, I will be at altitude, [5,675 feet above sea level], which will be helpful. So I am looking forward to more training time. The region there hosts some major events. Actually, a year ago in October, I was invited to compete in the National Age-Group Sprint Triathlon Championships in Wisconsin where I finished 20th in my age group. I thought, I can do a lot better than this. Other participants had more experience, more training, so I need to catch up and get back in," she said.

Norton said she truly enjoyed living in Slippery Rock, the community and the campus. "I really want to thank the community for embracing Henry and me and for making us part of their family. After all, we were strangers in a strange land in some ways, but no one treated us as if we did not belong. If anything, they were warm and welcoming to a degree we had never experienced. At first, I thought people were being nice to me because I was the president. Then, as I met more people new to the community, I asked them what their 'ah-ha moment' was they said, 'How nice everybody is.' I realized that the welcome had nothing to do with me; it was truly a characteristic of the community. I hope this area never changes. I hope they continue to remember how special a place Slippery Rock University is and continue to welcome newcomers with as much enthusiasm as Henry and I have received."





# Twist of Fate



*Educational  
'alternative'  
leads to world  
of opportunities*

What could have easily been one of the worst moments of Timmy Samec's life turned into one of his best opportunities.

It was June 2011 and Samec had been accepted into the U.S. Naval Academy, where he planned to major in aerospace engineering and compete on the school's NCAA Division I wrestling team while being groomed to serve his country, when what was supposed to be a routine physical changed the course of the young man's life.



"I got a medical disqualification on induction day," Samec said. "I was born with a hole in my heart. I was cleared through all of the preliminary testing, but when I was down there (for induction day) I found out I was medically disqualified during a final routine physical even though I had wrestled for the past 15 years."

Samec spent the following year away from school before deciding to enroll at Slippery Rock University in the fall of 2012 for the start of what has turned out to be a backup plan that has exceeded all expectations.

"Coming to Slippery Rock has been the best decision I ever made," Samec said. "I don't regret anything at all. Everything I've done is for a reason. People told me when I got medically disqualified that everything happens for a reason. I didn't believe it then because it was a bad situation, but now that it's six years later, I can see that they were right."

“Coming to Slippery Rock has been the best decision I ever made...”

A gifted student, Samec has excelled at The Rock over the last five years so much so that he was selected as SRU's nominee for the 2017 Syed R. Ali-Zaidi Award for Academic Excellence. The award is sponsored by the Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education Foundation and goes to a graduating senior who exemplifies academic excellence and involvement.

Samec, who graduated in May with a bachelor's degree in physics with a concentration in computational biophysics and a minor in mathematics, has an academic resume that reads like something a professor would draw up if asked to describe their ideal student.

He posted a 3.5 GPA and was a Norton Undergraduate Scholarship Award Recipient (Spring 2016) who had also been awarded a National Science Foundation grant through the University of Pittsburgh. His research projects were so well regarded that he was selected to present at the National Council on Undergraduate Research national conference and at the American Physical Society's national meeting, one of the most prestigious physics conferences in the U.S.

Since the 2014 spring semester, he had worked as a student collaborator on an interdisciplinary research collaboration studying the

fabrication methods of DNA nanostructures with Arlene Ford, SRU assistant professor of physics and engineering, and Haitou Liu, assistant professor of Chemistry of the University of Pittsburgh.

Athula Herat, an SRU associate professor and chairperson in the Department of Physics and Engineering, is Samec's undergraduate adviser. He described Samec as one of the most unique students he has encountered.

"If I were asked to name the top students that I have taught during my 15-year career as a physics faculty member, Timmy would definitely be within the top five students," Herat said. "He is a born leader who possesses amazing organizational skills, confidence and passion. He holds several leadership positions at SRU. He achieved all





of this while maintaining a 3.5 GPA in what is arguably the hardest and most demanding major on campus. It is very rare to see a student with this much innate ability, focus, passion and drive.

"I believe Timothy has all the right qualities to be a great research scientist or engineer and I am confident that he will emerge as a leader in his chosen field. One of the greatest qualities about Timothy is that he always makes maximum use of all the opportunities presented to him."

On top of his academic pursuits, Samec has also been the president of SRU's Physics and Engineering Club (Fall 2013 – Fall 2016); a FYRST seminar peer leader (Fall 2013, Fall 2016); and the co-director of the Western Pennsylvania Special Olympics Event Management Team (Fall 2012 – Spring 2014).

Samec was also recently named the Slippery Rock Outstanding Senior Man by the SRU Alumni Association. Not bad for someone who didn't even intend on coming to SRU out of high school.

"Slippery Rock has been much more than I expected," Samec said. "I'm thankful for everything that's come my way. I'm doing what I'm doing now because I was put here. There's things in this world we can't control. I'm not a real religious person by any means, but I do believe in God and that he has a path for me. I was put in this department for a

reason, I've met the faculty I have for a reason."

The story of Timmy Samec, the academic superstar, cannot be told without looking at Timmy Samec, the athlete.

While Slippery Rock's highly acclaimed physics department helped quench Samec's thirst for knowledge, he had to look outside of The Rock to keep his athletic dreams alive. With his wrestling career dead, Samec has channeled his energy to competing in triathlons, multi-stage competitions

**“Slippery Rock has been much more than I expected. I'm thankful for everything that's come my way.”**

consisting of three consecutive events - swimming, bicycling and distance running.

Samec's immersion into the world of triathlons started gradually. He originally took up cycling during the summer prior to his senior year in high school to stay in shape for wrestling. That same summer his girlfriend, Shaina Grego, convinced him to take up swimming at his local YMCA. From there, the couple, along with their swim instructor, Rob Gould, competed in a relay with Grego swimming, Samec serving as the cyclist and Gould doing the running.

"It wasn't pretty at first, but after that I was bitten by the bug and I've now been racing for seven years," Samec said.

Since diving into the world of triathlons, Samec, the president and founder of the Triathlon Club at SRU, has established himself on a global level for team USA in International Triathlon Union sponsored events.

"I'm a two-time national team member for the sprint distance U.S. triathlon team," Samec said. "I've competed at the world championships both last year and in 2015. I've taken what wrestling was for me and have now transferred it into triathlons."

Training for triathlons is constant and time-consuming. Samec estimates that he dedicates close to 25 hours per week in training. In comparison, NCAA athletes are only allowed to practice 20 hours per week during their seasons.

However, it doesn't take long to see that Samec, who plans to get his pro ironman license within the next three years, needs this time to not only fill the void that was left by the end of his wrestling career, but also as a break from the academic rigors that come with being just the second person in Slippery Rock history to have a concentration in computational biophysics.

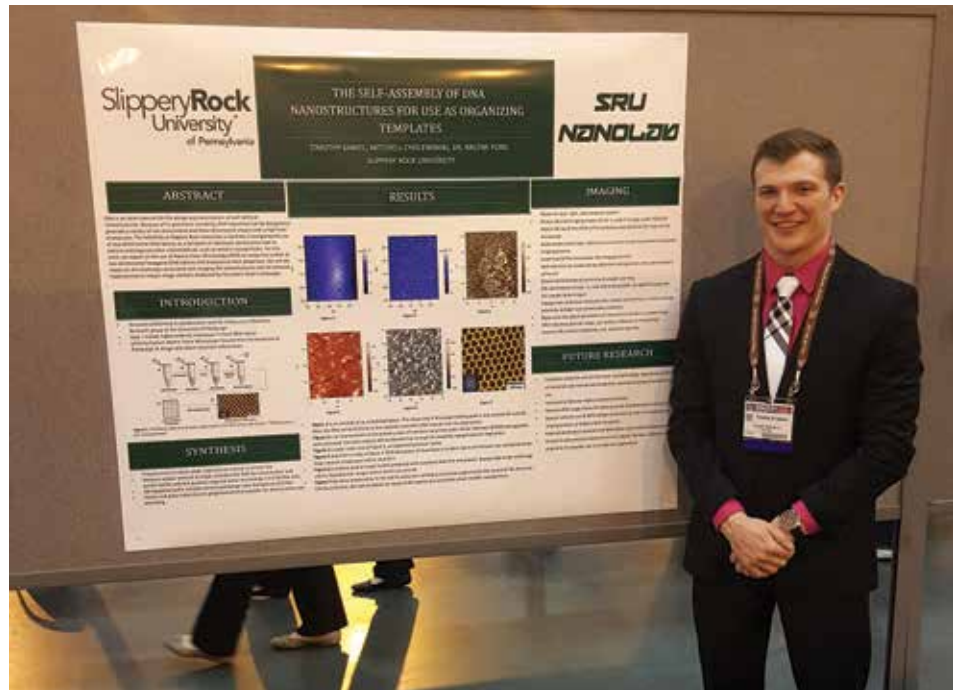


"Everyone thinks I'm absolutely nuts for doing it and sometimes I do too when I think about the time I spend, but it's just a positive outlet for me," Samec said. "If I have a Saturday when I can do a three-hour bike ride, even if it might not be an easy jaunt because I might have hard intervals, it gets my mind off of other things and allows me to focus on keeping my body physically well so that my mind can be well when I go back."

Excelling on such a high level on multiple fronts is not without its struggles. Time management is crucial, but eventually, some part of life must be neglected.

A typical weekday for Samec involves getting up at 5 a.m. to make it to the ARC when it opens at 6 a.m. to practice his swimming. Following his time in the pool, he's off to morning classes; then he tries to squeeze in a run before his afternoon classes. Once his classes are done for the day, he turns his attention to lab work and tutoring with any other free moments typically spent at his computer or working in his notebook.

"It's very difficult," Samec said. "Sometimes I really sacrifice the social aspect of things, which isn't the most fun as an undergraduate, but it's going to be, and really has already shown to be, very beneficial for me. It just takes



dedication and prioritizing what's important."

Samec credits the advice of his father, Tim, a former University of Virginia football player, for helping him navigate an ambitious academic curriculum along with a slew of extra-curricular activities, all the while dedicating the amount of time that is equivalent to a part-time job on triathlon training.

"As far as motivation goes, I'm determined to do what I set out to do and not quitting," Samec said. "If I choose to do something, I don't quit until its done. I may not like it, and if I choose to not do it again, that's fine, but once I commit to something or somebody, I will finish it no matter how bad it gets."

"I'm really starting to realize that all the stuff he constantly drilled in my head all these years is coming to fruition. I can't thank him enough for everything he's done for me and everything he continues to do. I'm not here without him and all the things he has taught me and continues to teach me."

With his Rock days now done, Samec will head to Clemson University where he has accepted a lab position and will pursue a

doctoral degree in biomedical engineering. He chose Clemson in part because of its similarities to Slippy Rock.

"The campus is beautiful," Samec said. "It has a perfect environment for me to train in and their bioengineering department is an exact mirror of our physics department. The relationship that the students have with their faculty as Ph.D. students and the entire sports culture which is right up my alley and the ability to train all year around is perfect."

Following the completion of his degree requirements, which takes four to five years, Samec hopes to stay at Clemson to complete

postdoctoral research, stay in academia and teach. His future plans can partially be attributed to the guidance he's received at Slippy Rock.

"The professors at Slippy Rock have been absolutely everything to me," Samec said. "They've been very instrumental to getting me where I am. I hope to be able to do the same thing, even if it's just for one student somewhere along the line."

**“As far as motivation goes, I’m determined to do what I set out to do and not quitting...”**



# Sowing the seeds of hope & humanity

SRU alumnus is one of the world's  
foremost diversity consultants

## The Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington has been described in many ways: a writer, speaker, coach, consultant, teacher and trainer.

But the one he enjoys the most is that of facilitator.

"I guess you could say I'm sort of like a modern-day Johnny Appleseed," said Washington, a 1982 Slippery Rock University graduate with a bachelor's degree in recreational therapy. "However, instead of seeds, I'm planting a sense of hope, community, humanity and healing so that folks can begin to see the possibilities of what we can have – a genuine love for all human life regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation.

"There is a real fear out there for folks about being judged. Whether that judgement stems from how they are feeling, or how they view a particular topic, event or crisis, there is a lot of discomfort out there.

"What I enjoy doing is helping people work through that discomfort by providing skills and tools that teach them how to live, work and move among each other on a common plane. But in order to do that, we have to work through the anxiety and unease in order to find a space where we can accept one another for who and what we are; to be ok with that; and be able to live and work in unity."

Washington, the founder and president of the Washington Consulting Group, a Baltimore, Maryland-based multicultural organizational development firm, recently served as the exclamation point to Slippery Rock University's Black History Month celebration with a pair of presentations for students, faculty and staff.

"Coming back to my alma mater was both exciting and nerve-racking," Washington said with a chuckle. "SRU is where it all started for me. It's where I learned I could have an impact on the world."

Washington arrived at SRU as a music therapy major, but his active involvement in a variety of student clubs and organizations, including the Student Government Association, University Program Board and the Black Action Society, eventually led him down another path.

"All the things I did here as a student left me not only with some of

my finest memories, but helped me find my passion for working in higher education," Washington said. "From the time I was a junior, I knew working in student affairs administration was the path I was on and it has led me to the space which I live in today.

"I've learned that if we create a space for people to sit, talk and learn from one another, we can create healing and more effective engagement across all difference ... and that's what happened during my time on this campus.

"To be invited back was very humbling and an honor. To have the chance to be there once again for the students, faculty and staff and be a source of encouragement for even just one person is a matter I take very seriously. The work that is being done here is incredibly important and will have a huge impact on our future. Who knows who is out there right now? Is it the next Jamie Washington? Or maybe the next Barack Obama or Donald Trump?"

Washington, who is also president and a founder of the Social Justice Training Institute, an organization that "provides a forum for the professional and personal development of social justice educators and practitioners to enhance and refine their skills and competencies to create greater inclusion for all members of the campus community," has said he had an interesting pathway to his own "journey to wellness."

"My own journey as a black, same-gender-loving man brought me, years ago, into a church whose pastor never uttered a condemning word. Outside the pulpit, the pastor was gentle and supportive. Inside the pulpit, he wasn't gay-hateful, but neither was he gay-affirming.

"For years, I thought that was the best I could hope for in a black church experience. At least, I thought, they weren't condemning me to hell. Being silent, just not talking about it, felt like enough.

"But then a new pastor arrived who was hateful and hurtful. When a youth said to me, 'She's killing us,' I realized that all those years of neglect had left me unequipped to stand up to abuse.

"Later, during Bible study, when the preacher said, 'homosexuals

*"I guess you could say I'm sort of like a modern-day Johnny Appleseed. However, instead of seeds, I'm planting a sense of hope, community, humanity and healing so that folks can begin to see the possibilities of what we can have – a genuine love for all human life regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation."*

make God vomit,' that 'God didn't create no homosexuals,' that same child asked, 'Well, who created them?'

"The pastor and others then descended on the child, and, in that moment, I found my voice. I heard the Spirit saying to me, 'Don't you dare let them do this to the child. I know you better speak up.'

"That was when I understood my call to speak the truth, to protect our children from misguided judgments and ill-informed readings of Journey Scripture."

To arm himself for the journey, Washington earned master's degrees in higher education administration and counseling with a concentration in human sexuality from Indiana University, Bloomington; a doctoral degree in college student development with a concentration in multicultural education from the University of Maryland, College Park; and a master of divinity from Howard University's School of Divinity.

He has served as an educator and administrator in higher education for more than 20 years, most recently as the assistant vice president for student affairs at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. An ordained minister, he has served as an instructor in sociology, American Studies and education and women's studies.

As he crisscrosses the country speaking to various groups – corporations, governmental agencies, religious congregations and those in higher education – Washington continually detects a common barrier ... eggshells.

"Everyone is walking on them," he said. "People don't know what or how to say what they want when it comes to diversity. There is a real lack of knowledge on just how to start the conversation and when the possibility of controversy and emotion becomes part of the equation, people shut down before they've even begun to talk.

"Most people don't feel equipped to speak about these topics or to listen even when given the opportunity. When you consider the mere fact that I'm being invited to help facilitate these discussions, it's easy to see that people want to be inclusive and want to care about each other, the issues at hand and the perspective of others, they just don't

people. Think about your co-workers, your partner, your siblings ... you enjoy being with them and building those relationships, but is every day a happy day? Certainly not.

"We're all fully functional individuals with our own views and concerns and when you pair us up or put us in a group, disagreements will arise. It's how you deal with those disagreements that shape how your world will be.

"In order to that, we have to just slow down, breathe, listen, sit back and know that there is deeper understanding that will help all of us get to a better place. Our country is facing a lot of challenges at the moment and yes, we are a country divided by a great many things, but it's not hopeless.

"We need to realize, however, that there are not any quick fixes. We just have to operate from that place that all things are possible and aspire to look for solutions where we may not have otherwise ventured before, outside our comfort zones."

Washington invites his audiences to share real stories about their experiences in order to find out where confusions may have occurred, and what they may have found to be unfair so that "a way through the clutter" can be found and used as a foundation for growth.

"It's about holding each other accountable," said Washington. "We all need to learn that our words and actions have impact on others and can do harm, even if we didn't intend to do so, when we engage with others. It's bringing our hearts and minds together that can help us to find a common understanding. That takes practice and learning to let go of assumptions in order to move forward.

"If I say that I care about my fellow man, how does that show in my behavior? If you're going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk."

*"We all need to learn that our words and actions have impact on others and can do harm, even if we didn't intend to do so, when we engage with others. It's about bringing our hearts and minds together that can help us to find a common understanding. That takes practice and learning to let go of assumptions in order to move forward."*

always know how to engage one another. At the heart of it all, and it's rather simple, is just listening."

Washington, named by The Economist as one of the top 10 global diversity consultants in the world, said that in addition to listening, there needs to be an understanding that inevitably, conflict will be part of the conversation as it is with all relationships.

"There is no way to build a more inclusive world without there being conflict and discomfort," he said. "But that is all part of our growth as



# Just "doing what came

During the 13 years that Paul Kuszaj worked in elementary education, the 1988 Slippery Rock University graduate always went the extra step for his students.

Whether it was providing clothing so a young boy had a fresh shirt, or brushing out and braiding a little girl's hair because no one at home had taken the time to do it, giving of his self was something that came naturally to the West Mifflin native.

After his passing in 2012, a group of his former Sigma Pi fraternity brothers banded together to establish an endowed memorial scholarship in his name so Kuszaj could continue giving.

Endowed scholarships provide Slippery Rock University with a permanent asset from which students receive support. The gift becomes a fund managed by the Slippery Rock University Foundation, whose investment objective is to achieve growth that is sufficient to preserve the value of the gift so the annual award is not diminished by inflation. The minimum principal balance required to establish an

endowed scholarship is \$25,000. Initial contributions may be made in lesser amounts until the gift of \$25,000 is reached. Subsequent additions may be contributed at any time in any amount.

"I was overwhelmed with the kindness and generosity of his fraternity brothers wanting to establish (the memorial scholarship) in Paul's name," said his wife, Janet Kuszaj. "When I first heard about it, I was ecstatic that Paul's memory would be able to live on forever. For his name to be associated with something so special is just incredible."

The couple, married in 1999, were just two years into their marriage when Paul suffered a severe brain hemorrhage. His wife was told he likely had just hours to live and that if by some chance he did survive, the chances he would ever walk, talk or see again were near zero.

The couple's then infant son, Shane, would never have the opportunity to play catch in the backyard with his dad; and another son, Corey, now 10, just wasn't something that should have been possible.

Yet Kuszaj challenged the dire medical prognosis with the same energy and attitude that often made him, according to his wife, the center of attention throughout his life as evidenced by his election as SRU's homecoming king in 1987.

"Paul meant a lot to a lot of people," said Eric Wangler, '88, Kuszaj's former fraternity brother, roommate, best man and the driving force

*"He was a real people person and took great pleasure in sharing in the joy of others. I can't help but think he still will when he sees what this scholarship will be able to do for others."*



# naturally”

behind the memorial scholarship. “He was a very inspiring guy that went through a massive life-altering illness and quality of life change. Yet he never complained. His passing got our group thinking that we’d like to do something lasting to pay tribute to him. Something that would be there forever. He was just a super guy and to do something in his memory that will mean so much to so many others moving forward.”

Though his life ended prematurely, Kuszaj’s larger than life personality made an indelible impact on all those he knew – before and after his aneurysm.

Kuszaj suffered an aneurysm Nov. 12, 2001, that was brought about by a condition he’d been born with, as his brain lacked some of the necessary smaller blood vessels that slow blood delivery to the brain. The abnormal connections caused blood to flow quickly and directly

from his arteries to his veins, bypassing the surrounding tissues, and leading to a brain bleed.

Following a nearly five-month stay in hospitals and rehabilitation centers, Kuszaj returned home, where over time, he took on the role of Mr. Mom. As he slowly began to walk again – with the help of a brace – Kuszaj began doing chores around the house and became a father for the second time, while Janet returned to the workforce.

“To see the hardship he went through over the last decade of his life; to see him rise up and not be bitter but become stronger, can’t help but provide motivation to others,” said fraternity brother Jay Allison, ‘88. “He was a complete gentleman and hero and to see him persevere through what would have deterred most was inspiring.

“All who came in contact appreciated his energy and drive.

Establishing this memorial scholarship will not only preserve his memory, but hopefully provide students, who have the same character and values that he did, with an opportunity. The bottom line is that there are other Paul Kuszaj’s out there and this can have a hand in impacting their lives so they can do the same for others.”

Following his graduation from SRU, Kuszaj taught in the Avonworth, Baldwin and West Mifflin school districts prior to settling into a 12-year run as the librarian at Barrett Elementary in Homestead.

“When he proposed to me, he told me that we’d have a wonderful life and we did,” said Janet Kuszaj. “It was not nearly long enough ... but we did ... even through his illness. He was a real people person and took great pleasure in sharing in the joy of others. I can’t help but think he still will when he sees what this scholarship will be able to do for others.”

To learn more about the Paul Kuszaj Memorial Scholarship, other scholarships, endowments and ways to give to SRU, visit: <http://www.srufoundation.org>.



## EDITORIAL INFORMATION

To submit "Class Notes," email us at [alumni@sru.edu](mailto:alumni@sru.edu) or go to [www.rockalumnicafe.com](http://www.rockalumnicafe.com). We do not publish engagements or pregnancies, but we do publish marriages and births.

Please note that due to space restrictions, submissions may be edited. However, remember that we are proud of all our alumni and all they do. GO ROCK!



## SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION 2016-2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## 1940s

**Melvin Klein, '49**, was honored by the Essex (New Jersey) County Board of Chosen Freeholders at its Veterans Celebration. Klein, a Pittsburgh native, served in the U.S. Navy on the aircraft carrier USS Shangri-La during the 1946 atomic bomb testing in the South Pacific at Bikini Island. After graduating from SRU, Klein spent more than 60 years in education as a teacher and administrator.

## 1960s

**Dick Bennett, '65**, was inducted into the Ridgewood High School Hall of Fame. Bennett totaled 1,021 victories, including: 387 in boy's soccer, 325 in combined bowling, 212 in girl's basketball and 97 in boy's golf. His squads won 11 county championships and six state-sectional titles. Bennett has recently retired from his full-time duties but still serves as the golf and bowling coach. ❶

**Sandy Steiger Schreengost, '68**, and her husband recently relocated to Moorpark, California to be nearer to her daughter, Molly and her husband John, who run a biodynamic-organic farm, Apricot Lane Farms. The farm provided a strong catalyst for Schreengost to co-author a traditional foods cookbook, "Back to Butter." The book's content reclaims the real food preparation techniques set aside in the early 1900s.

## 1970s

**Mark Linton, '70**, remains a close friend to a group of "boys," each with high hopes, that all enrolled at Slippery Rock in 1965. Fifty-two years later they remain close friends that gather together each year in one form or another. The group hopes to return to the University in the fall for homecoming. ❷

**Pam Horter-Moore, '72**, has written a romantic fantasy, "LoveQuest," a light-hearted retelling of the ancient love story of Eros, the god of Love, and

the mortal woman, Psyche. When the goddess Aphrodite asks her son Eros to punish Psyche, her plan backfires when he wounds himself with his own arrow attempting to carry out her will. Eros' forbidden passion for the faithless Psyche takes them both on a misadventure that can only be resolved by a love that is tested and found true.

**Dan Hatfield, '73**, is the editorial page editor for the East Bay Times (San Francisco, California) that won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News coverage centering on what became known as the "Ghost Ship" fire that killed 36 people. Hatfield has been in the newspaper business for 44 years. One of his first writing jobs was serving as an intern for The Rock Magazine.

**Lois Henry, '74**, a teacher from Yulee, Florida; **Vicki Emerick, '74**, a retired paralegal from Worthington, Ohio; **Stephanie Smarto Connell, '74**, a retired teacher from Connellsville; **Kathy Galilk Hillen, '74**, a retired teacher from Connellsville; and **Becky Smith Factor, '74**, a retired administrator living in Istanbul, Turkey were roommates in 1970 at the former Fairview Hall and are still good friends today. ❸

**David Descutner, '74**, was named interim president of Ohio University. He has served as dean of University College, executive vice provost for undergraduate education and interim director of the School of Communication Studies during his 37-years at OU.

A group of alumni, primarily from the classes of '74 and '75 gathered together Dec. 1 to remember fellow SRU alumnus, **Jon Joseph Lutes, '74**, who died of AIDS May 2, 1994. Members in attendance included: **Susan Changnon, '85**, **Ralph Colangelo, '74**, **Bob Helmuth, '75**, **Janice Madden Helmuth, '75**, **Linda Jerick, '75**, **Harry "Chip" Larkin, '75**, **Charlene LeClair Larkin, '75**, **Denise Longo Spory, '75**, and **Glenn Beech, '75**. Coincidentally, Lute's birthday, Dec. 1, is also World AIDS Day. ❹

**Tony Haneman, '76**, was recently inducted into the Bordentown (New Jersey) Regional High School Athletic Hall of Fame. Haneman, who has spent 40 years in education, coached the 2001 New Jersey Group I state

championship track team; and in 2005, helped coach the Bordentown Track Club sprint medley team to the Nike Nationals national title and Rob Novak to the 800 national title.

**Lucy (Smelko) Magoulick, '76**, recently retired from Cambria Heights School District where she was an educator and federal programs coordinator for more than 38 years. She and her husband, Gary, are looking forward to traveling and spending winters in Florida.

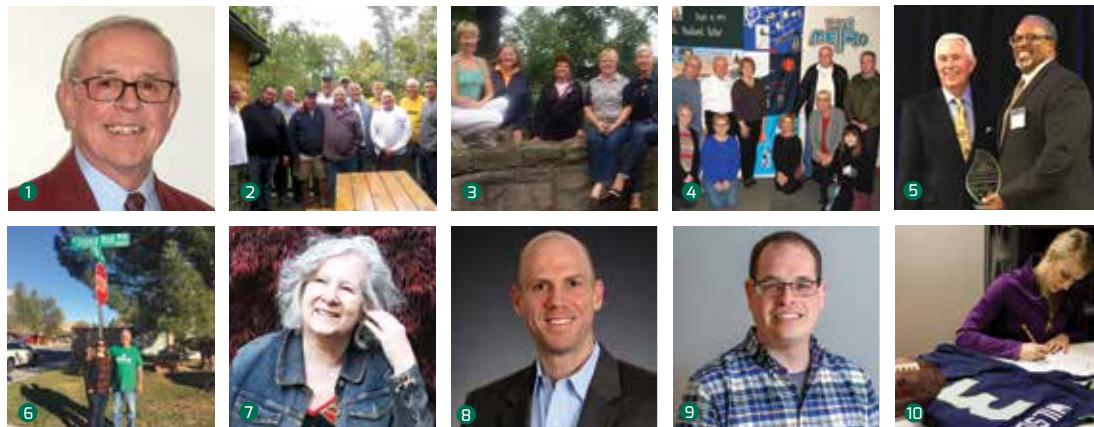
**Gary Bernstein, '77**, has written the textbook, "Nonprofit Recreation and Sports Organizations: Principles and Practices in Leadership Management." The book is geared toward students studying sports and recreation management in business or social work focused courses; as well as students seeking an overview of sport management principles within recreation or leisure study programs.

**David Price, '78**, owner and CEO of Price Builders & Developers, Inc., recently received the Ohio Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Contractor of the Year Award at the inaugural Civil Rights Symposium hosted by the ODOT. The award recognizes businesses that have exhibited outstanding contributions to the ODOT DBE Program. ❺

**Mark Strausbaugh, '78**, and his daughter, Danielle Strausbaugh Felton, '08, recently visited the intersection of Slippery Rock Way and Pebble Canyon Drive in Las Vegas, Nevada. ❻

**Lawrence Clark, '79**, recognized as one of the world's leading authorities on the casino gambling industry, has authored a book, "The Eccentric World of Casino Gambling." The book is an encyclopedia of sorts on casino gambling around the world and reflects Clark's decades of study of the industry. Clark was retained by President Donald Trump as an expert for Trump's property tax appeal case against the city of Atlantic City (New Jersey) for one of his casino properties.

**Kathleen Crisi Hart, '79**, of Robbinsville, New Jersey, has retired after 35 years of teaching. During her tenure at Hightstown High School she was a self-contained classroom teacher as well as an in-class support teacher. Hart served as a cheerleading and track coach in the 1980s and was an



adviser for the Red Cross Club. One of her greatest accomplishments was studying as a fellowship student in the James Madison Seminar at Princeton University for three summers. Future plans include traveling to a variety of national parks with her husband of 35 years, Raymond Hart, '80.

## 1980s

**Mark Smith, '85**, has co-authored the Civil War book, "To Prepare for Sherman's Coming: The Battle of Wise Forks, March 1865." The book explores the significance of the clash between Union and Confederate troops that occurred March 7-10, 1865, in Kinston, North Carolina. Smith researched the battle by reviewing official military reports, diaries, newspapers and letter collections.

**B. Stephen Carpenter II, '87**, is featured in a new video from the Big Ten Network. In the video, Carpenter, professor of art education and African American studies at Pennsylvania State University, discusses his unique approach to water filtration through the use of clay pots in order to educate students about health issues, filtration benefits and the role of the ceramic arts in preventing waterborne disease in underdeveloped countries.

**Lynda McKinney Lambert, '89-'94**, recently published "Walking by Inner Vision: Stories and Poems." Lambert, who lost her sight in 2007, began using a computer two years later following rehabilitation training. She celebrated the accomplishment by starting a daily blog. Her publication is a collection of her favorite poems and non-fiction essays organized into a year-long journey. 7

## 1990s

**Nicole Stout, '94**, was recently selected as a Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association. The fellowship is the association's highest membership honor, recognizing Stout's efforts in advancing research and practice in oncology rehabilitation.

**Susan Robinson Fruchtl, '99**, was named a recipient of the 2017 NCAA Silver Anniversary Award. The honor is bestowed upon former outstanding

student athletes on the 25th anniversary of their intercollegiate athletics eligibility. Robinson Fruchtl, who earned a bachelor's degree at Pennsylvania State University, was a standout basketball player for the women's basketball team. She is one of only two players in PSU history to score 2,000 points and record 1,000 rebounds.

## 2000s

**John Lienert, '03**, recently launched The Lienert Law Firm. The practice, based in Pittsburgh, will focus on the representation of individuals in the areas of personal injury, vehicle crashes, premises liability, products liability and child abuse matters throughout Pennsylvania and West Virginia. 8

**Jordan Bowen, '07, Adam Cook, '05, Chrystal Davis, '01-'04, Danielle Sciarro, '08, and Jason Knick, '01-'05** were named to the Mercer County Chambers of Commerce "40 Under Forty" list. The group was joined on the list by Kelly Bailey, director of alumni engagement for SRU's Alumni Association.

**Daniel Klein, '08**, recently earned a master's degree in information science from Penn State University. He is employed as a systems engineer at Vanguard, a financial services firm located in Valley Forge. 9

**Matthew Swallow, '09**, received his doctoral degree in saxophone performance at West Virginia University in December. His published dissertation was titled "MIDI Electronic Wind Instrument: A Study of the Instrument and Selected Works." Swallow is a faculty member at Alderson Broaddus University (Philippi, West Virginia), teaching applied woodwinds and coaching woodwind chamber ensembles.

## 2010s

**Jackie Freeman, '10**, was recently named artistic director for the Orphan Girls Children's Theatre in Butte, Montana. In that role, she is in charge of community outreach and programs for young artists and children with special needs.

**Rachel Knapp, '11**, was named curatorial assistant at the Pro Football

Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. Knapp oversees installation of traveling and long-term museum exhibits; processes new acquisitions; and leads behind-the-scenes tours for VIP guests. 10

**Mike Quinn, '13, Karey Bartlett, '13, and Tyler Moser, '12**, recently reunited to celebrate homecoming. **Jake Kuczynski, '13**, also joined the group, helping out the AVI staff to keep the lines moving. 11

**Michael Suplicki, '13**, graduated in December from Logan College of Chiropractic (St. Louis, Missouri). He is employed by the Winchester Institute of Chiropractic Health & Wellness in Dublin, Ohio. 12

**Felicia McKinney, '16**, was recognized for her work as the social media manager at Point Park University. McKinney received the Gold Award from the Education Digital Marketing Awards for her work with the university's Instagram account.

**Cheyenne Svihla, '16**, was recently hired as a financial representative at Northwestern Mutual in the South Hills area of Pittsburgh. She focuses on personal and business financial planning and the offensive and defensive sides of a financial plan.

## Weddings

**Stephanie Bonzo, '14**, and Colin Rensel were married July 2, 2016 in West Sunbury. The couple resides in East Butler. 13

**Ronald Kienzle, '76**, and Judy Claypool married Oct. 8, 2016 in Kittanning. The couple resides in Ford City. 14

**Eric Mastriano, '11**, and **Shannon Duff, '11**, were married Sept. 23, 2016 at the Atrium in Prospect. 15

**Elizabeth Theodore, '10**, and Ryan Malesick, were married Sept. 24, 2016. The couple resides in Weirton, West Virginia. 16

## Births

**Grant Batchelor, '12**, and **Becky (Searight) Batchelor, '14**, welcomed their first child, Miles Duncan Batchelor, Feb. 5, 2017. He weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz. and was 20-3/4 inches long. The family resides in Lebanon, Tennessee. 17

**James Baxendell Jr., '09**, and **Rebecca Baxendell, '08, '16**, welcomed their son, James, born Feb. 2, 2016. 18

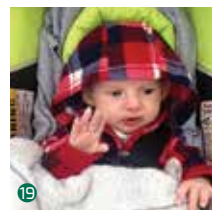
**Rebecca (Carnahan) Cozad, '03**, and her husband, Dave, welcomed their son, Bradley Noah Cozad, Dec. 9, 2016. He weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. and was 21 inches long. 19

**Sarah Riggensch, '02**, and her husband, Joshua, welcomed their son, Keegan Dane, Nov. 1, 2016. He shares his birth date with his big sister Mollie (pictured) and his grandmother. 20

## In Memory

Helen (Linhart) Livengood, '38  
Antoinette Thomas-Keddie, '44  
Gail (Cooper) Baker, '45  
Victor Fuller, '47  
Bernice (Edie) Offutt, '48  
Zane Meixner '49  
Ruth Podbielski '49  
Joseph James Harvey, '50  
Patricia (Nedde) Peer, '51  
Beverly (Shacikoski) Gochnour, '53  
Doris (Mason) Wilson, '58  
Ada (Mumment) McGregor, '58  
Lawrence Bowers, '58  
Maxine (Peffer) Kalcevic, '60  
George Petroff, '61  
Barbara (Gillen) Brown, '61  
Louis Gerard Slater Jr., '62  
Margaret Josephine "Jo" Bushman, '62  
Gladys Pearl (Feil) Adamczyk, '63  
Sheldon Goldstein, '63  
Harold George Dusko, '64  
Patricia (McGowan) Dixon, '65  
Marie Furka, '66  
Edwin Pomroy, '67  
David Hoyer, '67  
Gwendolyn (Kochanowski) Phillips, '68  
Joseph Timmons Bailie, '69  
John Forte, '69  
Carl Stoltz, '69  
Patricia Neigout, '70  
Nancy Jane (Bresnan) Shaffer, '70  
R. Marguerite McCullough, '72  
Mary Ann (Groh) Wirmani, '73  
Bernard Colonna, '74  
A. Neil Kerns, '74  
Eileen Ann Dobbins, '75  
Laurey Joan (Sobona) Campaign, '75  
Deborah Leigh (Stout) Rose, '76  
Michael George Spowles, '76  
Roberta (Hornfeck) Tritch, '76  
James Robert Herrington, '78  
Sara Marie "Sally" (Hughey) Duffett, '78  
Gertrude Hartman, '79  
John Scott Samsa, '83  
Frank Anthony Funair, '84  
Toby (Lind) Woodward, '85  
Christine Ann Congie, '86  
Tina Caputo, '87  
Gloria Mae Dripps, '88  
Roger Olean, '91  
Christopher TenEyck, '94  
Lisa Ann Rosa, '97  
Aaron James Smith, '97  
Anthony "Tony" Paesano, '02  
Paul Bernot, '08

John Bonando (retired staff)  
Laura Holste (retired staff)  
Robert "Bob" Konnen (retired staff)



# Satisfaction guaranteed



CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES PROVIDE  
'WIN-WIN' FOR DONORS, UNIVERSITY

**D**uring his time as a Slippery Rock University student, Jack Hill dipped his toes in a lot of waters.

A former high school basketball player, Hill, '50, health and physical education, "dabbled" in swimming and "fooled around" with track and field before finding a home on the SRU football team – sort of.

"I spent two years on the football team until I got sidelined by a shoulder injury. Back then, the attention that got paid to injuries isn't like it is nowadays, what with the therapy and rehab players go through. Truth be told, I was a second or third team center and lineman, so they might not have invested that much time into making me whole again anyway," Hill said with a laugh.

His roster pecking order aside, Hill does have one moment in the sun he fondly remembers from his time on the gridiron.

"My one claim to fame ... we were playing Edinboro ... I intercepted a pass ... took one step and got flattened by three guys. I went absolutely nowhere but down," Hill said.

These days, life for the former high school teacher and coach – who transitioned to a private sector career as a financial adviser and retirement consultant – is looking up.

Especially where charitable giving and its return on investment are concerned.

Hill and his wife, Margaret, recently established a Slippery Rock charitable gift annuity.

A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract between a donor and the Slippery Rock University Foundation.

In exchange for an irrevocable gift of cash, securities or other assets, the SRU Foundation agrees to pay one or two annuitants a fixed sum each year for life. The older the designated annuitants are at the time of the gift, the greater the fixed amount they will receive. In most cases, a portion of each payment is tax-free, increasing each payment's after-tax value.

Charitable gift annuities are the most popular planned gift at SRU as well as at most charities throughout the U.S. because of their ease and the assurance of a fixed, guaranteed payment. The funds can be designated to a program, department or athletic team, or can be used to establish a scholarship at the University.

"Making a gift to SRU to establish an annuity is a win-win situation," said Samantha Swift, director of development for the SRU

Foundation. "Not only does the donor receive guaranteed income for life, the funds will be used to better the educational experience of our students. It is a wonderful way to give back to the institution. We are so appreciative that Dr. Hill chose to support the University by making this generous gift."

Per Hill, the choice was a simple one and is a great tool to achieve his financial and philanthropic goals. And like his athletic career at SRU, it offers a variety of options.

*SRU played a big role in who I became and I hope that by giving back, I can do the same for someone else.*

"After doing my research," said Hill, "and looking at what (making the investment) could do for me, the University and the students, it just made sense."

Hill cited a quartet of reasons for establishing the CGA, including: the investment being backed by the Foundation; a solid 6 percent return on investment; primarily tax free benefit payments; and,



*Hill's high school photo from 1944.*



*Hill in the cockpit of an AT-11 Kansan, a World War II training aircraft for pilots, navigators and bombardiers, in 1944. Hill served in the U.S. Army from 1944-1945, training as a pilot before becoming a drill instructor.*

more importantly, the funds being a benefit to the University.

"Over the years, I've always done what I can in terms of giving back to the University," Hill said. "Not in great amounts, mind you, but I've done what I can to support the University and the Alumni Association. When (the CGA) presented itself, it seemed like the best opportunity for me to give a bit more while being rewarded for it at the same time. You can't beat that."

These days, it appears you'd have a tough time beating Hill on the field of play too.

A frequent visitor of the senior center near his home in Montgomery County, Maryland, Hill, 90, began competing in the state's Senior Olympics nearly a decade ago. During that time, the former SRU benchwarmer has laid claim to several bronze, silver and gold medals in track and field.

"I'm pretty good with a javelin, a shot and a discus," said Hill. "I try not to run too much because I had a hip operation a few

years back, and on that front, I'm not so successful - except for the year I was the only entrant in my age group and brought home the gold."

Following his time as an SRU undergraduate, Hill went on to earn a pair of master's degrees - one in history from Edinboro University in 1958 and one in counseling from the University of Florida in 1962 - and a doctoral degree in education from George Washington University in 1968.

"I can say, with certainty, that it was because of the faculty and rigorous programs at the University, that I was encouraged and able to continue my education and obtain those other degrees," Hill said. "SRU played a big role in who I became, and I hope that by giving back I can do the same for someone else."

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*Margaret and Jack Hill enjoy a visit from great granddaughter Harper Mae Montesino.*



# GOING PRO

Working in the Athletic Communication office helps launch careers



**S**

tudent-athletes across the nation aren't the only people who hope the pros will recognize their performance and what skills they could bring to the team.

While academic coursework at Slippery Rock University continues to build the foundation for students to succeed in life after college, more and more potential employers are looking for graduates with hands-on experience that can hit the ground running.

While the University strives to link students to work experience and internships that are tied to their academic major, one office at Slippery Rock University, athletic communication, has seen an incredible level of success over the last five years in placing student employees in "the pros."

The athletic communication department is responsible for a comprehensive communication plan that promotes the University's 17 NCAA Division II athletic programs, its student-athletes and coaches. The office carries out a myriad of tasks that relate to the coverage and promotion of the athletic department, including the design and maintenance of the official athletics website, [www.RockAthletics.com](http://www.RockAthletics.com), and all content on the site that receives more than 2.3 million views per year. The office also handles operation of live video broadcasts of sporting events, compilation and historical archiving of all statistics and records, photography, production of game programs and promotional materials, management of all the official SRU athletics social media accounts, reporting to the NCAA, nominating student-athletes and coaches for weekly and yearly awards and serving as the media liaison for the department, its coaches and student-athletes.

"The amount of responsibility our office has leads to a tremendous

amount of work," said Jon Holtz, director of athletic communication. "It has become impossible to do the job to our standards without the help of our student assistants, and in return, we have been able to help many of them develop skills that have set them up to succeed in their professional lives."

More than 20 student assistants from the athletic communication office that have graduated in the last five years are currently working jobs in athletics, from NCAA Division I schools to professional sports, working in multiple concentrations that extend far beyond communications. The department also has graduates in a number of other professions, from teachers to business professionals and from park rangers to financial consultants.

"Most of our student assistants want to work in athletics," said Holtz. "We pull most of the group from the sport management major, but we'll never turn down a student that we think has potential to help us just because they don't want to go into athletics. Some of our best student assistants over the last decade have gone into other professions and are succeeding at a tremendous level. We are particularly proud of the number of former student assistants we have working in athletics though. Just about every student we have had graduate in the last five years who wanted to get a job in sports has one."

Dating back to the class of 2012, former SRU student-workers and graduate assistants in the athletic communication office have held a total of 24 jobs in sports over the last year alone.

One of those 24 is Tyler McIntosh, M.S. '12, current assistant director of athletic communication at SRU. McIntosh came to Slippery Rock in 2011 as a graduate assistant and, after earning his master's degree,



accepted a sports information director position at another NCAA Division II institution.

"When I came to Slippery Rock as a graduate assistant, I had a raw skill set, but thanks to the guidance and mentorship I received while studying at SRU I was able to refine those skills and learn countless other lessons that prepared me for a successful career in athletic communication," said McIntosh. "It wasn't until I left for a full-time job at another Division II college that I realized just how special working at Slippery Rock was. I couldn't submit my application quick enough when an opportunity to return to SRU presented itself."

McIntosh has become one of the driving forces of the current athletic communication office and has taken over a significant portion of the scheduling and management of the student staff.

"Tyler has been an incredible asset to our office," said Holtz. "There is just no way we could do things the way we do without his efforts. His handling of our student assistants allows our office to get the best out of them, and in return allows us to stay ahead of the curve in the quality and quantity of the content we can deliver."

McIntosh is one of the three graduate assistants who have earned master's degrees from Slippery Rock over the last five years, all of which are currently working jobs in athletics. After McIntosh, Brianne Dishong, '11, M.S. '13, took over as the graduate assistant in the office. Dishong is currently serving as the head women's lacrosse coach and assistant sports information director at Hiram College. Following Dishong, J.D. Tinkey, M.S. '15, was named the graduate assistant in the office. Tinkey is currently serving as the assistant director of athletic communications at the University of Detroit Mercy.

"I believe that working in the athletic communication office at Slippery Rock not only helped me start my career, but also led me to a career path that I truly love," said Dishong. "Playing a college sport was always a dream of mine growing up, but I had no idea that I would be able to watch other sporting events and be paid for working them. Slippery Rock and the athletic communication office gave me the opportunity to do both. Without Slippery Rock and the athletic communication office, these opportunities may not have come my way. I know I wouldn't be where I am today without the mentors and friends I made in my time there."

"I am extremely grateful because I wouldn't be where I am today without my experience at The Rock," said Tinkey. "I am fortunate to have learned from one of the most highly respected offices in the largest NCAA conference. My

experience at Slippery Rock allowed me to step in and excel at the next level right away."

The successes of students that have worked in the office are not reserved for the graduate level students, as the other 21 recent graduates working in athletics were undergraduate students in the office. Of those, nine are currently working at the collegiate level, including seven on NCAA Division I campuses.

Julie Jurich, '14, is the assistant director of athletics media relations at the University of Pittsburgh.

"Prior to transferring to Slippery Rock, I had no idea that this field even existed," said Jurich. "I started as a practicum student and after my hours were over, I knew I was in an area that was really special. Once I decided this was a path I wanted to follow after my time was done at Slippery Rock, Jon gave me the opportunity to learn more and grow as a young professional, and for that I am forever thankful. The SRU athletic communication office taught me how important and valuable the profession is and how to make the most of it. Although I'm still learning, I always think back to my time at The Rock and how those experiences can help me at the Division I level at Pitt. I would not be where I am today without the Slippery Rock athletic communication department."

Other former SRU athletic communication students working at the collegiate level include Britt Grove, '15, (compliance at Bowling Green State University), Kyle Rhoads, '12, (marketing at the University at Buffalo), Chris Henry, '12, (athletic communications at Coastal Carolina University), Adam Obringer, '14, (athletic communications at DePaul University), Cali Hafdell, '14, (women's lacrosse coaching at Rhodes College), Renee Dubuc, '14, (compliance at Sacramento State University), Shane Tay, '12, (compliance at Saint Francis University) and Justin Kotzmoyer, '17, (campus recreation at Youngstown State University).



2014-15 Athletic Communication staff

## 2012-17 Athletic Communication Grads

1. **Jon Michael Cardamone (2014)** – Director of Operations at Atlantic Coast Baseball
2. **Nicole Compe (2017)** – Marketing Intern at Somerset Patriots
3. **Brianne Dishong (2011, 2013 Masters)** – Head Women's Lacrosse Coach at Hiram College
4. **Renee Dubuc (2014)** – Director of Compliance at Sacramento State University
5. **Kelsey Everhart (2013)** – Associate Athletic Trainer at Cleveland Clinic Sports Health
6. **Katie Gable (2015)** – Corporate Events Intern at Heinz Field
7. **Tyler Getz (2013)** – Youth Sports Director at Carlisle YMCA
8. **Britt Grove (2015)** – Compliance Graduate Assistant at Bowling Green State University
9. **Cali Hafdell (2014)** – Assistant Women's Lacrosse Coach at Rhodes College (Tenn.)
10. **Chris Henry (2012)** – Assistant Director for Media Relations at Coastal Carolina University
11. **Ariana Heter (2016)** – Membership Manager at USA Taekwondo
12. **Julie Jurich (2014)** – Assistant Director of Media Relations at University of Pittsburgh
13. **Holly Kennedy (2016)** – Sports Development Assistant at SportsPITTSBURGH
14. **Chris King (2017)** – Ticketing Intern at St. Louis Cardinals
15. **Justin Kotzmoyer (2017)** – Campus Recreation Intern at Youngstown State University
16. **Ben Matos (2017)** – Communications Assistant at Indianapolis Indians
17. **Tyler McIntosh (2012 Masters)** – Assistant Director of Athletic Communication at SRU
18. **Jami Meirick (2013)** – Assistant Girls Lacrosse Coach at Mount DeSales Academy
19. **Adam Obringer (2014)** – Athletic Communications Graduate Assistant at DePaul University
20. **McKenzie Popatak (2017)** – Guest Services Intern at Daytona International Speedway
21. **Kyle Rhoads (2012)** – Sales and Marketing Coordinator at University at Buffalo
22. **Shane Tay (2012)** – Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance at Saint Francis University (Pa.)
23. **JD Tinkey (2015 Masters)** – Assistant Director of Athletic Communications at University of Detroit Mercy
24. **Dann Whitmore (2012)** – Support Specialist at SIDEARM Sports





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Kotzmoyer is one of five current SRU students that will graduate in May or December that are serving full-time internships this semester or summer. The others in that group include Ben Matos, '17 (communications for the Indianapolis Indians), McKenzie Popatak, '17 (guest services at Daytona International Speedway), Nicole Comple, '17 (marketing and promotions with the Somerset Patriots and Lehigh Valley IronPigs) and Chris King, '17 (ticketing with the St. Louis Cardinals).

"Working in the athletic communication department has absolutely helped me in my professional career," said Popatak, who was named this spring as the sport management program's Student of the Year. "Working under Jon and Tyler was the best experience a student at Slippery Rock could ask for. Working in the department taught us as students how to work in a diverse atmosphere with being able to work all of the different sporting events as well as being able to learn all of the different jobs the office is responsible for. It also taught us teamwork, time management and leadership skills. The connections, experience and friendships that I made working in the SRU athletic communication department are invaluable and will benefit me for the rest of my professional career and personal life."

"I was very fortunate to work in the athletic communication office and even more fortunate that Jon and Tyler gave me an expanded role during my senior year," said Matos. "If it wasn't for the experience I was able to gain and the connections I made while working in the office, I would not be in the position I am today."

While the majority of the former students listed above are currently working directly with athletic teams or programs, there are also a number of recent graduates that have found other jobs in athletics that don't involve working directly with a team.

Kelsey Everhart, '13, for example, joined the SRU athletic communication office as a

summer student-worker with no intention of entering the field. She is now working as an associate athletic trainer with the Cleveland Clinic in the Sports Health division.

"All I really needed was a summer job to keep me afloat, but I ended up coming out with much more than that," said Everhart. "This position allowed me to add some field-related experience to my resume, which in turn helped me to receive a job offer prior to even graduating. It also challenged me to improve upon my communication and computer skills and showed me a whole new side to the world of athletics."

Ariana Heter, '16, joined the staff to fulfill a practicum requirement and parlayed her experience in the office to a dream role that sent her to Brazil last summer working with the United States Paralympic team. Following her internship with the US Olympic

Committee, she landed in her current position working as the membership manager for USA Taekwondo in Colorado Springs.

"Working in the athletic communication office helped me develop skills that allowed me to be a perfect candidate for a top internship with the Paralympics, which then led to my current position at USA Taekwondo," said Heter. "Working in the office was much more than just a job. Jon and Tyler make it a priority for the staff to operate as a family environment, which makes learning and working enjoyable. I wish I would've started my career in the office earlier than I did."

Dann Whitmore, '12, still plays an integral role in the athletic communication department at Slippery Rock. Whitmore is a customer support specialist with SIDEARM Sports, the web-hosting and streaming provider for the official SRU athletics website. Whitmore is heavily involved in making sure the backend of the SRU website, and nearly 1,000 other collegiate websites, are working properly.

"Undoubtedly, the largest impact on my

career from my position in the SRU athletic communication office was the realization of the expectations required to work in the field of sports," said Whitmore. "Jon and his staff always did a tremendous job of delegating important tasks to students like myself that had an interest in the field so we could acquire real-life experience. It's simple; if my second practicum in my sport management curriculum was not in athletic communication at SRU, my career path would have been entirely different and I'm not sure I would have remained in sports for the long-haul."

Holly Kennedy, '16, has also been involved with Slippery Rock since her departure, as she currently works for SportsPITTSBURGH, the sports development branch of the Visit Pittsburgh enterprise. SportsPITTSBURGH joined with SRU recently to submit a bid to the NCAA that was accepted and will see SRU serve as the host institution for eight NCAA Division II National Championship events in 2018 and 2019.

"I would absolutely say working in the athletic communication office helped start my career," said Kennedy. "I can say with 100 percent certainty that it was the best job on campus and also one of the best college experiences I had."

Other former SRU student assistants during the last five years that have found interesting positions within athletics include Jon Michael Cardamone, '14 (operations for Atlantic Coast Baseball), Katie Gable, '15 (corporate events at Heinz Field), Jami Meirick '15 (high school girls lacrosse coach) and Tyler Getz, '13 (youth sports director of the Carlisle YMCA).

While Holtz is proud of the success recent grads have accomplished, he's the first to point out that providing such experiences has long been a point of pride for the office. "Former director Bob McComas and before him, John Carpenter, each trained a slew of student-assistants for professional positions," Holtz said.

"Being able to watch sports and be involved with all of our teams and student-athletes is a nice perk of the job," said Holtz. "But at the end of the day, the thing I am most proud of is that we are providing another vital aspect of a college education for the students that work in our office."

**More than 20 student assistants from the athletic communication office that have graduated in the last five years are currently working jobs in athletics, from NCAA Division I schools to professional sports, working in multiple concentrations that extend far beyond communications.**





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# I am the rock

## Nicole Stout, '94, community health, business and IT strategy consultant, 3e Services, LLC

**DAY JOB:** I am president and CEO of 3e Services, LLC, providing strategic consulting to federal IT executives to help them effectively use data. I also serve as a medical affairs consultant to several health care tech startups and to the National Institutes of Health. My clients work with emerging technology in medical-grade wearables, big data analytics and enterprise workflow tools. I love helping clients to gain actionable insights so they can put their data to work.

**BACKGROUND:** After SRU, I earned a doctoral degree in physical therapy. My focus was rehabilitation during cancer treatment. I ran two major clinical trials that studied breast cancer recovery, the findings of which have helped to change the way we manage cancer-related side effects. I have a post-graduate certificate in health policy. My research and data work have led to my work in IT consulting. I believe that problem-solving is the core skill that you can take anywhere.

**INFLUENCE OF SRU:** SRU's influence on my life has been immeasurable. It is the foundation of who I am professionally. I am grateful for the exposure to new ideas and amazing relationships. I travel extensively for speaking engagements and it never fails that I meet other SRU grads. We marvel at the immediate bond and love of the shared experiences we had at The Rock.

