Principals and Presidents
of Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
James Morrow
Principal, Slippery Rock State Normal School
1889-1890

“No one will be graduated who has not acquired a good degree of skill and success as a teacher.”
– Slippery Rock State Normal School catalog, 1889

James Morrow was appointed principal and professor of psychology and history of education in early 1889, following the inspection of the school’s facilities by a committee representing Pennsylvania Gov. James Beaver. Morrow and the school’s six faculty members developed the first program of studies for the 168 students admitted for the first term, which began March 26, 1889. Prior to his service to Slippery Rock State Normal School, Morrow was a lawyer, an infantryman during the Civil War and a high school teacher and principal in Pittsburgh. His academic degrees were from Jefferson College. His granddaughter, Anne, married famed aviator Charles Lindbergh.

Albert Maltby
Principal, Slippery Rock State Normal School
1890-1916

“Here was just the opportunity for a vigorous personality to exercise its powers in molding an embryo institution.”
– A class friend of Principal Maltby

Less than two years after opening its doors, Slippery Rock State Normal School had its second principal, Albert Maltby, who would serve for more than a quarter century. He led a transformation of the campus from a row of frame buildings on the edge of cultivated fields to walls of brick and stone circling a beautiful campus set with trees, shrubs and flowers. His first step was to put a plan in motion for the construction of large brick multi-purpose buildings, which, in addition to housing recitation rooms and the library, would contain laboratories, rooms for literary societies and a gymnasium. Completed in 1893 and called “Main Building,” it is now known as “Old Main.” As the campus grew and new buildings were constructed, Maltby, a civil engineer, did much of the surveying of the land, which the school acquired. By the end of his tenure, the school had become one of Pennsylvania’s premier centers for the preparation of teachers in the western region. Maltby’s undergraduate degree was from Cornell University and his doctorate was from St. Lawrence University.
J. Linwood Eisenberg
President, Slippery Rock State College
1917-1934

“The hearty cooperation of the board has made it possible to develop this school from one of the smallest to the third in size in Pennsylvania, with the standard for graduation and a faculty second to none.”
- President Eisenberg, upon his departure.

Under J. Linwood Eisenberg’s leadership, Slippery Rock State College grew from a normal school with an enrollment of 500 to full collegiate status, offering four-year degrees and an enrollment of more than 1,000 students. Having previously served as superintendent of schools in Chester County, this highly experienced teacher and administrator enlarged the campus, launched a major building program and instituted new and innovative academic programs. He created a new physical education program, a commercial department with programs in bookkeeping, shorthand and teacher training for commercial teachers, and a special two-year course designed for those who planned to teach in Pennsylvania’s rural schools, but were unable to take the regular normal school course. He earned a bachelor of education, a bachelor of arts degree and a master’s degree from Ursinus College and his doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.

Charles Miller
President, Slippery Rock State Teachers College
1935-1940

“5 NEW BUILDINGS AT SLIPPERY ROCK TO COST $842,000… the largest grant the state ever made to any of its teachers colleges.”
- The Slippery Rock Signal

High academic standards for students and faculty were constant goals for Charles Miller, who believed that Slippery Rock State Teachers College should serve as the educational “lighthouse” for its service area, “furnishing service to its schools and teachers” and leading “in research and demonstration of modern methods and thought.” In 1937 important curricular changes were made in the elementary and secondary education programs requiring students to take a basic liberal arts curriculum the first two years. Miller expanded student activities and established a student life division. To assist first semester freshman in adjusting to college life, the staff of the new division conducted weekly orientation and guidance sessions for them. Miller earned his bachelor’s degree from Allegheny College, his master’s from the University of Pittsburgh and his doctorate from New York University.
Dale McMaster  
President, Slippery Rock State Teachers College  
1940-1941

“Teaching is a noble profession...you must have, in addition to your training, within you the ability to think clearly on all problems, and a desire to serve society in making sure for your pupils a continuance of the American way of life.”

– President McMaster, commencement, 1941

During his brief time as president, Dale McMaster saw enrollment drop to 445 because of World War II. Reflecting the nation’s need for more education in the field of science, Slippery Rock State Teachers College introduced an area of concentration in the sciences in its secondary education curriculum. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives was considering a bill to close the state teachers colleges as such and re-open them for vocational training in defense work. McMaster expressed his concern at the 1941 commencement emphasizing his belief that well-educated teachers were important for the survival of the nation’s way of life. His tenure was abbreviated by his death in November 1941. He was a graduate of Grove City College and had a master’s degree from the University of Pittsburgh, where he was a candidate for a doctorate.

John Entz  
President, Slippery Rock State Teachers College  
1941-1946

“We do not do so well, but that we could not do better.”

– President Entz

John Entz, who had been dean of instruction at Slippery Rock State Teachers College, began his presidency while enrollment was continuing to decline after the attack on Pearl Harbor. By fall of 1943, only 189 students were enrolled. SRSTC began to explore ways in which its educational resources could be used to promote the nation’s war effort. By the next spring, the first Army flight-training cadets arrived and the campus became an Army Air Force Technical Center. The college achieved a significant milestone in 1943 when it was awarded full accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. With the end of the war in Europe, enrollment began to improve. The roots of the school’s nursing program were planted in 1945 when the college became a center of government-sponsored training program for cadet nurses. That same year, Entz resigned, explaining “at this time it is wise to yield the post to a younger and more vigorous man.” Entz was a graduate of Albright College and had a master’s from New York University, where he also pursued a doctorate.
Dale Houk
President, Slippery Rock State Teachers College
1946-1956

“Slippery Rock’s Dr. Houk hopes that under his system, teachers will offer pupils tools for successful living, not ‘cafeteria learning.’”

– The Pittsburgh Press

Dale Houk, a native of Butler County, entered Slippery Rock in 1919 when it was still a normal school and eventually became superintendent of schools in Allegheny County before being named president of SRSTC. With the G.I.Bill providing tuition and subsistence benefits, enrollment at the college soared to reach 920 by 1955. The teaching curriculum continued to become more rigorous. Students planning to teach in the secondary schools were required to have at least 30 semester hours of credit in the fields of biological science, physical science, general science, history, social science and English. During this time, SRSTC became one of the first to offer credit for courses taken over the Pittsburgh Educational Television Station, WQED. Houk resigned his presidency to join WQED as director of community relations. He graduated from Park College in Missouri and earned his master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh.

Norman Weisenfluh
President, Slippery Rock State Teachers College
1956-1964

“A state college offering a larger number of curricula for the college in addition to teacher education.”

– Weisenfluh’s 10-Year Plan

Norman Weisenfluh provided the college with a bold vision of offering a diversified curriculum and embracing the various disciplines of the liberal arts, while continuing its long tradition in teacher education. He also began an expansion into graduate education. Reflecting these changes, he recommended dropping the word “teachers” from the college name, and in January 1960, trustees changed the name to Slippery Rock State College. In 1962, the State Council of Education approved the college’s course offerings leading to the bachelor of arts degree in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. An important new program to train teachers in special education was introduced in 1963. Weisenfluh’s creation of a joint Physical Therapy Certificate Program with the Mayo Clinic laid the foundation for today’s School of Physical Therapy. He graduated from Dickinson College and was awarded a doctorate by the University of Pittsburgh.
Robert Carter
President, Slippery Rock State College
1964-1968

“Our need is to spend the next several years strengthening what we now have.”

– President Carter

Robert Carter created the departments of biological science and physical science, began a certificate program in earth and space science and expanded offerings in physics, geology and geography. During his tenure, master of arts and master of science degrees were added to the existing master of education program. While president, enrollment grew from 2,767 to 3,757 and the library grew from 58,000 volumes to 107,000. By spring of 1966, five buildings were under construction: a science building, a world cultures center, a women’s residence hall and two privately financed residence halls. Carter earned two degrees from Bucknell University and his doctorate from New York University.

Albert Watrel
President, Slippery Rock State College
1968-1976

“If we work together as academicians, I am confident that the future is bright.”

– President Albert Watrel

During Albert Watrel’s tenure at SRSC, enrollment climbed to more than 4,000 and the college was reorganized into the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the School of Fine Arts and Humanities. During this time, intercollegiate athletics earned significant national recognition and grew to 19 men and women’s teams. A wide variety of intramural sports were available for both men and women. In 1974, N. Kerr Thompson Stadium (now Mihalik-Thompson Stadium), with 10,000 seats, was dedicated for football and track events. Watrel formed the Slippery Rock Foundation (now the Slippery Rock University Foundation) to secure additional private financial support for the college. His bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees were from Syracuse University.
Lawrence Park
Interim President, Slippery Rock State College
1977-1979

“Dr. Park announced that his first action step will be to develop a Master Planning Council that will make a comprehensive study of the plans and goals of the college.”

– Minutes, Council of Trustees, Sept. 21, 1977

During this period, a Master Planning Council was formed with the responsibility of making a “comprehensive study of plans and goals for the college.” Eight new programs were added during his first year, six leading to bachelor of science degrees in computer science, economics and business, music therapy, public administration, social welfare and rural and urban studies. In his second year, the college offered a bachelor of fine arts degree in art.

Lawrence Park earned his bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at New Paltz and his master's and doctorate from New York University.

Herb Reinhard Jr.
President, Slippery Rock University
1979-1984

“Slippery Rock is a fine institution that collectively we can make even finer.”

– President Reinhard

Herb Reinhard's first priority was to prepare the University for an evaluation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, which would occur during the 1980-81 academic year. The work by faculty and staff resulted in an evaluation report that cited SRU as “a strong institution with a good promise for an exciting future.” Having established the first Office of Alumni Affairs and Development, Reinhard participated in the first “phonation” to raise money from alumni for scholarships and other college programs. SRU’s athletic teams continued to bring national honors to the college in a wide variety of sports. Reinhard capitalized on the University’s unique name and brought increased national recognition to the college by forming the Slippery Rock National Athletic Fan Club, which also raised money for athletic scholarships. Adding to its stature, the college was granted university status in 1983. He earned bachelors and master’s degrees from Florida State University and his doctorate from Indiana University.
Robert Aebersold  
President, Slippery Rock University  
1984-1997  

“I’ve tried to create and encourage an atmosphere of openness and consulting with others...hearing from as many people as possible.”  
— President Aebersold

Robert Aebersold became SRU’s 13th president after having served the college for 17 years in many capacities: assistant professor of physical education, department chair, coach, vice president for academic affairs and acting president. Under his leadership, the University was organized into four colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Education, the College of Health and Human Services and the College of Information Science and Business Administration. The University achieved widespread recognition for internationalism, including a top-10 national ranking for study abroad opportunities, environmental programs, community service-learning and physical therapy. The University’s first-ever capital campaign exceeded its goal raising $6.37 million. Construction on the new R.O.C.K student apartments, a student recreation center and an alumni house funded exclusively with contributions from some 2,000 alumni were also realized. Enrollment during this time reached a peak of 7,925 in 1991. His bachelor’s degree was from Ohio Wesleyan University, his master’s from Ohio University and his doctorate from the University of Maryland.

G. Warren Smith  
President, Slippery Rock University  
1997-2002  

“Slippery Rock University has an opportunity to be the model for the interactive learning center for the future. Each of us has a critical part to play in advancing this goal.”  
— President Smith in his first address to faculty

G. Warren Smith began his term July 1, 1997, following nine years as president of Southeastern Louisiana University. Upon his arrival, he said, “Slippery Rock University is an institution with an excellent national reputation.” He announced his first priority would be to further strengthen that reputation by developing a vision that would guide the University into the year 2000 and beyond. Smith led a visioning process he called “FutureWatch,” which quickly gained widespread attention among his colleagues for adapting a business leadership model to a vision and strategic initiatives for a higher education institution. He was instrumental in ensuring ongoing improvements to the campus environment with an eye toward student needs. Smith is a highly regarded chemist, a fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and an accomplished violinist. He earned his bachelor of arts degree from Grinnell College and his doctor of philosophy degree from Cornell University.
Robert Smith
Interim President, Slippery Rock State University
2002-2004
President, Slippery Rock University
2004-2012

“This is a great time to be at Slippery Rock University.”
– President Smith

During Robert Smith’s tenure as the 15th president, the University grew in a myriad of ways, including: academic standing; leadership in sustainability and greening; offerings in state-of-the-art technology; modern classroom buildings; new and expanded academic programs; contemporary academic and academic-related facilities; comprehensive international study opportunities; and ever-expanding friend support. He led the local and regional community in economic development efforts and was instrumental in creating a downtown resurgence that brought new enterprises, success and jobs to the community. He was instrumental in SRU’s development of the Regional Learning Alliance in Cranberry Woods. Under his guidance, the University reversed an enrollment decline and achieved a peak enrollment of 8,852. In 2011, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education granted the University a full 10-year accreditation approval with no stipulations, requirements or recommendations. Under his leadership, SRU invested more than $250 million in new construction and renovation projects – the largest investment in the University’s history. Smith earned his undergraduate degree at Wichita State University and his doctorate from Temple University.

Cheryl Norton
President, Slippery Rock University
2012 -

“This is an institution that is rich in its history, with unlimited potential for its future.”
– President Norton

Cheryl Norton was selected by the board of governors of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education April 5, 2012, to serve as the 16th president of Slippery Rock University. She is the first woman in the University’s 123-year history to be named to lead the institution. An accomplished scholar and educator, Norton earned her bachelor’s degree from Denison University and three degrees from Columbia University; a master of arts in applied physiology, a master of education and a doctorate of education in applied physiology. She is a fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine.