Dear Friends,

This fall has been somewhat of a roller-coaster ride. The new academic year greeted us with great opportunities and with more than the usual number of challenges; the greatest of which was an estimated $5.2 million deficit in our Fiscal-Year 2013-14 operating budget.

This deficit was due to a combination of events, while not individually dangerous, occurring together produced a disastrous outcome, a perfect storm if you will: the fragile economic recovery, unavoidable increases in expenses and a declining population of high school graduates who are college ready.

Working together, we were able to address the shortfall and present the Council of Trustees with a balanced budget. This was the result of increased performance-funding revenues, strategic reductions in each of the divisions, plus the use of institutional reserves. While these budget reductions were difficult, every effort was made to preserve the core mission and values of the University. I’m confident this budget will allow SRU to continue to provide the Rock Solid educational experience for which the University is known.

With the FY 2013-14 budget behind us, we are hard at work developing the FY 2014-15 budget, which promises to be even more challenging.

As we continue that task, we are buoyed by the wave of accolades SRU has received from external agencies that validate the outstanding and important work we are doing.

• U.S. News and World Report again named SRU one of the Top 100 Regional Universities in the North in its annual U.S. News & World Report’s 2014 edition of Best Colleges.
• The Princeton Review named SRU as one of the “Best in the Northeast” universities.
• AffordableCollegesOnline.org, an online rating service, included SRU on its list of colleges and universities with the greatest lifetime return on investment.
• BestOnlineColleges.org, a leading resource for online education, named SRU’s special education programs as one of the best in the nation in its 2013-14 national report.
• The Chronicle of Higher Education, a weekly national news and job-information publication for college and university faculty members, administrators and students, again named SRU a “Great College to Work For.”
• Sierra Magazine named SRU among the top 100 universities nationally in their seventh annual rankings of the nation’s greenest universities.
• The Pittsburgh Business Times named SRU one of the “Healthiest Universities in Western Pennsylvania.”
• G.I. Jobs magazine again named SRU a “Military Friendly University.”
• The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette named SRU as one of the region’s top workplaces.
• Student Horizon’s named SRU a 2013-14 “College of Distinction” for our institutional commitment to engaged students, great teaching, vibrant communities and successful outcomes.

This is an institution that is doing great things and contributes to the public good. We can all be proud to be a part of The Rock.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Norton
President
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**To our readers**

When alumni reminisce about their college days, they often swap student-housing stories. This edition of The ROCK highlights SRU’s residential renaissance and shows how important the “home away from home” has become to student success.

No longer just a place to live, residence halls support academics, promote life skills and help students make friends for life. As you’ll see, today’s digs are a far cry from the cement-block rooms of old.

The Union Jack flies in Old Main, so to speak. Englishman Philip Way, provost, promotes globalization by his presence and has emerged as a major advocate for collaborative academic efforts.

If you’ve been to campus lately, you’ve noticed a colorful change. Facilities and planning landscaped the grounds with new trees, shrubs and flowers. The added beauty enhances appearances for recruiting and boosts quality of life for current students.

Also in this edition is a story about community service. Students fan the county and parts of the world to undertake housing, teaching and cleanup projects. A dedicated SRU staff oversees their benevolent work.

You will also read about two standout Rock athletes who made the big time, and you will learn more about the importance of supporting the University.

January 2014 marks the beginning of Slippery Rock University’s 125th anniversary. Each edition of The ROCK in 2014 will have a special anniversary focus. In anticipation, we’re asking you to share with us, “What I love about SRU.” Email me your contribution. Thanks.

Gordon Ovenshine, ’88
Editor, The ROCK
gordon.ovenshine@sru.edu

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**THE ROCK**

The ROCK is published three times annually by the Office of University Public Relations for alumni and friends of the University.

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University Vision Statement

Slippery Rock University will excel as a caring community of lifelong learners connecting with the world.

Slippery Rock University is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

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**About the cover**

Students come from far and wide to attend Slippery Rock University. One common denominator is living in a residence hall. The halls provide an environment for success (page 10).
Frank Brogan, former chancellor of the State University System of Florida, began his duties as the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education chancellor Oct. 1. The PASSHE board of governors selected Brogan to serve as the fourth chancellor in PASSHE’s nearly 31-year history following a six-month-long search that attracted interest from several hundred potential candidates.

Prior to serving as chancellor of Florida’s 335,000-student public university system, Brogan was president of Florida Atlantic University, lieutenant governor of Florida and Florida’s commissioner of education.

“I am excited to join PASSHE in its commitment to provide high-quality, affordable higher educational opportunities for Pennsylvania’s families. Balancing quality and accessibility has been my top priority in Florida and should be the mission of every good public university,” Brogan said.

Brogan earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees in education from the University of Cincinnati and Florida Atlantic University.

Cheryl Norton, SRU president, has established a President’s Commission on Wellness. The commission, which focuses on empowering people to sustain a culture of fitness as an essential aspect of life, is the sixth president’s commission. Other presidential commissions focus on sustainability; race and ethnic diversity; disability; gender identity and sexual orientation; and the status of women.

“The President’s Commission on Wellness is the most recent addition to our team,” Norton said. “We want to empower individuals to make smarter choices that influence their wellness. All six president’s commissions work together to promote diversity and inclusion, identifying and developing the character traits and values that distinctly mark SRU as an institution of inclusive excellence.”

Alumni and students have a new, online job search site to access for employment opportunities. (http://www.sru.edu/CareerConnection.) The Office of Career Education and Development is hosting the site.

Major advantages of the career connection are that it can be integrated with LinkedIn, described as the largest professional network with 225 million members in more than 200 countries and territories; offers students updates via Twitter or text, can be easily operated from a mobile device and offers more storage for documents and portfolio items for students and alumni.
University earns national, regional accolades

Once again, SRU has earned “best of” accolades for academic excellence, affordability, greening, being military friendly and as a great place to work.

The tributes came from national and regional organizations and rankers of institutional excellence.

Sierra Magazine included SRU in its rankings of the nation’s 100 greenest universities. The report gave SRU kudos in planning and waste elimination. The magazine, published by the Sierra Club, reaches more than a million people in North America.

The Chronicle of Higher Education named SRU as one of only 97 colleges and universities nationally to its “Great College to Work For” list. The Chronicle’s results were based on responses from nearly 45,000 people from 300 institutions.

SRU was once again named a Top 100 Regional University - North in the annual U.S. News & World Report’s 2014 edition of Best Colleges. SRU was one of the top three of five PASSHE schools recognized in the “top 100” group.

AffordableCollegesOnline.org, an online information service, included SRU in its list of 81 Pennsylvania colleges and universities with the greatest lifetime return on investment.

BestOnlineColleges.org, a leading resource for online education, recognized SRU’s special education program as one of the best in the nation.

Student Horizons named SRU as a 2013-14 “College of Distinction” for institutional commitment to engaged students, great teaching, vibrant community and successful outcomes.

Victory media designated SRU as a “Military Friendly School” on its 2014 list of top colleges, universities and trade schools in the country that are doing the most to embrace America’s military service members, veterans and spouses as students and ensure their success on campus.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette named SRU a 2013 “Top Workplace.”

The Pittsburgh Business Times cited SRU as one of the “Healthiest Employers of Western Pennsylvania.” The Healthiest Employer awards program recognizes organizations committed to creating a healthy workplace, and showing leadership in six categories: culture and leadership, foundations components, strategic planning, marketing, programming and interventions, reporting and analysis.

Governor appoints student trustee

Laura Ordaz, a physics/pre-engineering major from Cooperstown, took her seat this semester as a newly appointed SRU Council of Trustees board member. Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett appointed Ordaz, who also serves as a community assistant in the residence halls.

“I know the students who have served before me did an outstanding job, so I am following in their footsteps,” she said. “I am happy to participate in all aspects of the job and to representing SRU’s students.”

The campus leader volunteers with The Awesome Spirit of Wildlife and the Office of Students with Disabilities at SRU.

Professor aids ‘marathon melt’ runners

Jeff Lynn, professor of exercise and rehabilitative sciences, doesn’t shrink from challenges. He recently traveled to the Death Valley desert in California to provide medical treatment for runners participating in the Badwater Ultramarathon.

The 135-mile marathon melt, one of the toughest footraces in the world, is especially grueling, Lynn said, because it moves from the Mojave Desert, which is 285 feet below sea level, to Mount Whitney, elevation 8,300 feet.

Lynn manned the medical station at the 42-mile marker. He assessed heat-related problems experienced by runners and their crews, helped runners control nutrition, hydration and sun exposure so that they kept their bodies in working order until the finish line.
University celebrates ‘Legends of The ROCK’

Homecoming 2013 was a legendary experience. It was a perfect weekend for renewing friendships and making new memories.

Students, voting online, elected Monte Chapman, a physics major from Turtle Creek, and Maria Montero, a social work major from Dunmore, as 2013 king and queen. They replaced Oliver Laneir, a criminology major from Pittsburgh, and Madeline Williams, a communication major from Mercer.

Homecoming fun included an indoor pep rally with games, a parade along Main Street, alumni reunions, tailgating, a soccer game and a home football game that SRU won. The Class of 1963 was honored since it was marking 50 years since graduation.

‘Green rush’ seizes campus

It was a grand sight – students, faculty and staff running around campus in green and white jerseys, T-shirts and caps emblazoned with SRU.

SRU fans wore their colors to mark the national College Colors Day. Alumni, catching the spirit, emailed photos for posting on the University’s Facebook page.

College Colors Day is an annual celebration promoting college tradition and spirit by encouraging fans across America to wear their colors.

New students ‘wowed’

The 1,500 new and returning students who moved into campus residence halls did so in style thanks to 600 “Weekend of Welcome” (WOW) student and staff volunteers.

Upper-class students and staff, wearing fluorescent green WOW T-shirts, helped new students carry their clothes and technology into the halls.

An informal examination of out-of-state license plates shows students arrived from many states, including California, the Carolinas, Michigan, Connecticut, Virginia, West Virginia, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Arizona.
International students enrich campus

More than 30 international students, from Germany, Sweden, Korea, Australia and other foreign countries enrolled this fall. They help to enhance globalism and give American-born students opportunities to learn more about foreign cultures.

New Language Center bridges cultural barriers

Foreign-born students have a new meeting place that speaks their language – SRU’s Language Center in Strain Behavioral Science Building.

Seungku “Steve” Park, a South Korean native, is the first director. He is running the English as a Second Language Program, building international relationships with foreign institutions and recruiting new professors.

“The English as a Second Language Program is especially important for many international students who want to study at SRU but need English language training. Globalization is essential, and it starts with the awareness of cultural diversity,” he said.

‘94 graduate powers way to Arena Football Hall of Fame

Greg Hopkins, ‘94, a former SRU and Arena Football League standout, has been named to the Arena Football Hall of Fame Class of 2013.

Recipients are selected through a combination of votes cast by fans, the Arena Football Hall of Fame Advisory Board and current Arena Football Hall of Fame members.

Hopkins, who played 10 seasons as a wide receiver/linebacker in the AFL and set the league record for career interceptions returned for a touchdown with eight, earned the league’s Ironman Award in 2002 as the top two-way performer.

A four-year letterman and three-time All-America and Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference selection at SRU, Hopkins remains The Rock’s all-time leader in pass receptions (215), pass receiving yards (3,382) and pass receiving touchdowns (28). He also set Rock single-season records with 83 receptions for 1,283 yards and 12 TDs as a senior in 1994.

Hopkins was inducted into the SRU Athletic Hall of Fame in 2005.

Gary Charmel, ‘86, communication

Home:
Las Vegas, Nev.

Profession:
I am president of Johnson Brothers of Nevada, Inc., a wine, spirits and beer wholesale beverage distribution company that distributes to restaurants, casinos and retail establishments through southern Nevada. We also provide sales consulting, training and printing services.

Great accomplishment:
Successfully running a company.

Hobbies:
Fitness, food, wine and reading.

Influence of SRU:
I really enjoyed my time at The Rock, and my experiences there have had a positive effect on me throughout my life both personally and professionally. My instructors, advisers, coaches and teammates educated me, believed in me, supported me, challenged me and brought out the best in me. I am a lifetime Alumni Association member. I support SRU and the football program. My association with Rock football enabled me to understand the value of hard work, preparation, teamwork, competition and commitment to a goal, which continues to benefit me throughout my life. As a result, I’m committed to ‘paying it forward’ by supporting ‘Mihalik’s Mission’ in order to help elevate Rock football to elite status worthy of competing for the NCAA Division II championship. This will not only benefit the current players and coaches, but I truly believe it will provide a financial windfall for the students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community by enhancing the SRU brand.
Patty Monteson, ’67, ’81, physical education

Home:
Pompano Beach, Fla.

Profession:
I was a health and physical education teacher for 15 years. I retired from teaching in the Baldwin-Whitehall School District to become the fitness supervisor at The Spa at Palm Aire in Pompano Beach. After that, along with a business partner, I started a spa-consulting company, HFD Spa, in 1983.

Great Accomplishment:
Hopefully, I haven’t done it yet. Upon reflection, it probably is being a pioneer by starting a business that had not existed prior to our forming HFD Spa and running it successfully for almost 30 years.

Hobbies:
I enjoy traveling and have been to all continents except Australia. When I’m home, I enjoy not having a ‘work schedule’ and having more leisure time.

Why I Give:
I believe I received a wonderful education thanks to the many dedicated professors I had over the years. Slippery Rock not only prepared me to be a teacher, but also strongly influenced how I approached starting and running my own business. I try to give back to the University whenever I can. I belong to the Alumni Association and always look forward to the Florida events. I served on the President’s Advisory Board for several years, donated to various funds and scholarships and am a member of the Amethyst Lifetime Giving Club.

Sports Information unveils new athletics site

SRU sports enthusiasts have a new and more user-friendly website to visit for the latest news about ROCK athletics. The official athletics website, www.RockAthletics.com, was conceived by Jon Holtz, assistant sports information director, and designed by Holtz and SIDEARM Sports.

The complete overhaul offers a host of new features, including upgraded navigation panels, web graphics, video and statistics integration.

Future plans for the website include an adaptive design concept that will enhance mobile viewing on all platforms.

Student-faculty team maps campus

Interested in the University’s sustainable campus features? There’s a map for that. A student-faculty team used geographic information system software to create a new suite of digital maps that display sustainable campus features among other information rich topics.

The map identifies wildlife sanctuaries, wetlands, athletic fields, parking areas, street and sidewalk lighting and many other campus physical features. Admissions counselors will use the printable map during student tours.

Student cartographers Max Scanlon and Josh Lewis, environmental studies majors from Glenshaw and Lancaster, collaborated with Paul Scanlon, special assistant to the president for sustainability planning and operations, and Jack Livingston, SRU associate professor of geography, geology and environment, to create the multi-layer map.

Check it out at http://www.sru.edu/president/sustainability
Filling stations save 250,000 water bottles

The reusable water bottle filling stations that started sprouting up around campus in 2011 have already succeeded in avoiding the use of more than an estimated 250,000 disposable water bottles. The initiative reduces expenses and is another example of SRU’s sustainability leadership.

“We now have more than 20 filling stations on campus that not only help reduce the waste from single-use disposable plastic water bottles, but they filter the water to make it taste better,” said Scott Albert, SRU director of facilities and planning.

“Any way you look at it, this program is a huge success for SRU students, faculty and staff,” said Paul Scanlon, special assistant to the president for sustainability planning and operations.

“At the going rate on campus of $1.65 per bottle, that’s close to half a million that stays in our pockets instead of being spent on buying plastic bottles,” Scanlon said.

“We’re also reaping the environmental benefits – reducing the amount of waste we dump in the landfill and eliminating the greenhouse gas emissions and water used in the manufacture and transportation of disposable bottles.”

Grant funds equestrian center greenhouse

Horseback riders using the University’s Storm Harbor Equestrian Center will soon have another therapeutic feature, an “accessible greenhouse.”

The center, which specializes in educational and riding opportunities benefiting those with disabilities, is using a $10,723 grant from the Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Trust to build a greenhouse along the center’s outdoor trail. It will enable riders with special needs to grow and take care of plants.

Storm Harbor Equestrian Center provides numerous research opportunities for SRU students interested in equine assisted activities.

SRU’s Robert Vallin pens mathematics textbook

Robert Vallin, professor of mathematics, has written “The Elements of Cantor Sets: with Applications.” The book targets upper-level undergraduates, graduate students and researchers.

“This book is best as a textbook for a capstone course, such as our seminar, or as the guide for an independent study course,” Vallin said.

The Cantor Set, which was first published in an 1875 paper, is a special set in the interval of [0,1]. “It helps to illustrate some of the paradoxical parts of infinity,” Vallin said.


Music professor toots flutes

Kathleen Melago, associate professor of music, has composed a book of etudes that has received distinction as a finalist in the National Flute Association Newly Published Music Competition.

“Modal Exercises for Double- and Triple-Tonguing Mastery” will be reviewed by the association’s member publication, “The Flutist Quarterly.”

For her book, Melago composed various etudes in every key and mode in which to hone the skills of double and triple tonguing. Melago included advice from Stacey Steele, SRU assistant professor of music.

Alumnus continues ‘Winky Studmire’ series

G.T. Wiley, ’64 and ’68, a retired teacher, has written “Winky Studmire & the Incident on Hazard Creek.” It is the third volume in his Winky Studmire series.

The books are adventure tales that follow Winky’s life from upper elementary grades through Winky’s college antics while attending Mystic Bay University. The books are available at Amazon.com.

Special education professors collaborate

Richard Barger-Anderson, Robert Isherwood and Joseph Merhaut, associate professors of special education, collaborated to write “Strategic Co-Teaching in Your School, Using the Co-Design Model.”

The book outlines methods for taking collaborative teaching and learning to the next level. Published by Brooks Publishing, Amazon.com carries the volume.

Biology professors pen botany textbook

Jerry Chmielewski, professor of biology, and David Krayesky, assistant professor of biology, have written and published “General Botany Laboratory Manual.”

The textbook provides a blueprint for viewing interrelationships between and among structures, handling live and preserved material and proper use of microscopes. Images in the manual serve as a guide for viewing slides.

Published by AuthorHouse, the book is available at Amazon.com.
Many alumni remember living in student housing, wondering who their roommate would be and sharing the hall bathroom with 30 to 50 people. Those uneasy experiences are a thing of the past for current Slippery Rock University students. Residence halls provide an environment that support learning, friendship and personal development. Students connect for success.
They used to be tiny, charmless cinderblock rooms with bad air. Slippery Rock’s South Hall dormitory was such a tight fit. Quentin Currie, who enrolled in 1958, recalled his men’s hall room as a total disaster – three guys, one a heavy smoker, crammed into bunk beds, “windows from 1890,” dirty clothes and “gang showers.”

Currie relocated to Patterson Hall, nicknamed “the dungeon,” but it was no better. When an out-of-season cold weather spell converged on the area, Patterson’s heating system failed.

“After two nights of sleeping in a very cold dorm, 100 men marched up to the President’s House chanting, ‘We want heat.’ We want heat,” Currie said. Despite the hardship, “I speak for many when I say countless lifelong friendships were developed in South Hall in the late 1950s.”

In years gone by, Slippery Rock students sought out their own interests with little guidance or support from housing and rarely knew anything about their roommate. Today’s residence hall student has a team of student development specialists to assist them during their journey.

SRU has adopted a residential college model that connects residence hall life to the classroom. The halls provide a living and learning environment that supports each student’s educational,
social and personal development. Residence Life and housing staff are committed to making each student’s out-of-the-classroom experience the best it can be.

Eighteen year olds heading off the college need guidance. They’re looking to break co-dependency strings, meet people, form study groups, join clubs and succeed academically. They want an environment that can be transformed into something closer to a first apartment: suite-style rooms with private bathrooms, kitchens, communal living rooms and in-house study and recreational space.

“It goes back to the dormitory versus the residence hall concept,” said Kevin Currie, SRU director of Residence Life. “A dormitory was just a place to lay your head, a place to stay. As the true residential campus evolved, we realized how important it was for residence halls to become places where education happens. Not only does SRU work very hard to connect students with the classroom experience, but students learn life skills, conflict management, time management, tolerance by forming bonds and they develop lifelong friendships,” he said.

The concept of linking the academic with the residential was intentional in the design of Buildings A-F, referred to as the residential suites. The housing, owned by the SRU Foundation Inc., offers a close-knit community with all the advantages of home, and many rewards students don’t get at home.

They are the kind of halls that accommodate extra-long bedding and plump pillows. They offer 100 percent wireless, ergonomic desk chairs, climate control, technology connections galore and cleanliness. Parents don’t need to swab fixtures with disinfecting wipes during move in.

Many subtleties make students comfortable, which promotes good study habits. The halls were designed and built with modern, open architecture. The University wanted warm, comfortable colors, sensor lighting and pleasing common areas. Student paintings on walls are themed, such as a painting of musical notes in the humanities living learning hall. Students use E-Readers, laptops, iPads, Nooks and cell phones from anywhere inside and on patios.

“A large part of the impact really takes place in our halls, because when students are not in class, they are at home in the halls and that is where the magic happens,” said Justin Brown, a 2011 public relations graduate who served as community assistant in one of SRU’s halls.

Brown went on to earn a master’s degree and recently accepted a position as resident director at West Chester University. He said SRU’s residential renaissance contributed to his success.

“SRU halls stand out because number one, they are beautiful,” Brown said. “There are very few campuses that I have been too, and I have traveled many places, that have residence halls as nice as SRU does. Everything is in one place. Friends, academic support, computer labs, study rooms, programs and game lounges for friends – some even have small food places. SRU halls are clean, safe and student friendly.”

Students living in campus halls reap many academic benefits, including:

• Access to Living-Learning Communities that house students with similar academic interests together and offer support through study groups and faculty engagement;
• Free Internet ports in their rooms, computer labs and a free supply of paper for printing
• Laptop computers at each residence hall Welcome Desk;
• 100 percent wireless access; free registration for up to five devices;
• In-hall dance studio, music practice room, art studio, education resource rooms and education labs with computers that double as classrooms;
• Nearly 70 community adviser mentors, graduate assistants and full-time staff;
• Biweekly Community Circles on every floor; and
• Work, leadership, social and educational programs and involvement in hall councils.

SRU’s student housing includes the six, four-floor suites, The ROCK Apartments and the more traditional North and Rhodes halls. The University owns 2,800 beds and offers
rooms with double and quadruple options. Each building houses up to 350 students. Families choose from many price and privacy options, each with plenty of open areas and access to support resources.

Paula Olivero, SRU assistant vice president for student development, said students who live in on-campus housing are more likely to get involved with out-of-class activities, build friendships with their classmates, interact with faculty members and remain enrolled.

Residence Life is one of several offices that are part of the Student Development area led by Olivero, who has served SRU for close to 25 years. Under her supervision, Housing and Residence Life was transformed from dorms with beds and social activities to residence halls that create connections to the entire campus.

“The motto of this arm of the student affairs is: Creating Opportunities for Success,” Olivero said. “Its mission is to promote, create, coordinate and support programs and activities that connect students to the University, create links to the classroom experience and prepare students to be positive campus and community leaders and encourage self-exploration and growth.”

‘Lots of friendly people’

New students and recent graduates said the halls contribute to a welcoming atmosphere, reduce homesickness and build confidence for academic challenges. Nazhia Polk, a first-year student from Erie, followed her two brothers to SRU and moved into Building E in August.

“Residence Life gives us the option of joining a living-learning hall, trading rooms and picking roommates, which makes it easier to connect with other students of the same major and to be comfortable with our surroundings,” she said. “Building E is a great living environment with a lot of friendly people, and it’s the closest building to main campus.”

Unlike the old days, Polk and roommate Ashley Kirsch got to know each before they arrived on campus.

“Over the summer, I emailed Nazhia to get in contact with her and to introduce myself because we did not know each other before coming to Slippery Rock University,” Kirsch said. “We discussed what we each were bringing to school and what we thought was necessary to have in our dorm room. I really enjoy staying in the residence halls. The halls are very nice and in good condition.”

Students’ connections with living on campus begin at orientation. Some of the students attend in the spring while others go in the early summer. Here they learn who their roommate is, about their room assignment and are provided with business card templates they can print and provide to friends and family members that state their name, hall address and email.

Connections continue when the student signs a housing contract to live in either the traditional residence halls or the newer residential suites. Where once freshmen – now called first-year students – filled out paper forms and mailed them to the housing office, today they go online to “My Housing” to complete the housing contract online. Virtually all aspects of their housing are handled electronically.

When it comes time for room selection in the early spring, no longer do students gather in halls to await their name and number to be called to select their room. Instead, they go online to participate in an online lottery from anywhere they may be at the time.

“My experience living in a residential suite was nothing short of positive,” said Tesin Gnalian, an early childhood and special education major from Wexford who lived in the suites as an underclass student. “Since I am an early childhood and special education major, I had the opportunity to live in the education living-learning community during my freshmen and sophomore years. I could not have asked for a better transition to college life. I felt a sense of community instantaneously.”
Chad Palladino, an early childhood and special education major from New Wilmington, said his “CA” influenced him so much he decided to become a community adviser.

“Even three years later, I still sit next to the familiar faces I met on my first day in Watson Hall,” he said. “We still discuss classes, which professors to take and what our plans for the future are. My main advice for incoming first-year students would be to make all of what you can of your college experience. The residence halls provide ways of facilitating these experiences and help you in your journey to become successful.”

Alina Idrissova, a 2012 graduate who enrolled from Kazakhstan, said the halls shaped her perception of a positive and valuable college experience and helped her make friends and form professional connections. She and her roommate, Salta Serikova, shared classes as business majors, joined study groups and participated in special events.

“Both of us lived on the business floor in Building E, since both of us were business majors and most of the students on that floor were business majors, we shared multiple classes,” said Idrissova, now a graduate student in Miami. “That made the study sessions much easier and more helpful, because all of us would prepare for the tests, quizzes or regular homework together. Most of us got excellent grades at the end of the term and it felt like it was a team effort.”

“As the semester ended, all of us would go and celebrate our accomplishments as a team,” she said. “Salta and I also participated in many residence hall contests and activities, where we met more friends.”

Kelly Ligion, a transfer student from Lower Burrell, said the cleanliness and modern rooms wowed her, especially in comparison to every other college she visited in Pennsylvania and the surrounding states.

“The residence halls here are definitely set up to be all about the student,” she said. “SRU really cares about its students’ living arrangements and realizes how vital it is for students to be comfortable in order to be successful.”

Forty-four years and counting

While the physical structure of today’s residence halls may be much different than those decades ago, one thing – some would say the most important thing – hasn’t changed a bit. Residence halls or dorms are still the place students create friends for life.

Ronald Wasilak arrived in 1958 and moved into Room 200 at South Hall. He was assigned the top of the Army-style, wooden bunk, which was typical of the era. He recalled his face being very close to the ceiling.

“The ‘springs’ were the wire fence type and the cotton mattress was about four inches thick,” he said. “Sleeping was very much like being in a hammock. The room was painted institutional mint green, as was the door and the window frames. The state must have received a bargain on the paint as the halls were the same color. With a bare wooden floor and three windows, it was a rather Spartan room.

The three windows did provide great views, Wasilak said, and it was a fine vantage point from which to watch the health and physical education women walk past in their gym attire as they made their way to East or West Gym for classes. One of those coeds, Patricia, has been Wasilak’s wife for 51 years.

“South Hall provided few services,” he said. “There was a TV lounge that was about as large as two dorm rooms with maybe 30 chairs and one black and white 16-inch television. Another small room had a couple of soda vending machines. There was one telephone per floor located in an empty closet and if someone answered a ringing phone, they would shout out to whomever the call was for. We did receive a clean sheet and a pillowcase each week, if we were willing to walk to the basement to get them.”

Brought together under bare-bones conditions, some graduates formed lasting friendships.

Judi Stitzel, ‘73, early childhood, and Kathy Andrasko Sidun, ‘73, special education, have been friends 44 years. They lived in Bard Hall for a year and North Hall for three.

“Who would have thought that in the summer of 1969 I would meet my best friend, someone I love like a sister,” Sidun said. “We were both recent high school graduates entering college in the summer/January program. I wasn’t really sure I wanted to be there, let alone live with a complete stranger. That summer changed our lives forever.”

FRIENDS FOR LIFE: (from left) Judi Stitzel and Kathy Andrasko Sidun, in 1970 and 2011, became friends as roommates in North Hall. They remain close.
Sidun said current students can form similar bonds if they follow the “three R’s:” respect each other’s feelings; remember to be kind and understanding and remember to laugh and cry.

“Judi and I have returned to SRU many times through the years. It certainly has changed significantly,” she said. “Of course there were no such things as co-ed dorms. You had to sign a guest into your room only certain hours of the day. I can recall hearing, ‘make sure your feet touch the floor’ if you signed a male into your room.”

Stitzel recalled sleeping in the bottom bunk in a room on the second floor of North Hall and decorating their room with a life-like poster of Joe Namath, the former football star.

“Kathy was always the sweet one,” she said. “I think things worked out so well for us as we were both very young, innocent high school girls who learned quickly we could depend on each other. We would dress up for each other’s birthdays in ridiculous costumes and invite everyone in the hall for something we could whip up in the popcorn popper.”

She said friendships were made in the halls, but not all of them lasted as long as theirs.

“We were blessed with a wonderful friendship that started at 17 years old, and we can now collect Social Security,” Stitzel said. “Distance seemed like it never mattered; we were always together when we needed to be. Life has it’s ups and downs and no matter what life has dealt me, Slippery Rock gave me my best support system and someone I have loved with all my heart since that June way back in 1969.”

**Good for each other**

Other lifelong friends include John Hicks, ’62, SRU professor emeritus of education and a former University trustee, and Dennis Murray, ’63, a current trustee. Their wives Judy Hicks, ’62, and Gerry Murray, ’62, were roommates in North Hall and remain close.

“Dennis and I met as a result of being assigned to the same room in Patterson Hall,” Hicks said. “I had recently returned from the service and the dorm and furniture were all new.”

Murray said the young men had a lot in common and good chemistry. “John was good for me. He was a neat freak,” Murray said, laughing. “We used to have to clean and wax the floor together.”

Both men delivered mail for the U.S. Postal Service as students, and they took a vacation together to Washington, D.C. Later, when the Murray’s married, Hicks served as best man. They also took graduate classes together at Penn State.

Brought together in far-from-ideal circumstances, Murray said lasting friendships were common in those early days. “We were all close,” he said. “When I needed help in some subject or John did, we would be able to find it in Patterson.”

Twenty years later, Ben Addison, ’87, recalled moving into the seven-floor Founders Hall in 1983, but accommodations were not that different from earlier years. There was one bathroom for every 20 people and no appliances except a plug-in refrigerator were allowed.

“The room was a typical cylinder block, 8x10 or whatever the dimensions were,” Addison said.

Addison said he lived in Founders all four years.

“The new apartments with stoves, full size refrigerators, microwaves, private living areas, separate bedrooms are nice,” he said.

“But somehow thousands of us back in the ’80s survived with a contraband hot plate and showering and shaving with 20 of your closest friends each morning. I call it character building. I’m sure many freshmen today would call it torture.”

“Judi and I have returned to SRU many times through the years. It certainly has changed significantly. Of course there were no such things as co-ed dorms. You had to sign a guest into your room only certain hours of the day. I can recall hearing, ‘make sure your feet touch the floor’ if you signed a male into your room.”

–Kathy Andrasko Sidun ’73.
The British are coming. The British are coming. Actually, they’re already here. Brits occupy top positions in American television, publishing, business and now, the academic ranks at Slippery Rock University.

Philip Way, provost and vice president for academic affairs and a Great Britain native, joined SRU in February. He has emerged as an ardent advocate for bridging the divide between academic fields through interdisciplinary teaching.

The collaborative approach to higher education enables academic departments to learn from each other’s strengths and find a common language for student success. This “united kingdom” offers graduates a wider knowledge base and better employment preparation for a pluralistic world by providing a more varied undergraduate experience.

“It is certainly important for students to get a good grounding in at least one discipline, but if they add a second or a third discipline, that would prepare them well for whatever job they do or if they go to graduate school,” Way said.

Interdisciplinary approaches have existed in the Western world since the ancient Greek philosophers. It is not a new concept.
However, the meaning of it has acquired a relatively new model that takes into account the myriad connections between fields. Disciplines feed off each other to become more efficient and more pertinent to global, social and economic issues.

Way said he is building off SRU’s successes by pursuing additional collaborative opportunities and has asked the four academic deans to explore further programs, such as a recent joint research trip by geology and art majors to the Badlands.

“This is the way of the future, and the truth is the world is interdisciplinary,” Way said. “Unfortunately, the world’s problems do not break down simply in terms of one discipline. Take a look at energy or sustainability. You need to have multiple frames in which to look at those issues to sort them out.”

“If you go into the topic of energy with a business framework, you’d do a cost-benefit analysis of things you can measure but you won’t necessarily look at other angles,” he said. “A political scientist may look at it differently and you might have people in the geological area who will have another view.”

There are numerous examples of interdisciplinary success at SRU, such as the student who receives a double major in French and chemistry and finds a job in a French pharmaceutical company; an art professor who specializes in painting collaborates with a physics professor to create a pedagogical project allowing painting students to understand the use of light; or a dance major who minors in communication finds a job in performance and public relations.

Way said he envisions an academic plan that teaches economics majors to look at a problem through the lens of an economist, sociologist, political scientist and engineer.

More professional studies majors will minor in European or Latin American studies, while sustainability and health majors might work together to resolve problems.

“Take obesity. You can look at it medically, genetically, or you can look at it in terms of sociology,” Way said. “It is a complex area requiring different disciplinary angles, including health and nutrition. We want students to synthesize information from different perspectives. That is the kind of person we need to be educating nowadays in order to deal with the world’s problems.”

Way’s responsibilities encompass all academic matters as well as institutional research, academic budgeting, information technology, enrollment management, University Police and academic labor relations. His primary strategic role is to refine and execute the academic affairs portion of the University’s wide-ranging strategic plan, “Reaching for 2025 and Beyond.”

The plan’s Trend One commits the University to educating graduates who understand and act
on global issues affecting political, environmental and economic stability.

Way said SRU graduates must be ready to parachute into a particular country and survive adequately in the professional world, the business world and socially. They should demonstrate versatility in culture, language and the lingo of their field.

“We’re going to have graduates who are more equipped to be competitive in the job market,” he said. “And that is what it’s really all about. We want to help students be successful in school and help them find positions afterward.”

Eva Tsuquiashi-Daddesio, dean of the College of Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts, agreed that graduates need a larger perspective than that provided by their academic major. “Exploring interdisciplinary connections is what will allow students to maximize the use of their talents within their chosen field of study,” she said.

While SRU has not changed graduation requirements, Tsuquiashi-Daddesio said she talks to department chairs, faculty and fellow deans about encouraging students to multidiscipline their education. “I also convey this information to parents during orientation,” she said.

**Old world man**

Way’s commitment to blended education stems in part to his background and education. He received his bachelor’s degree from Cambridge University in economics. He completed a master’s degree in industrial relations at the University of Warwick before he worked in a research position at Nuffield College, Oxford University for two years. He subsequently returned to Warwick for his doctorate in industrial and business studies.

He then won a Frank Knox Memorial Fellowship to Harvard University, where he attended classes, taught economics and conducted research.

Way served as associate provost for undergraduate programs at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where he was responsible for the universitywide honors programs, core curriculum, service learning, undergraduate research, advising, scholarships and student retention. Previously, Way worked at the University of Cincinnati for 21 years, rising through the ranks and taking on progressively more responsible leadership roles.

“Traveling around and moving to different places has made me more intellectually curious, because I see how things can be very different from one place to another,” Way said. “And so, being a curious kind of person, I say, ‘Why is this?’ and I say, ‘What is the role of economics? What is the role of politics? What is the role of the government system, the culture, and so on? If I hadn’t moved around, I wouldn’t see that degree or variation.’”

Way said he sees many indications SRU students understand the importance of globalism.

“I’m encouraged by the fact that we have 400 students a year studying abroad, it may only be for a short time, maybe a week or...
10 days over spring break, but they are opening their minds to other cultures,” he said. “I think they’ll be more open to going further in their fields in terms of working in the U.S. and possibly working overseas too.”

SRU has also incorporated technology into programs, such as projection technology for dance majors to use during performances. SRU’s new master of business administration program uses digital infrastructure to combine online and in-person instruction.

At the eight-month mark, Way said much about SRU impresses him, especially the student-centered focus.

“There is no confusion of mission,” he said. “It is very straight forward, it’s not a big research university where there are competing demands in terms of a huge research engine. Sure our faculty conducts research but it’s an add-on to our fundamental mission. And I think that clarity spells good fortune for our students.”
What’s the first thing that helps future students decide that Slippery Rock University is the place for them?

The well-educated faculty? The comfortable beds in the residence halls? Great food in the dining hall?

All of those are important, but first impressions count.

It’s the way the place looks. The bursts of orange winding along a curved sidewalk, a pop of pink framing a building and that lush green that makes rough concrete edges seem softer.

SRU’s recent green up, seeded with close to 75 trees, hundreds of annuals, perennials, shrubs, flower boxes and green roofs, has made campus a more picturesque and enjoyable place. The facelift provides an eye-catching respite from brick, mortar and concrete.

Studies have shown that the first 15 minutes of a campus visit are the most important for prospective students as they decide where they’ll spend the next four years.

That’s long before students set foot in the cafeteria, take a seat in a lecture hall, marvel at the equipment in the science lab or play catch on the Quad.

Dallas Cott, SRU’s assistant director of campus services, is an integral part of that crucial first 15 minutes. Among Cott’s many duties is the huge job of campus

By Amy Clingensmith Mongiovi ’08
beautification – huge because the University covers more than 660 acres. In the nearly two years since Cott began his post, campus improvements have been a priority.
Since last spring, Cott has overseen the planting of 50 flats of annual flowers, from marigolds to petunias, as well as perennials such as Knock Out roses that will bloom each year. A dozen giant new planters overflowing with flowers also dot the campus.

Although Cott’s position isn’t new, the increased attention to beautifying campus is. Cott, who has a degree in turf management from Pennsylvania State University, works to improve the grounds, landscape flowerbeds and care for athletic fields, among other things.
And he takes that first 15 minutes of fame very seriously.

“When students first come onto campus, we want them and their parents to feel like they’re at home, to feel like they can really be comfortable here,” Cott said.

A fancy term for making the campus look great so potential students want to return is “enrollment retention,” and it’s one of the buzzwords in higher education today.

Cott and his team strategically place the landscaped flowerbeds, trees and shrubs along the route used by the Office of Admissions tour guides. The detailed landscaping goes a long way in creating that important first impression.

“It’s a win-win,” Cott said, “when student workers can be involved in campus beautification.”

“It’s great for students because they can take pride in their campus,” he said. “They can walk past a flowerbed, hear their friends comment on it, and say, ‘I did that.’”

As with any garden undertaking, campus landscaping isn’t a “love it and leave it” project. There’s continual maintenance – daily weeding and watering, as well as pruning and care of the many trees on campus.

Since the green up began in 2010, close to 75 trees have been planted. Species range from strong oaks and maples that do well in western Pennsylvania to dogwoods, redbuds and weeping cherries that explode with color at just the right time. Other more unique trees serve as teaching points for faculty and students. For example, ginkgo trees with their fan-shaped leaves also adorn campus, as well as smoke trees, that can bloom in a rainbow of colors.

New trash and recycling cans have been put out on upper campus, and new park-like benches have been put out in key locations of upper and lower campus.

All of Cott’s work is in an effort to attract and retain students, but there’s an overarching environmental thrust to campus beautification, too.

Paul Scanlon, special assistant to the president for sustainability planning and operations, heads the relatively new Office of Sustainability at SRU. The umbrella group coordinates projects related to the environment. And it’s more than just being kind to Mother Nature. SRU’s strategic plan, “Reaching for 2025 and Beyond,” contains a section on environment goals.

Scanlon said he works to leverage resources to ensure that campus departments are working together to expand conservation, recycling and including sustainability in the curriculum.
In an effort to bring these goals to life, a pair of geographic information systems students recently created two maps of campus – a greening map that shows SRU’s sustainability projects and a topographical map that provides a blueprint for incorporating sustainability into planting and landscaping.

“For example, rather than mowing, can we plant a sustainable ground cover that will look nice and also cut down on the time, resources and gasoline used for mowing,” Scanlon said.

Scanlon said the University has outlined steps to go carbon neutral by the year 2037, or achieving net zero carbon emissions. In the meantime, SRU is working to reduce its carbon footprint by making changes in food preparation, lighting improvements, heating and cooling measures. The Jack C. Dinger Building and the Robert M. Smith Student Center also have green roofs, meaning that they are covered with vegetation. The Smith Center also has a rainwater garden with local indigenous plants, and plans are under way to expand features like these to other campus buildings.

Inside the residence halls, the sustainability lesson is also being taught. Residence halls are equipped with “energy dashboards,” or computer screens in each lobby that show the energy use for that dorm compared to other residence halls. While in competition with other dorms, students learn to conserve energy through simple behavior modification, like turning off the lights. For example, the “Small Steps, Big Payoff” initiative reminds students that collectively reducing their shower time by five minutes per day would save 30 million gallons per year, reduce carbon emissions by 1,000 tons and serve as the equivalent of planting 22,000 tree seedlings.

So why is it important to teach students about sustainability alongside their majors? Scanlon said today’s graduates will live in a different world—one where climate change is a concern, where incentives will be given for living more Earth-friendly, and where the environment simply can’t be taken for granted.

(Read more about Slippery Rock University’s sustainability efforts at www.sru.edu/sustainability.)
Hunger, homelessness, poverty, devastating diseases, natural disasters, blight, illiteracy… Watch the evening news or surf the net and one can’t help but be overwhelmed by the need. The cynic may question whether anyone cares or what one individual can do, but remember this number, 500,000 hours and counting.

Long before schools across the country offered community-service programs in an effort to hone civic responsibility and social justice, Slippery Rock University students were walking the talk. And because of their experiences, many have found themselves rethinking how they want to live their lives.

“I had the opportunity to travel with 17 other SRU students for a youth community service project in Washington, D.C. My group headed to D.C. and helped clean up a playground,” said Elise Michaux, a 2011 and 2013 graduate.

“As a group, we reflected on the experience and everyone was so humbled by what we had just done. Words like ‘life changing,’ ‘honored’ and ‘eye opening’ were used to describe the emotions we were feeling. I thought I was going to make an impact on the lives of families; I did not know it would be reciprocal.”

Community service, leadership and involvement are major initiatives at SRU, with more than 4,000 students participating in campus, national or international projects last year. While some of the ventures were grand in scale, such as hurricane relief, pro-
grams operate under the premise that even the tiniest contribution better the world in some way.

“This past year we were able to really come together as a campus and embrace the concept of service,” said Brad Kovaleski, director of SRU’s Center for Student Involvement and Leadership, which leads the programs. “Faculty-infused service learning in their courses. Students coordinated a significant number of programs and many departments worked diligently to implement or enhance service opportunities.”

The CSIL offers opportunities within three main areas: involvement, leadership and service. Involvement opportunities include the Student Government Association, Green and White Society, University Program Board, Greek Life, clubs and organizations. Leadership offers the Compass Leadership Program, First-Year Leader Scholar Program and the Board of Governors Program. Service includes the Community Service Corps, CareBreaks, Peer Mentoring and various campus events such as blood drives and veterans’ breakfasts.

“The integration of these programs is key to the development of students’ academic success and their willingness to give back to their communities after graduation,” Kovaleski said. “These active students are part of a long legacy of involvement at SRU.”

Kovaleski said participation has increased steadily over the past 20 years. Since 1994, more than 1,300 SRU students have participated in CareBreaks alone, logging 200,000 hours of service in 26 U.S. cities and seven countries. Students tutored children, helped build low-income housing, aided the hungry and supported environmental preservation.

This past year, more than 40 students traveled to Jamaica to assist in a local village and hospital. Other students supported Empty Bowls for hunger relief, Toys for Tots, the Make-A-Wish Foundation and the St. Jude Research Children’s Hospital.

Thousands of students have signed up for service, leadership and charity fundraisers over the years, including 4,181 students in 2012-13, and committed hundreds of thousands of hours to volunteering. The work continues: Students will contribute to service projects in Chicago, Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh and New Jersey during the school year.

“They are all voluntary experiences,” Kovaleski said. “None of our students is required to participate in any of these programs. So the numbers demonstrate how SRU students are living a mission that is civic-minded and engaged.”

Cheryl Norton, SRU president, said involvement helps students on their journey of self-discovery and global citizenry.

“We want to graduate students who not only understand values-directed leadership skills, but students who are prepared to take leadership roles in our community and support the continued development of a society that promotes democratic ideals, respects diversity and advocates for social justice,” she said.

Participation promotes well-being and a stronger commitment to academic excellence, said Laurel Dagnon, CSIL programming director. “Research indicates that engaged students do better in their classes,” she said. “It adds dimension to their educational experience. It is a great networking opportunity and very attractive to potential employers. It’s a great problem-solving/critical thinking skill builder. Students feel better about themselves and their self-esteem soars.”

Julie Varnish, CSIL assistant director, said it is rewarding to see the light bulb go on as students see how through service to others their lives have been transformed.

“I’ve had more than one student tell me that because of their involvement with a program, they decided to stay at SRU and that their overall college experience was so much more beneficial for them,” Varnish said. “A lot of my students have used the skills they developed at SRU in their current careers or even decided to pursue a career in event planning/programming because of their experiences from SRU.”

Alice Del Vecchio, SRU assistant professor of professional studies, was an early pioneer for community service. She connected SRU with the federal AmeriCorps program, launched a tutoring center in New Castle and developed the first “Cardboard Village” to raise awareness of the homeless problem in America.

Students who participated in CSIL programs said the passion for leadership and helping others certainly carried over into their careers and life beyond SRU.

Sade Battle, a 2009 communication graduate and security event
manager in Orlando, Fla., said she connected with CSIL “from day one.” She joined the First-Year Freshman Scholar Program, Compass Leadership and became a Green and White Society ambassador and eventually, president of University Program Board.

Battle led a fundraiser involving security work at a Heinz Field event in Pittsburgh, forging a career goal.

“I wanted to find out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, and CSIL gave me the avenues to experiment and find out what I truly love to do,” she said.

Austin Hawk, a 2012 elementary education graduate and Teach for America fourth-grade teacher in San Antonio, Texas, said he tutored disadvantaged children, led a “Hoop Heroes” afterschool program and participated in a CareBreak to Las Vegas, where he and other students worked with homeless populations. While in Nevada, Hawk said he helped provide upkeep for a veteran’s facility. He also served as a Green and White Society ambassador.

Hawk said his service work compelled him to join the fight against educational inequity with “Teach for America.”

“I am a very proud alumnus because SRU provided me with the skills in the classroom and the ‘hands on’ experiences through volunteer opportunities to be successful alongside my peers in Teach for America who have attended much larger universities and Ivy League colleges,” he said.

Andrew Bolla, a 2011 history graduate and Marine Corps officer, said he served as a mentor for the First-Year Leaders Scholar Program, participated in Compass Leadership, became a Green and White Society ambassador and a residence hall leader.

“As a community assistant with Slippery Rock’s residence life, I further developed my capability of interacting with students and identifying at-risk actions, an important skill when working with Marines who may be dealing with stressful situations,” he said.

“My experience outside the classroom at Slippery Rock University has had a direct and lasting impact on my current career, and the skill sets I developed through the CSIL set a solid foundation for me to become a Marine officer.”

Chris Stefanides, a 2010 masters in park and resource management graduate, works as a park ranger with the National Park Service at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina. He moonlights as a firefighter.

“While at SRU, I was a graduate assistant with CSIL,” he said. “The work my students focused on was with the environment. They worked closely with Jennings Environmental Center and Moraine State Park. We did trail work and some other cleanups. CSIL taught me that one of the most important things we can do is give back, and I feel by working for the National Park Service, I am able to protect something I love and give back to the people who visit.”

Kate Hepner, a 2011 education graduate, said she participated in CSIL trips to Costa Rica and St. Lucia. Hepner distributed donated shoes to pupils in St. Lucia but pointed out that it wasn’t all work. She recalled zip lining through the rain forest in Costa Rica.

“There is nothing like the feeling of doing good alongside people you care for,” she said. “Representing Slippery Rock University and the CSIL was something that made me proud. I wanted to give back everything to the program and school that taught me so much and volunteering was the right place to start. The CSIL prepared me for the ‘real world’ because I learned a healthy balance of professionalism and fun.”

Volunteering is not only a win-win situation for volunteers and the people they serve, but for the economy as well. Remember those 500,000 hours of volunteer service SRU students have logged? Well, according to the Independent Sector, a coalition of nonprofits, foundation and corporate giving programs, those hours are worth an estimated $11,070,000.

“That’s pretty impressive,” Kovaleski said, “especially when it’s the right thing to do.”
Slippery Rock University’s new masters in business administration degree will help students credential themselves for jobs in financial services, management, manufacturing and logistics. SRU’s School of Business devised the program that will launch in January.

“We think it will have a very important and very positive impact on the region by offering top-quality business education to professionals in the region looking to expand their education and career opportunities,” said David Culp, SRU professor of economics and School of Business chair.

The MBA will feature a blended-learning approach with courses delivered face-to-face and online. Classes will be offered at the Regional Learning Alliance, an SRU-conceived satellite campus in Cranberry Township, one of the region’s fastest growing business communities.

“We found in the older-style MBA programs, the focus was on people who had worked for a few years and needed to return to school for further education,” Culp said. “Our program allows the recent college graduate or veteran employee to go right on to master’s level education making them more marketable to potential employees.”

Students will choose from three tracks: general, accounting/finance and management/marketing. Undergraduate business majors will be able to link to the program, a framework for receiving undergraduate and graduate degrees in five years, Culp said. GRI and GMAT scores are not required for admission.

The program will use an eight-week, mini-semester format. “This means a cohort will move through the program as a unit, but should a student be forced to drop out for a session due to work or family obligations, he or she can quickly re-link in the next session rather than having to wait a full year to rejoin,” he said.

The program provides an added benefit of employment networking. Students will be required to partner with an individual or team with a business employer in the Pittsburgh region to learn how to deal with problems and challenges they might see in the real world.

The job site, Simply Hired, indicates that more than 356 jobs in the Pittsburgh region list an MBA as a requirement, with another 2,200 jobs identifying an MBA as a preferred credential.

For information about enrolling in the program, visit: http://www.sru.edu/academics/colleges/cbiss/business/MBA/Pages/index.aspx
Google her: Leight leads COE’s technology efforts

Google “Joanne Leight” and the search engine drives browsers to a YouTube video featuring Leight, a Slippery Rock University associate professor of physical education and technology-education champion.

Leight recently became one of 50 educators worldwide to gain acceptance to the Google Teacher Academy in Chicago, where she became a Google Certified Teacher.

The free, professional teacher development conference gave Leight hands-on experience with the latest Google products in order to more fully incorporate technology into teaching strategies. Google accepted Leight after she submitted an online form and posted her one-minute video on the importance of technology in physical education pedagogy to YouTube.

Leight, a 1987 SRU physical education graduate who received her doctorate from Duquesne University, uses iPads in her classes and has been an advocate for the modern classroom. She serves as the College of Education’s task stream coordinator helping to convert portfolios to e-portfolios and a new electronic assessment system.

She serves on numerous technology-related committees and is the technology editor for the Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. She is the technology chair for the Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

“Our University faculty do an excellent job of modeling how to use technology in the classroom and via distance learning modalities,” said Keith Dils, dean of the College of Education. “Our faculty also do an excellent job of providing coaching and providing feedback to our teacher candidates as they themselves begin to engage their students with highly-motivating uses of technology. And, it is gratifying to see our graduates go on to apply these skills, for example, in teaching positions in the growing job-market of cyber schools.”

Even if education majors don’t take a class taught by Leight, they will learn to utilize technology. The College of Education recently introduced a Professor Protégé Program that gives students access to an iPad to be used with tasks associated with the program.

The program allows students to work one-on-one with an SRU faculty member on a service or scholarship program, earn student wages up to $800 and use an iPad for projects.

The program requires students to apply the skills learned in the program to using technology to assess, teach and motivate their students during early field experiences, pre-student teaching, student teaching, tutoring and during their first teaching job.
A big push for mathematics and science education will unfold this fall when Slippery Rock University hosts the first Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Conference for Undergraduate Research in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

More than 100 undergraduates from the 14 state system institutions will present research during the Nov. 15-16 conference.

SRU volunteered to host the conference after STEM professors advocated for the importance of recruiting and retaining STEM students at a statewide meeting. Professors say STEM careers offer some of the best employment opportunities of the 21st century.

“When it was announced that we would be hosting the conference, we got a round of applause,” said Deborah Whitfield, SRU professor of computer science and STEM undergraduate research coordinator. “When our team went to this meeting, it seemed like SRU was a bit ahead of the curve for coordinating resources for STEM undergraduate research.”

“Reaching for 2025 and Beyond,” SRU’s strategic plan, cites STEM education as an institutional priority, not only for employment, but to foster modes of thought and inquiry.

SRU offers majors in the hard sciences, including computers and several technology fields.

Conference participants will be chosen through a “double blind review” process of research projects. Faculty volunteers from the 14 state system universities will review student research papers and select the participants without knowing gender, academic major or the student’s home school.

Thomas Wenzel, professor of chemistry at Bates Colleges, will provide the keynote address. He has been the recipient of more than $2.8 million in research and educational grants and is a nationally recognized expert on student-faculty research.

SRU’s team heading the conference includes Whitfield; Jack Livingston, associate professor of geography, geology and the environment; Susan Hannam, dean of the College of Health, Environment and Science; Nancy Cruikshank, director of grants and sponsored research, Donald Zapien, professor of chemistry and Jennifer Willford, assistant professor of philosophy.
Faculty travel globe pursuing educational excellence

France, Norway, Canada, North Carolina, Louisiana – geographic distances present few barriers for College of Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts professors eager to enhance their teaching skills. Professors recently presented research, performed and headed international conferences on four continents, bringing what they learned back to the classroom.

“Going to an international conference allows me to gain insight about the climate of the dance field that our students at Slippery Rock University will be entering upon graduation,” said Teena Custer, instructor of dance, who presented and performed hip-hop at Dance ACTions in Trondheim, Norway. She also taught dance at Duke University over the summer.

Ursula Payne, SRU professor of dance, presented in Norway and traveled to Canada to give a 30-minute lecture and DVD research presentation on reconstructing and teaching dance.

“Our students benefit because I am continuing to subject my scholarship to challenge and scrutiny by my peers,” Payne said. “The instructional methods I employ with dance majors at SRU contribute to improving their knowledge acquisition and artistic development. This way of working expands the students’ own definition of dance and dance-related research and further develops their interests in attending graduate school.”

Stacey Steele, SRU assistant professor of music, led the SRU Flute Choir to an invitation-only performance at the National Flute Association Annual Convention in New Orleans.

Colleen Gray, associate professor of music, flew to Brisbane, Australia, to present twice during the International Congress of Voice Teachers, a worldwide gathering of voice teachers for master classes and presentation.

Nola Nolen-Holland, assistant professor of dance, serves as president of CORPS de Ballet International, a non-profit organization for ballet teachers in higher education. She presided over the group’s international conference in Paris.

“Being president of CORPS de Ballet International has led to my professional development in several ways,” she said. “As a dance educator, I have developed professional relationships with faculty members and school directors in Britain, Canada, Croatia, France and the U.S. Being president has developed my administrative skills, which always enhances one’s ability to plan and organize dance events, write grants, organize performances and guest artist residencies for the dance department.”

The Far East also hosted professors. Eva Tsuchiashi-Daddesio, college dean, Ana Maria Caula, associate professor and chair of modern languages and cultures, and Yukako Ishimaru, instructor of modern languages and cultures, flew to Japan and North Korea to work on transfer agreements with institutions in those countries.
The PowerPoint slide, with large letters, plays into fears – at first. “You are not going to find a job after graduation…”

“I let that statement hang in the air, and I know parents of prospective students and matriculating students are wondering what is coming next,” said John Rindy, director of Slippery Rock University’s Office of Career Education and Development. “I then ask how many students in the audience have been told this by others? Then I advance the slides and the word ‘unless’ is the only word on the screen.”

SRU’s Office of Career Education and Development helps students and alumni define the “unless” in terms of career development. Since contemporary career offices cannot guarantee jobs, career counselors have shifted into hyper drive to credential graduates for the “Hire me” refrain by taking a four-year approach to occupational counseling and introducing new, career-focused programs.

Much success has been achieved.

SRU graduates from 2011-12 work for more than 500 employers, including the U.S. Department of Justice, The Ohio State University, General Motors, Shell Oil, Mine Safety Appliances, Pittsburgh Community Television and PPG Industries, Rindy said.

In many cases, job success is a matter of knowing what not to do.

“In most cases, posting your resume on an Internet job search site is comparable to tossing your resume into a black hole. It is less than 5 percent effective in finding a job in your field,” Rindy said. “Seven out of 10 jobs come from contacts. You need to know people, and waiting until your senior year in college to make those connections does not allow time for those relationships to develop. You need people in your network with hiring influence, and you need to know them for several years. We get the message out very early that students need to visit with us about this and other facets of career development.”

Students and alumni are heeding the message. Rindy said involvement with the office has increased more than 500 percent, from 300 students and alumni in 2010-11 to nearly 1,600 in 2012-2013. The office commissioned more than 1,500 exit surveys last year, netting a rating of 4.9 out of 5 on all measures of satisfaction.

Studies show a correlation between taking advantage of career training and securing the first professional job. Rindy said a recent study conducted by the career office, in conjunction with its annual survey of employment outcomes, found that recent SRU bachelor’s degree graduates who connected with the office as students were 14 percent more likely to be working full time and among those working full time, 20 percent more likely to be working full time in their chosen field.

“Our message and our office vision statement is pretty simple – we will not rest until we are the recognized career education resource among all of our stakeholders, including students, alumni, faculty, staff and employees,” Rindy said.

The office provides a swath of services to help students hone their professional skills and to prepare for interviews. Students receive help with resumes, cover letters, mock interviews, net-
working assistance and portfolio reviews as well as graduate school applications and personal statements. The office sponsors three on-campus job fairs annually, three off-campus job fairs and several networking events with alumni.

The office manages the University’s jobs board and coordinates on-campus interviews for a few dozen companies seeking new hires and interns.

“In collaboration with the Office of Admissions, we have also been career coaching high school students who are interested in coming to The Rock,” Rindy said. “Often school counselors are overwhelmed and so in some cases, we are now even supporting students before they arrive on campus.”

New and collaborative programs include etiquette dinners, a first-year-of-work financial responsibility program, Dress for Success, Start Smart Salary Negotiations, alumni brownbag webinars, parent career development webinars and assistance in building LinkedIn profiles and other social media branding.

The office emphasizes the importance of good grades, community service, extracurricular involvement and internships.

While public and government jobs are not as numerous as in the past because of the recession, job opportunities exist in energy, shale exploration, biomedicine, computer networking, safety, finance and other fields with majors offered by SRU.

“In order to prepare for and to find that rich, valuable career path, there has to be teaching and training beforehand,” said Renee Coyne, assistant director of the office, referring to the four-year career development model at SRU. “Just as a runner must train weeks and months in advance for race day, so must college students learn and train for their careers long before graduation day.”

“The most important factor of the job search is the candidate him or herself,” added John Snyder, associate director. “Those who proactively engaged in their academic and career preparation as well as in their professional networking during college will be successful in securing employment. Those who are passive in any area of education, career preparation and professional networking will have a much harder time in any job market.”

Students and recent alumni credit the office with helping them find their way.

Tommy Younkins of Sarver, who graduated from SRU in 2010 and 2012 with degrees in Spanish and business administration, said Coyne and Rindy kept in touch with him after he graduated, even meeting with him at Panera Bread in Cranberry for job coaching.

“I am currently working at BNY Mellon as a fiduciary senior control specialist with benefits and tuition reimbursement. I also have a wonderful opportunity to advance within the organization,” Younkins said. “If it wasn’t for the help of John Rindy and his other colleagues in the Office of Career Education and Development, I don’t know if I would have landed this position.”

Nicole Crevar, a communication major from Mercer, said she visited the office during her junior year with a message of ‘I don’t know what to do with my life.’ Crevar said a career counselor discussed her skills, interests and future goals, suggesting she spend a semester in Washington, D.C. He then directed her to the political science department and connections to The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars.

“Once it was all said and done, I had landed an amazing internship as an economic researcher with the Mexican Embassy [Embajada de México],” she said.

Crevar’s younger sister, Cheyanne Crevar, a business management major from Mercer, said she connected with the office as a freshman. The career counseling she received steered her toward a business major. Crevar said she works for the office as a student assistant and hopes to open her own bakery and café.

“My experience with the Office of Career Education and Development is going to give me an upper hand when competing with other graduates because it will prepare me more than most students,” she said. “A lot of people graduate from college and think they will get a good job because they have a degree. I realize that is not how it works, but my experiences with the office have provided me with the tools I need to be successful.”

Tamara Whiting, a 2003 SRU communication graduate and national sales director with the tourism office VisitPittsburgh, echoed the career office’s message of campus involvement. Whiting served as president of University Program Board, president of Black Action Society and as Student Government’s vice president of Student Affairs.

“If you are a go-getter in college, more than likely that same passion and determination will follow you in your job search,” she said. “I would advise recent graduates to establish goals even if it is targeted for just a year. I didn’t land my dream job after college, but I had a plan. Once I established where I wanted to be I was able to make professional decisions that supported those goals.”
1970s

George Mihalik, '74, '76, SRU’s head football coach and professor of safety management, received the 2012 Eastern Collegiate Football Officials Association’s Sportmanship Award. “Each year the officials in the ECFOA select a coach, who by his actions, demonstrates the highest ideals of sportsmanship,” Dennis Crim, ECFOA spokesman, said in a letter announcing Mihalik’s selection. “His interaction with officials, players and coaches exemplifies the highest ideals of collegiate athletics. By his actions, he set a benchmark for his players and coaches to follow.”

Rick Ardinger, ’75, executive director of the Idaho Humanities Council since 1993, was selected as the recipient of Idaho State Universities’ 2013 Professional Achievement Award from the College of Arts & Letters, Fine Arts and Humanities.

1980s

Ed Geary, ’82, competed in the April 15 Boston Marathon that ended in tragedy when two bombs exploded, killing three people and injuring more than 20. Tammy Stockdill, ’82, his wife, was watching the race. Geary, a cancer survivor who wore an SRU T-shirt during the race, said he was less than two miles from the finish line when the bombs detonated. Although unharmed, he was not able to finish because the race was halted. His wife, who was there to watch him compete, provided first aid to survivors.

Craig Wehr, ’86, management and marketing, was recently named president of Zurn Industries LLC in Erie, Pa., a manufacturer of engineered water solutions. He has group responsibilities for multiple business units throughout North America. Wehr has been employed by Zurn for 18 years and previously served as vice president of sales and marketing and general manager.

Joanne Leight, ’87, SRU associate professor of physical education, was one of 50 educators recently accepted into the Google Teacher Academy in Chicago and became a Google Certified Teacher. See related story in this issue.

Jennifer Kennedy, ’04, music education and a sixth-grade teacher at Mars Centennial School, has received a Red Apple Award from the United Way of Butler County. The award recognizes outstanding teachers who teach in Butler County. Kennedy sponsors the school’s Instrumental, Running and Spanish clubs, and provides students the opportunity to join the sixth-grade jazz band. She heads the Academic Support Program, which offers tutoring by teachers who stay after school. Kennedy said her teaching mission is “to empower my students to reach their absolute potential, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically.”

Jason Kush, ’04, a SRU instructor of music, has received a Red Apple Award from the United Way of Butler County. The award honors outstanding educators working in Butler County. A colleague who nominated Kush told the United Way, “Dr. Kush is a real gift to the music department.” Kush teaches saxophone, clarinet and improvisation and directs the SRU Saxophone Quartets, Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Lab Band.

2000s

Jillian Morgan, ’03, who received her graduate degree from SRU, has taken over the leadership at the Creative Learning Christian School in Mercer. Morgan, originally from Greenville, has previously taught in Germany, Ohio, Kentucky and North Carolina. She earned her undergraduate degree at Grove City College. She is completing her state administrator certification and is certified as a Christian school administrator.

Jodie Perry, ’09, biology, has been named a National Science Association New Teacher Fellow (2011-2012) and a Kentucky Fellow (2013-14). She teaches sixth grade science in Wake Forrest, N.C.

2010s

Rachel Popik, ’12, special education graduate from Newtown, joined the Peace Corps and is serving as a teacher in The Gambia. “I went to Ghana through the Women’s Studies program for an internship with Dr. Cindy LaCom, professor of English, and fell in love. It was then that I decided that I wanted to join the Peace Corps,” Popik said. During her undergraduate career at SRU, Popik spent three weeks in Ghana in an internship, collaborating on a research study with Case Western University’s medical program on the effects of domestic violence on access to reproductive healthcare.
Births and Adoptions

2000s

Thomas Harned, '05, and Ashley (McClain) Harned, '05, welcomed boy and girl twins, Reeden Dukes, and Vivian Ivoree Harned, Feb. 17, 2013. He weighed 5 pounds 11 ounces. She weighed 4 pounds 13 ounces. Both were 21 inches long. The family lives in Marysville.

Gregg Kalemba, '94, and Chiloh Ritchey-Kalemba welcomed their daughter, Daelyn Anah Kalemba, March 5, 2013.

Marsha (Boit) Radkowski, '00, and Matthew Radkowski welcomed their fourth child, Milena Joan Radkowski, April 22, 2013. She weighed 9 lbs. 9 oz. and was 21.5 inches long. Milena joined older siblings Adam, 6, Erik, 5, and Jillian, 3. The family resides in Johnstown.

In Memory

Bessie (Brown) Higgins, '26
Helen (Sowa) De Simone, '32
David Speizer, '40
Helen (King) Rowe, '40
Blair Hildebrand, '48
Anna (White) Bolinger, '50
Vincent Toth, '51
John Borres, '53
Raymond Glausser, '53
Rosalie O'Neil, '54
Thomas Kelsesky, '55
Lois (Jackson) Wunderley, '56
Nancy (Gruzyzky) Sabovik, '59
James Ryan, '59
Marcella (Speir) Tarquinio, '59
Wayne Petraccia, '59
Neil Decima, '60
Dorothy Smith, '61

Elizabeth Nelson, '82
Jane Harris, '82
Bruce Comstock, '84
Sophia O'Hare McCarthy '84
Sarah Brown, '67
Mary Lou (Kimmory) Sikesy, '88
Nancy (Monti) Barto, '74
Morris Amimo, '70
Dennis Giarnelli, '78
Marian Slavenhout, '78
Linda (Boring) Kier, '79
Frank Kohler, '85
Sharon (Dylewski) Giesey, '86
David Licht '89
Jesse Valensky, '12

Golf of Fame: (from left) National Football League legend Joe Namath, Rick Allen, a 1983 Slippery Rock University graduate and 2013 Athletic Hall of Fame inductee, Bobby Bell, a retired Kansas City Chief, and Harold Leininger, a friend of Allen’s, participated in a New York City golf tournament.

Weddings


Jacob Miller, '10, and Anne Kinneer, '11, married June 15, 2013. The couple lives Grove City, Pa.


Nathaniel Kapaldo, '13, chemistry, a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, has been accepted into Veterinary School at Kansas State University with plans to enter the Army Veterinary Corps.

Andrew Line, '13, professional studies, a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, has been assigned to the Pennsylvania Army National Guard’s 112th Infantry Division.

Tyler Shimandle, '13, philosophy, a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, has been assigned to the 6th Military Police Brigade at Ft. Bragg, N.C.
Celebrating Golden Grad alumni at the 50-year milestone is a long-standing tradition at SRU. This year, the Slippery Rock University family welcomed the Class of 1963 back to campus for three days of festivities during SRU’s “Legends of The Rock” Homecoming and Reunion Weekend 2013.

The Golden Grad planning committee was chaired by co-chairs Jan (Westerwick) Sargert and Ken Hanby. Fellow ’63 alumni Ray and Mary Lou (Suveges) Bitar, Gene and Kay (Hoban) Collodi, Eileen (Myers) Montgomery and Bonnie McElhaney Lukasik served as committee members.

SRU’s Golden Grads have made it a tradition to celebrate the impact that the University has had on their lives by making a class gift. The Class of 1963 chose to make a collective gift in support of student scholarships and other areas of interest chosen by members of the Class of 1963.

“Each Golden Grad class can choose whether to collect funds for a gift that benefits a specific University program or scholarship or they can encourage members of their class to donate to whichever program they find most attractive. The Class of 1963 has chosen this latter option,” said Sargert.

Sargert, a former attorney and teacher, said her life would not be the same without her alma mater.

“I have been involved with SRU on an ongoing basis because I know that, if I had not attended Slippery Rock State Teachers’ College, I would not have had the interesting life I have led,” Sargert said. “My parents were people of very limited means who wanted more for their children. High on their list was a college education, a benefit neither of them had enjoyed. As it continues to do, SRU provided a quality education at an affordable price.”

As a student at Slippery Rock, Sargert discovered a safe place for a young woman to begin experiencing the world on her own.

“Even then it was a diverse community that, in many ways, reflected the world I would enter upon graduation,” she said. “I chose Slippery Rock because I wanted to be a teacher. When I actually entered the classroom, after overcoming my newbie jitters, I felt prepared by the excellent instruction I had received at SRU. The skills I learned at SRU served me well in both my first career as a teacher and in my second career as a lawyer.”

“Slippery Rock influenced me in so many ways,” said Lukasik, who served 13 years as an Alumni Association board member, including two as president. “It gave me the education and confidence to handle any situation, and the strength behind my conviction to always finish what you start, and do it professionally. This University is family. Everyone here cares.”

More than 275 alumni from the Class of 1963 were invited to a Welcome Reception at the President’s Residence. Activities included wine and cheese tasting, a campus tour and reunion dinner. In addition, the Golden Grads were invited to ride on the Green and White Society float during the parade or enjoy watching the parade from the comfort of the president’s viewing tent. Special recognition was given to the Class of 1963 at halftime of the football game and a 5th Quarter Reunion Alumni Party followed the game at the Smith Student Center Ballroom.

Through their generosity, the Class of 1963 will help preserve the Slippery Rock experience for future students and alumni.

While SRU offers one of the most affordable tuition rates in the state, alumni said they recognize college expenses burden many young people and families.

“The cost of education is out of sight, and the more we can give to help a student succeed, the more desirable Slippery Rock University will be to high school students looking to continue their education,” Lukasik said.

“Students attending Slippery Rock in the late ’50s and early ’60s – and the other 13 state system colleges – in essence were receiving a scholarship from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” Hanby said. “In comparison to other colleges and universities, the cost of a first-class education at state colleges was very low ‘back in the day.’ I consider my support as ‘pay back’ and support of the wonderful opportunities which now exist at SRU.”
Hanby, the committee’s representative on the SRU Alumni Association Board of Directors, said he looked forward to the celebration and was sorry some very good friends were no longer alive to share the experience.

Hanby and his wife support the University’s Performing Arts Series and the 1957-65 Cross Country/Track and Field Scholarship.

Sargert said she and her husband established a scholarship to benefit students who, like them, were the first in their family to attend college.

“Probably just about every SRU student needs financial aid,” Sargert said. “Students need to create building blocks for their futures with all they do at SRU – in the classroom, in the residence hall, by being involved in activities, by forming friendships. All of these and more are tiny steps they are taking to create their own bright futures.”

(CLUB 50: Members of the Class of 1963 were honored as Golden Grads during homecoming. The Golden Grad planning committee includes ’63 alumni (clockwise from top) Bonnie McElhaney Lukasik, Gene Collodi, Jan (Westerwick) Sargert, Kay (Hoban) Collodi, Ken Hanby, Mary Lou (Suveges) Bitar, Ray Bitar and Eileen (Myers) Montgomery.)

reflect on the Slippery Rock University experience and their hopes for future generations of alumni
On a recent August day, Michele Phillips, widow of John Phillips, ’69, ’71, met with Slippery Rock University President Cheryl Norton to talk about John’s life and legacy and the meaning behind the scholarship created in his memory.

“John never forgot the people with whom he became close at The Rock,” Michele Phillips said. “He was a member of Lambda Chi Alpha and to this day, his old fraternity brothers still check up on me to see how I’m doing. Of course, the time spent at the biology department had a great impact on his professional life.”

Phillips said her husband had many mentors in college, including former biology professors Kimball Erdman, Frank Hoffman, Richard Medve, Charles Mueller, Murray Shelligren and Rhoda Taylor.

John Phillips’ work on environmental issues, particularly those pertaining to water, began in his days as a student at Slippery Rock University. John completed his bachelor’s degree in biology in 1969 and master’s degree in biology in 1971 with his master’s thesis on the Mercer Bog, a cranberry swamp in East Lackawannock Township, Pa.

Phillips became the first person to receive a master of science degree from SRU and parlayed his two SRU degrees into a successful career that included serving as a key member of the environmental recovery operations after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska.

As an environmental engineer and consultant with Exxon (later ExxonMobil Corporation), Phillips worked closely in developing national staff and in aiding the Angolan government in determining environmental policy.

“John developed an environmental/regulatory compliance system and many procedures for this new affiliate,” Michele Phillips said.

After success in Angola, John’s last assignment took him to Lagos, Nigeria, to work for the ExxonMobil affiliate, consulting on environmental and regulatory matters. He retired in September 2004 after 25 years service.

Although John’s life was cut short in 2005, he achieved both personal and professional success in his 57 years.

John, an honest and kind man who loved his family and friends, was especially proud of Sean, his son with Michele.

John enjoyed travel and sports. He completed his first marathon at age 50 and was an avid skier, tennis player, swimmer, hiker and runner. He also developed an interest in brewing and became a talented beer maker.

Michele and John shared a love for travel and visited at least 30 countries.

“The highlight of one trip was that John and our son, Sean, climbed to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania,” Phillips said.

John Phillips grew up in Chicora and graduated from Butler High School in 1965. His family has deep connections to Slippery Rock – his uncle, the late Don Oesterling, and his cousin, Peter Oesterling ’78, served on the Slippery Rock University Council of Trustees.

John and Michele Phillips met at SRU when John was a graduate student and Michele worked in the registrar’s office. Michele attended SRU for a little over a year and went on to graduate from Sam Houston State University. She is a certified public accountant and, like her husband, had a successful career with ExxonMobil.

After graduating from SRU, John Phillips started his career in Pittsburgh and later worked in Harrisburg for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania where he was involved in environmental issues associated with water.

After leaving Pennsylvania, he worked for various engineering firms in New Jersey. During a family trip west in 1979, Exxon hired Phillips to work for the Highland Mining Operations outside Casper, Wyo.

His career with Exxon was primarily as an environmental engineer/consultant in mining, synthetic fuels and oil and gas development and production operations throughout the United States and Africa.

Michele Phillips said both John and she appreciated the influence of SRU, and that her husband had begun talking about creating a scholarship before his death. The couple felt that making an impact on the lives of SRU students was a greater gift than giving to many different charities.

“With ExxonMobil’s generous Educational Matching Gift Program available to employees, retirees and surviving spouses, I am able to provide SRU with a 3:1 match for every gift I make to John’s scholarship,” Michele Phillips said. “To see the scholarship grow and to help additional students in the sciences is a meaningful way to honor John’s legacy.”

“No one has the means [for college] but they may have the desire and determination to make a successful life…”

— Michele Phillips
University names Distinguished Alumni

Slippery Rock University graduates Donna Couillard-Getreuer, ’74, Wayne Miller, ’71, Dennis Murray, ’63, and Chuck Sanders, ’86, have been named 2013 Distinguished Alumni by the SRU Alumni Association. They were honored at an awards banquet Oct. 18.

“These alumni personify excellence and are SRU ambassadors who demonstrate leadership in the workplace and in the community,” said Tracy Allison, SRU assistant director of alumni engagement.

The Distinguished Alumni Award, established in 1968, honors alumni who have translated their SRU experience into distinguished personal and professional achievement, community service, University service or philanthropy to Slippery Rock University.

About the recipients:

**Donna Couillard-Getreuer, ’74, Health, Physical Education and Recreation**

Couillard-Getreuer, from Stamford, Conn., leader in the oncology health care informatics field, began her career as a hospital nurse specializing in cancer care. While working as an advanced practice oncology clinical specialist, her hospital implemented a new clinical information system and appointed her the liaison between hospital clinicians and the database vendor.

Couillard-Getreuer moved from the clinical environment to industry and has held multiple positions over a 20 plus year career. In addition to her career, she has been active in professional and industry organizations including the Oncology Nursing Society and the Health Informatics Systems Society. She has served as a board member and secretary of the National Cancer Registrars Association Education Foundation, a non-profit organization with the mission of “supporting the advancement of the Cancer Registry profession through education and research.”

She also volunteers at the Connecticut Mission of Mercy, the annual NYC AVON walk for breast cancer, the Connecticut Red Cross disaster team and on a Guatemala dental mission each fall. Couillard-Getreuer created an endowed scholarship at SRU and continues her annual support to the Donna Couillard-Getreuer Scholarship for nursing majors.

She and her husband, Thomas, have two daughters, Melanie and Samantha.

**Wayne Miller, ’71, Zoology and Biological Sciences**

Miller, from Rochester, Minn., a physician and leader in internal medicine, serves as professor of medicine and cardiology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine. He has developed a career in cardiology specializing in clinical heart failure and cardiomyopathy syndromes.

Miller devotes his professional time to care for heart disease patients, administration and clinical research. He established the Wayne L. Miller, MD, Ph.D., Endowed Scholarship for SRU biology majors. Wayne and his wife, Catherine, have four grown children; Alexander, Katherine, Matthew and Nicholas.

**Dennis Murray, ’63, Education**

Murray, from Hollidaysburg, served as the superintendent of the Altoona Area School District for the past 29 years until earlier this year when he retired. He has broad-based educational experience, having also served as assistant superintendent, supervisor of elementary education, a member of the school board, member of the Intermediate Unit board, Vocational-Technical school chief administrator, student teaching coordinator, college professor, college administrator and a member of the SRU Council of Trustees since 1997.

Murray has been the recipient of many prestigious educational awards including the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Leadership Award, University of Pittsburgh’s Distinguished Educator Award and awards from Penn State University.

Murray enjoys frequent trips to Ireland, walking and spending time with his grandchildren; Michael, Amanda, Danny, Matthew and Andrew.

**Chuck Sanders, ’86, Business Management**

Sanders, of Wexford, started his career on the SRU football team, where he led Division II in rushing and was a candidate for the Heisman Trophy. After graduating from Slippery Rock University, Sanders was drafted by the San Diego Chargers and later, the Pittsburgh Steelers.

After his time with the NFL came to an end, Sanders began to pursue his interest in business and community service. He and his wife founded their first business, Urban Settlement Services, LLC., a company that provides real estate information and technology to banks and government institutions. Urban Settlement Services, LLC., was ranked number 16 by Black Enterprises Magazine’s BE 100 List and is one of the top 100 minority owned corporations in America.

Sanders was also named one of the top 10 black entrepreneurs in the nation by Inc. 500 Magazine. Sanders went on to launch Savoy, a restaurant in the Strip District of Pittsburgh. He is part owner in several companies including Fever USA, The Mint Restaurant and The Darby. Sanders also founded Chuck Sanders Charities, which is an organization that helps fund and support existing Christian charities, churches and programs.

Sanders and his wife, Elisa, have three sons; Charles, Joshua and Caleb.

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A mere two seasons after having had arguably the finest individual season in Slippery Rock University football history, Brandon Fusco was on the front line last fall, in a front-row seat, if you will, for one of the top individual efforts in National Football League history. As the starting right guard for the purple-clad Minnesota Vikings, Fusco played an important role in Adrian Peterson chewing up of the second-largest amount of green turf in league history – 2,097 yards, only eight stripes shy of the NFL record set by Eric Dickerson in 1984.

“Brandon was a big reason Adrian was able to go over 2,000 yards,” said Bill Musgrave, Vikings offensive coordinator. “We take a lot of pride in our run blocking here with Adrian Peterson in the backfield,” Musgrave said, “and the right guard position is essential because Adrian is predominantly a right-handed, right-legged runner, so Brandon was at the point of attack on most of (Peterson’s) runs.”

Blocking for a player with Peterson’s talents “makes our job easy,” Fusco said, “because he makes the most of every cut and every read possible. You don’t have to give him much room to run and break an 80-yard run.”

“It’s fun watching him run, I mean blocking for him,” Fusco said with a chuckle, “because he’s a hard worker and deserves all the recognition he gets.”

“Yeah, sometimes I caught myself watching him run,” Fusco said, “especially when I might have missed a block. I’d look around to see where he was and he was already past us and heading downfield.”

Fusco’s self-deprecating remarks aside, “Brandon developed a lot in his second year and became an integral part of our offensive line,” Musgrave said. “He was able to identify the different defensive looks and seemed to be one step ahead of the defense, able to make the identification of what was on the way after the ball was snapped.”
Fusco was appreciative of the high praise he received from his offensive coordinator because, as he put it, “Coaches aren’t going to pat you on the back as much in the pros as in high school and college. It’s pretty much cut-and-dry. They tell us what we’re doing well and not doing so well.”

“They’re always honest with me,” Fusco said, “and I appreciate that because it helps make me a better player.”

Fusco was a pretty darned good player when he left The Rock, having earned both the 2010 Gene Upshaw Division II Lineman of the Year Award and the Rimington Award as the nation’s top NCAA Division II center.

The highest-drafted player in Slippery Rock University football history and one of only six Rock players to be selected in an NFL Draft, Fusco is the only Rock player to ever participate in the Senior Bowl all-star game and NFL Combine, both of which are predominantly stocked by Division I players.

Fusco disproved the doubters during those prime-time workouts and ultimately was a sixth-round pick of the Vikings in 2011.

“The competition is not as stiff in Division II as in other conferences in college football,” Musgrave said, “but obviously Brandon was trained very well at Slippery Rock. He came to us ready to make the jump to the next level.”

“Coach Mihalik and Coach Walton taught me a lot about being a physical player and the way to become a great player,” Fusco said, referring to Rock head coach George Mihalik and former offensive line coach Joe Walton.

“I came into Slippery Rock as a 240-pound young boy and came out as a 6-foot-4, 315-pound man – all muscle – living my dream as a pro football player,” Fusco said. “I can’t thank them enough for what they did to help me get to this point.”

If nothing else, Fusco said, The Rock coaches taught him “believe in your dreams, work hard in the weight room and do the little things that will help make you a better player. There is no simple way to do it.”

Fusco saw action in only three games as an NFL rookie in 2011, but as that season wound down, he began to make the move from center to guard.

That transition paid off immensely last fall, when Fusco was in the starting lineup for all 17 Vikings games, including a first-round playoff game at legendary Lambeau Field against the Green Bay Packers.

“Starting in a playoff game in my first season as a starter and in Green Bay, that was a very special moment,” Fusco said. “And winning our last game against the Packers to get into the playoffs was pretty special, too.”

“I had some bad games and I had some good games,” Fusco said. “I’m just trying to get better as a player as I get more knowledge of the game and know more and more about my opponents.”

Fusco’s proverbial “welcome-to-the-NFL-moment” came in the first preseason game last fall, when he was matched up against San Francisco 49ers’ All-Pro defensive lineman Ray McDonald.

“That really opened my eyes to what I was I was going to see week after week,” Fusco said. “I played pretty well in that game, but I knew at that point I had to keep progressing to get better because I was going to see a lot of top-notch defensive ends and tackles.”

In the weeks that followed, Fusco faced the likes of JJ Watts (Houston Texans), arguably the top defensive player in the NFL, along with All-Pros Gerald McCoy (Tampa Bay Buccaneers), Ndamukong Suh (Detroit Lions) and B.J. Raji (Green Bay Packers).

Fusco said he didn’t experience any of the cheap-shot tactics for which Suh has become known.

“It was a pretty clean game,” Fusco said of his duel with the man some claim to be one of the “dirtiest players in the NFL.” Although Fusco admitted “I never thought my first start in the NFL would be as a guard,” he’s fine with the move he made and doesn’t foresee himself returning to the snapper spot.

“A center has a lot of responsibility,” Fusco said. “They make the protection calls and who’s sliding to block against the different defensive fronts, so having a guy like John Sullivan, an All-Pro, at center makes my job a lot easier.”

“I knew it would be tough to beat him out as the starting center,” Fusco said. “But there was an open position at right guard and they worked me in there, so I just made my mind up to keep getting better and more comfortable there.”

Playing guard was “different at first,” Fusco said, “because I was used to having the ball in my hands and making the offensive line blocking calls. As a guard, you’re pretty much on an island by yourself in pass protection, so it was quite an adjustment.”

“It is a tough adjustment,” Musgrave said. “But it’s tough to play any of the three inside positions, center and the two guards. There are so many variables and moving parts. The centers and guards in football have to be very sharp and Brandon proved to be just that.”

Fusco knows that having played, or at least practiced extensively, in two different roles on the offensive line could ultimately work to his advantage.

“You’re not going to last very long in the NFL if you can only play one offensive line position,” Fusco said, “so I’d like to get really good at playing guard and maybe play a little at center, too.”

Fusco settled into a pretty nice routine during the off-season, “playing golf and learning to fish.”

“There are a lot of lakes around here, like one every 100 feet,” Fusco said, “and it seems like everyone has a boat, so I’m getting more into that.”

“I finished third in a celebrity crap-pie tournament,” Fusco said. “I think I caught something like 15, so I’m definitely getting better as a fisherman.”

Fusco said his goal as an NFL player was to, “play 10 or more seasons and eventually become an All-Pro player.”

For now, though, he said, “I’m living the dream, so I’m happy.”
The Redbirds’ 23rd-round pick in the 2009 amateur baseball draft, Adams hit .355 in 63 games his rookie season and finished his four-year, 369-game minor-league career with a .318 batting average, 82 home runs and 291 runs batted in.

In his third pro season (2011), Adams was named the Cardinals’ top minor-league player and Texas League (Class AA) MVP.

Adams’ prowess in the minors earned him a brief stint with the MLB team in 2012 and a spot on the 25-man big-league roster coming out of spring training in 2013.

The left-handed-hitting Adams immediately showed he belonged on baseball’s top shelf. After being called up from the Cardinals’ triple-A affiliate in Springfield, Mo., May 20, 2012, to fill the void created by an injury to starter Lance Berkman, Adams lined a single up the middle as part of a 2-for-4 hitting performance in his MLB debut against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

In 27 games with the big-league Cardinals during the 2012 season, Adams batted .244 with one home run and eight RBIs. Adams subsequently went back to Springfield last summer and finished the 2012 season on the disabled list due to a bone spur in his elbow that required him to have surgery.

A native of Philipsburg and graduate of Philipsburg-Osceola High School, the young man who has earned the nickname “Big City” from his teammates batted .288 with three home runs during Grapefruit League action last spring.

That performance earned Adams a spot on the big-league roster, a honor he legitimatized by batting a white-hot .542 with three doubles, three home runs and eight RBIs in his first 24 regular-season at bats.

Matt Adams may be only 25 years old and with a little more than one full season of experience in Major League Baseball as a member of one of the league’s most storied franchises, but boy is he making his presence known.

Adams made MLB history last summer when he became the first player to ever hit two home runs in a single game with both coming in the 14th inning or later. Adams, who plays for the St. Louis Cardinals, put his team up 4-3 with a solo shot in the 14th inning of a game against Cincinnati, only to see the Reds tie the game in the bottom of the 14th. In his next at bat in the 16th inning Adams repeated the feat with another solo homer to clinch the win.

Making history isn’t something new for the former Rock standout.

“It’s pretty cool” to be the first modern-day Rock player to play in the majors, Adams said, “because there have been a lot of great guys who have played in the minors and just never got the opportunity to play in the bigs.”

According to the website BaseballReference.com, Adams was the third Rock baseball student-athlete to appear in an MLB game, following a path blazed by Doc Marshall (1904-09) and Bob Shawkey (1913-27).

Adams earned his opportunity to play in the majors by feasting on minor-league pitchers, which fueled a meteoric rise through the St. Louis Cardinals’ farm system.
Adams attributed his early success to “just sticking with what got me here and making sure I was aggressive.”

Heading into the final month of the 2013 regular season schedule, Adams, was used primarily as a pinch hitter and occasional starter at first base, had a .266 batting average with 11 doubles, nine home runs, 36 RBIs and a .449 slugging percentage.

Adams started 42 games and played in 84 of 138 Cardinals games through Sept. 1, missing 13 games while on the disabled list with a right oblique stain.

A .324 batter as a pinch hitter, Adams had the opportunity to be the every-day starter at first base for 10 consecutive games from July 12-26 when Matt Holliday sustained a hamstring injury.

“Those games definitely helped me get into a little bit of a rhythm and work on some things,” Adams said. “Facing live pitching day after day is way better than taking a few flips from a teammate in the batting cage to try to stay loose and ready to go.”

Having Adams ready to go paid dividends for the Cardinals when regular first baseman Allen Craig was sidelined with an injury. Adams stepped in and performed admirably as St. Louis swept up NL Central Division and playoff championships and earned a berth in the World Series.

Adams’ best outing was a June 29 road game against the Oakland Athletics, when he hit a pair of home runs in three plate appearances and picked up four RBIs.

“Matt’s done a nice job in every area of his game,” Cardinals manager Mike Matheny said during an in-season interview. “Making the jump to the big-league level is never easy, but he’s done a real nice job defensively and adapted to being a potential power bat for us off the bench. And he came in and played every day when we had some injuries, so he’s done everything we’ve asked.”

The most impressive part of Adams’ performance may well have been his ability to transition from being an every-day player and starter to a player who comes off the bench and gets an occasional start.

“Going from being a successful every-day player doesn’t always translate into being a good bench player,” Matheny said. “It’s a completely different routine; it’s not something everyone can do.”

“Matt’s done a nice job of getting into the right routine,” Matheny said. “There’s actually more work in being a bench player than an every-day player. There’s a lot of pregame work and postgame work to make sure you’re keeping up with your swing, staying up with your strength and getting in the weight room and watching more videotape to be prepared to face any pitcher in any particular situation. Those are things he’s learned and done well.”

At first, making the transition was tough, Adams said. “But we’ve got great guys on this team, especially (hitting coach John) Mabry and (bench coach) Bengie (Molina), who helped me develop a plan on how to do it every day when you get to the park and how to stick to it so it becomes a routine.”

“I spend a lot of time in the dugout around Benjie,” Adams said, “so I pick his brain a lot. It’s great to be able to see what he thinks about a certain situation and the best way to attack a certain pitcher.”

Maintaining consistency is the biggest challenge he faced as a pinch hitter and part-time starter, Adams said. “Coming up through the minors and playing every day, it was easy to get into a routine,” Adams said. “Coming off the bench, you have to make sure you get yourself ready when you’re called upon to go into a game. You haven’t batted for awhile, so you have to make sure your swing feels good, your timing’s good, that you’re not over-swinging or too anxious, and that you’re ready to go.”

Being in the same clubhouse and lineup with big-name players like Holliday, Carlos Beltran and Yadier Molina would seem to be grounds for a “What-am-I-doing-here?” moment, but Adams said that hasn’t been the case. “Maybe in my first big-league camp,” Adams said, “but now these guys are my friends and teammates.”

Adams had to admit, though, compared to being part of a franchise that wasn’t in a pennant chase and hadn’t experienced the kind of success the Cardinals have, he’s been very fortunate.
“This is a great clubhouse to be in,” Adams said. “I am very happy to be able to put on this jersey and be part of a winning team.”

There’s sometimes a price to pay for being part of a successful team like the Cardinals. St. Louis played in ESPN’s Sunday Night Baseball Game seven times during the 2013 season, which resulted in late-night/extremely-early-morning flights to the city in which the next game was played.

“It’s a little tough, but you get used to that quick turnaround,” Adams said, adding quickly, “Traveling by airplane is definitely better than getting on a bus for a long trip in the minors.”

As a 23rd-round draft pick, the proverbial chips were stacked against Adams in his quest to become a major-league player, but he’s taken the process of disproving the doubters all in stride.

“You kind of get caught up in all that when you’re waiting for the draft to take place and you wonder and worry about where you are going to get picked and how it’s going to impact your chances,” Adams said. “But you can’t let that effect you and how you play. You just have to go out there, play the best you can and let things progress from there.”

In addition to his on-field performance, Adams showed good progress in an important off-the-field area.

“He’s getting better at being around the media,” Cardinals’ radio play-by-play announcer John Rooney said. “That’s not to say he was bad, he’s just not a man of a lot of words. What he says gets his point across.”

“We were on the Cardinals Caravan together over the winter and Matt was very good with the fans, very low key and quiet, but very polite,” Rooney said. “Unlike a lot of young people in our culture today, Matt knows his place and what he can do. I think that’s going to make him a pro player for a long time.”

Whether Adams will be a longtime member of the Cardinals is a subject of much conjecture, according to Rooney.

“I guarantee you, his name comes up in trade talks all the time,” Rooney said. “I’d be shocked if that’s not the case because, from the scouts with whom I’ve talked, they like his raw power and his ability to hit to all fields. He’s a good natural hitter.”

It’s fair to say Rooney is a big fan of Adams.

“Matt knows what he’s doing and I’m really impressed with what he brings to the ballpark,” Rooney said. “I like him very much as an overall player, both offensively and defensively. He’s proven he’s a good hitter and a better-than-average fielder. He works hard at everything he does and that’s why he’s here.”
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I am Elaine Sullivan, ’74, environmental education

DAY JOB: I am a career coach in the Feld Career Center at Boston University’s Graduate School of Management. Career management has been a significant part of my work life for nearly 20 years.

BACKGROUND: I received my undergraduate degree from Salem State University and was encouraged by a fellow alumna to explore SRU for its graduate program in environmental education. While I strayed from the planned teaching career, I consider myself a professional educator and bring a design approach to my work and life. Prior to BU, I worked in management consulting, communication and the financial services industry. After SRU, I returned to my home in Lexington and reside in a family-built home with my partner, Lee.

INFLUENCE OF SRU: SRU is where I came into my own, growing more self-aware and self-confident. I had the opportunity to work at what is now the Jennings Environmental Education Center as part of my program and enjoyed the interaction with the visitors there. For several years, I funded the Eleanor Heaney Sullivan Scholarship in memory of my mother who believed deeply in the value of education. I continue to give to SRU as I, too, believe in education as an important pathway in life.