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## A CHANGE OF PACE

### Overseas studying provides new opportunities

By Kacie Peterson  
Rocket Contributor

College is an experience in itself, with the classes, friends, studying and transition into the real world.

But what if that college experience didn't just take place on the campus of Slippery Rock University, but in a different country altogether?

If students can proudly state they have spread Rock Pride worldwide, there's a good chance they were a part of the university's study abroad program.

Senior finance major Brennan McMahon and senior biology and marine science major Rebecca Pike are just two of these students.

McMahon studied at the University of Limerick, located in Limerick, Ireland, during the spring 2007 semester, and said he went for the Irish cultural

involvement.

"I studied abroad because it's something I have wanted to do since I was a freshman in high school," McMahon said. "I wanted to see if I could function in a different country for an extended period of time and learn as much as I could about Ireland."

Pike studied at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth in the United Kingdom, also during the spring 2007 semester.

"I wanted to go to an English-speaking country, first of all," Pike said, "so I looked at Australia and Ireland, but a lot of people went to Ireland and there wasn't a lot of information on the Australia Web site. But Aberystwyth had a lot of information and so I (decided to go) with a friend."

Pamela Frigot, the director of international services at SRU, said that McMahon and Pike are two of the about

300 students that Slippery Rock sends overseas every year.

"At the moment, we have 31 students in academic semester programs," Frigot said. "All are in European countries, except one, who's in Australia."

There is a mix of students in the program who go for their major, or like McMahon, for the benefits of expanding cultural awareness, Frigot said.

SRU has academic semester programs set up at 19 schools in 16 countries, with England and Slovakia having multiple schools.

For summer study abroad programs, there are 10 different countries available.

The most popular places to study for SRU students are Ireland, Wales, Australia and Spain.

Frigot said she hopes students who participate in international programs gain "a broader worldview and understanding of how the world is changing (and) how their life and career will not be segregated by the corner of the United States or world that they are living in."

"An overseas experience will be great in helping students learn about themselves, their capabilities, and how to navigate and thrive without the usual support system they have built in the U.S.," Frigot said.

Senior psychology major Shannon Plesh, who also studied at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth in the spring of 2007, as well as Pike, both know a thing or two about stepping out of their comfort zones.

Pike didn't have a cell phone overseas, so she said she wrote e-mails, letters and postcards to her family and friends in the states.

She said that being forced to adapt to a new environment and finding her own niche was a better part of the trip because "you find things out about yourself."

Plesh, who said she is very close to her family, also said studying abroad was an

### Changing majors becoming more common for underclassmen

By Anna Cypher  
Rocket Contributor

Nearing the end of October, many students are beginning to feel the crunch of academic work.

And with fall break and Homecoming now over, the pressure is on as students gear up for the work ahead.

But for some, between the writing of papers and the cramming of dates and facts, some students may begin to wonder if they're in the right major.

Often these questions and frustrations are just results of too much caffeine and too little sleep. Sometimes, though, they can be a wake-up call.

For Benjamin Kowalczyk, 23, now a junior finance major, a loss of interest in his accounting classes last year spurred him to look elsewhere for a major that could hold his attention.

"The homework started to bore me," Kowalczyk said.

And he's not the only one.

According to the MSNBC Web site, "50 percent of (college freshmen) who do declare a major, change majors—with many doing so two or three times during their college years."

Valerie Kremer, 21, knew that she needed a change of pace when her introductory education courses weren't what she expected.

"I always wanted to make a difference and help people," Kremer said.

She said ever since eighth grade, she loved working with kids, but by fall of her sophomore year, found that majoring in elementary education wasn't really for her.

So a student finds out what doesn't interest them. But then the question still stands: How do they find out what is for them?

Some students come to school with the end result already in mind, but many come



Rebecca Pike (left), a senior biology and marine science major, and Anna Fasoli, an SRU '07 graduate, visited Stonehenge in England before beginning their spring semester abroad at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth in the United Kingdom.

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SEE STUDYING, PAGE C-4

SEE KEEP, PAGE C-3

### Transfer possibilities among considerations for college-bound high-schoolers

By Jessica Rupell  
Rocket Focus Editor

When many students are getting ready to graduate from high school, a number of colleges are often looked at and compared.

Once one is finally chosen, it's a weight lifted off of students' shoulders, as they can sit back confident that they have picked the perfect school.

But for some students, such as Sean Flanigan, a junior elementary education major, this so-called perfect fit isn't as perfect as once thought.

Flanigan, 22, attended Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, for his freshman year of college.

He said he originally picked the school because it was a private Catholic college only about 45 minutes away from his home in the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

But he said he didn't realize when he first applied that they didn't have his major of choice: elementary education.

After this realization, he began to look at other schools during the spring semester of his freshman year.

"I looked at schools like Clarion, IUP, Edinboro, Cal and SRU," Flanigan said. "I met with transfer coordinators, went through which credits would transfer and looked

at overviews of the programs (they offered). It was kind of like re-applying all over again."

For Meghan McHenry, a senior elementary and special education major, her reasons for transferring were a bit different.

McHenry, 21, began her freshman year at Muskingum College in Ohio.

Midway through that year, she realized she wanted to come closer to home.

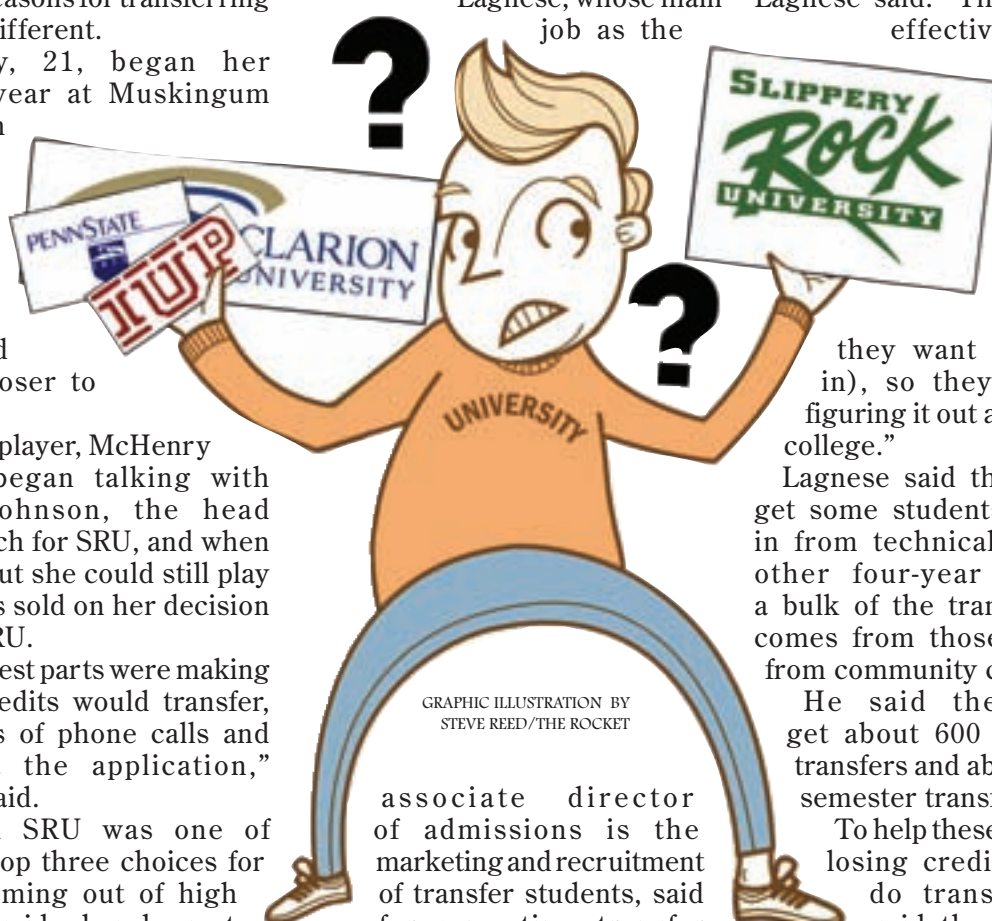
A softball player, McHenry said she began talking with Vashion Johnson, the head softball coach for SRU, and when she found out she could still play softball, was sold on her decision to attend SRU.

"The hardest parts were making sure my credits would transfer, making lots of phone calls and filling out the application," McHenry said.

Although SRU was one of Flanigan's top three choices for colleges coming out of high school, he said when he met with Robert Lagnese, the director of orientation and the associate director of admissions, he knew where he wanted to go.

"He was sincere about what (SRU) had to offer," Flanigan said. "Plus, my aunt went to SRU, and I knew they had a solid education program."

Lagnese, whose main job as the



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associate director of admissions is the marketing and recruitment of transfer students, said for some time transfer students have been neglected as a priority.

But he said the times are changing, and a lot of students

coming out of high school are beginning at community colleges and then transferring.

"There are really three populations of these students," Lagnese said. "Those who can't effectively afford (a

four-year institution), those who aren't ready

academically and those who don't know what they want to do (major in), so they save money figuring it out at a community college."

Lagnese said that while they get some students transferring in from technical schools and other four-year institutions, a bulk of the transfer students comes from those transferring from community colleges.

He said they currently get about 600 fall semester transfers and about 250 spring semester transfers.

To help these students from losing credits when they do transfer, Lagnese said they have begun proactively working with students right out of high school to help them plan ahead with course equivalencies so they

don't lose any credits when they transfer.

"By leaving nothing to chance, it saves time and money," Lagnese said. "And it helps to make a seamless transition."

Lagnese said the only time a lot of credits are lost occurs when students transfer late in their college years or when they switch majors.

But what makes SRU more desirable than other schools? "Not all state-system schools are the same," Lagnese said. "We're not cookie-cutter versions of each other, because we can offer something different."

Lagnese said the big programs at SRU, such as physical education and sport management, help with transfer recruitment and also have greater appeal to students from out of state.

Besides those factors, Lagnese said they have begun to send out an electronic newsletter series telling prospective students all the steps to take in the transfer process, and are currently in the process of designing ads for community college newspapers presenting the image of SRU as a transfer institution.

For Flanigan, he said Lagnese worked closely to have as many of his credits transferred as possible,

SEE CREATION, PAGE C-3