

A Top 10 List

Why SRU's new president will love Butler County

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October 2018

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania welcomed its 17th president, William J. Behre, on July 1.

Three weeks later, I had the privilege of meeting President Behre, who was accompanied by William McCarrier, chair of the university's council of trustees. I thoroughly enjoyed our 90-minute talk, but it was hardly enough time to cover all of the great aspects of our terrific county.

So, in the spirit of an official welcome, here are my Top 10 reasons why Dr. Behre and his wife, Leah Ingram, will love Butler County:

No. 10: Work ethic. That good ol' Western Pennsylvania diligence is something you'll soon notice. I believe it is rooted in the agriculture and steel industries. Such a dedication is something I assumed – until I lived in other states. A similar tenacity can be found in our students.

No. 9: Great local schools. Seven of them in public districts, a number of them private, and a robust vocational and technical center. You will find that our county's K-12 entities provide a sturdy foundation that serves students well entering post-secondary education or the workplace.

No. 8: The arts. You will enjoy year-round escapes with the music of The Butler County Symphony Association, summer concerts at Alameda Park, plays and musicals at our own Succop Theater, and the amazing attractions at the Butler Art Center and Maridon Museum.

No. 7: Location, location, location. Low unemployment, low taxes and a geographic diversity that few counties enjoy. Butler County has it – including two award-winning institutions of higher education.

No. 6: Crazy sports fans. Entrenched in deep tradition, the Rock is blessed with a dedicated and knowledgeable fan base. Speaking of knowledge, I attempted to impart some of mine a couple of decades back when future Rock football coach Sean Lutz listened intently as a student in a communication course I taught at West Virginia University.

No. 5: Forward thinking. The current Butler County Board of Commissioners has endorsed a unified approach for economic development. Its hiring of Mark Gordon as county chief of economic development is already paying dividends. So is the recent hiring of Joe Saeler as executive director of the Butler County Community Development Corp. We look forward to your participation in this important initiative.

No. 4: A giving community. Butler County has great service organizations, composed of individuals who are not afraid to give their time and resources for good causes. The same can be said philanthropically. For leaders who can articulate an authentic and focused vision, backed by a workable strategic plan that complements a sound mission, anything is possible.

No. 3: A local resident. I am honored to live in Slippery Rock Borough. Area residents have long established a solid relationship with the Rock's president. We all look forward to getting to know you and work toward a more defined town-and-gown relationship between the university and the borough.

No. 2: Elected officials. Great listeners who welcome collaboration and our roles in serving their constituents. My experience over the years in working with local, state and federal officials has been positive. I am sure yours will as well.

And ... : The No. 1 reason why President Behre will love Butler County is ... A great partnership with Pennsylvania's back-to-back No. 1-ranked community college.

We are so fortunate our county shares a Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institution and a community college.

There is only one other county in the state that can make such a claim.

Our transfer students move on to various public and private – but none more so than to Slippery Rock University. Over the years we have partnered in education programs, reverse-transfer agreements and tremendous scholarship opportunities for our students.

Here's to continued success under your leadership, President Behre!

Neupauer is entering his 12th year as president of Butler County Community College.