

# SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on June 17, 2015

Location: The Desmond Hotel, Albany, New York

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at An Evening with the Chancellor Alumni Reception

*The Chancellor was introduced Ashley Ennis,  
Arts and Sciences Class of 2010 and President of the Albany Alumni Club.*

Thank you, Ashley, for that warm welcome. Ruth and I are so happy to be with you tonight.

Albany and the Capital Region is home to nearly 7,000 Syracuse University alumni. It is also home to parents, future students, and friends. We are glad for this opportunity to get to know you better.

I first want to thank those who planned tonight's event:

- Matt Ter Molen, Chief Advancement Officer and Senior Vice President, and
- David Bartell and Sherry Hayes of the Office of Alumni Engagement
- Chilukuri Mohan, Interim Dean of the College of Science and Engineering

I would like to talk tonight on three topics:

- I. My observations from my first 16 months as Chancellor of Syracuse University
- II. A long-term strategy for Syracuse University
- III. Recent developments

## **I. FIRST YEAR OBSERVATIONS**

I grew up in Irondequoit, near Rochester. My father worked at Eastman Kodak. My mother worked in public relations. One of my brothers is a graduate from Upstate Medical University. My other brother is the retired editor of the Daily Messenger in Canandaigua. My sister works in the healthcare field.

I left to go to college in 1974 and hadn't lived full time in upstate New York since then.

After a long time away from upstate New York, I was overjoyed with how I found it. It's a place of smart and scrappy, entrepreneurial and diverse, unentitled and fundamentally decent people. Those are the attributes that make a Syracuse person seem different and wonderful.

I have found people who really care about the place and its history. They want its future to be even better than its glorious past and present.

So I am happy to be back and to have the privilege of leading this University.

In December 2013, before assuming my role as Chancellor, I lived with students for a couple of weeks on campus in the Brewster-Boland residence hall. You learn a lot from doing your laundry with students!

In my first year, I met with thousands of students. I ate in all of the dining halls on campus and at fraternity and sorority residences. I walked through almost every building in every room on main campus. Over the past nine months, Ruth and I hosted more than 2,800 University employees at the Chancellor's House as part of the One University initiative. I have traveled around the United States and to the Middle East and Europe to meet alumni and friends.

### **What I Have Learned**

Syracuse has four seasons—sometimes in the same day—and we should revel in it. Stop apologizing for the weather—there is nothing to apologize for. We need to revel in what we have and what is positive.

I would like people—in a humble Upstate New York way—to stop apologizing. That goes for the weather or anything else. It's really the best place to live. And I have been in other places, really good places (St. Louis, Washington, D.C.).

I've been proud of the universities and organizations I've been with. Syracuse has nothing to apologize for, including snow. I want to revel in it and I want us to revel in it. We need to constantly remind people of what's positive.

Syracuse is a student-powered University. Students create and run almost everything—the newspapers, the television, the organizations, the catering

service, the concert series. They are entrepreneurial; they are wonderful. It's what you want to see in future leaders. It's something to hold on to and celebrate.

Syracuse has done more with less. It's created a good ethic within the institution—unentitlement and ambition at the same time. People don't complain about what we don't have. They figure out what to do with what they do have.

There are many niches at Syracuse. It is a sprawling place, with schools, programs and activities, clubs, societies, and sports.

They are better than anywhere I have seen. There are many different parts to Syracuse that stand up so well to the best in the country.

When I stumble across one that no one knows about, I try to write about it.

One of those is our ambulance service. It is completely student run. It does things that no other university ambulance does. It trains wonderful students to be volunteers and emergency service responders. They do everything and run 24/7.

We need, as a university, to be more than the sum of our many wonderful niches. The whole has to stand up favorably to almost anybody, and the whole world has to know it. How do you make the whole more than the sum of its parts without hurting the sum of its parts? That is my challenge as Chancellor and Syracuse's challenge as a university.

## **II. A LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SYRACUSE**

So where do we go from here?

We have a goal of being a great, thriving, diverse, and engaged international research university. To do that, we implemented a three-part initiative, Fast Forward Syracuse, in April 2014. It consists of:

- Strategic Planning— Largely an academic plan, this lays out a shared vision for the University. It identifies the clear priorities needed to achieve that vision.

- Campus Master Planning—This guides decisions about the University’s strategic infrastructure needs.
- An Operational Excellence Program to help the University be more effective and achieve efficiencies. This also creates opportunities to fund investment in the Strategic Plan and the Campus Master Plan.

Fast Forward Syracuse is a University-wide initiative. It includes broad participation by faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders across the institution. All are invited to make their voices heard on our future direction. I encourage you to visit [fastforward.syr.edu](http://fastforward.syr.edu). There is a “Share Your Idea” button, where you can contribute your thoughts.

At its core, Fast Forward Syracuse is a strategic, transformative, and collaborative initiative. It will allow us as a community to:

- build on our recognized strengths
- improve in key areas
- prioritize students as the primary focus of everything we do.

I have identified four priority areas that are crucial towards reaching these goals:

For us to be the best, we need to have an unparalleled undergraduate experience at Syracuse. That must look at student living, student learning and student activities. And that has to focus in the College of Arts and Sciences. This is where the largest number of undergraduate students are.

We must empower research excellence. Great research today is so collaborative. It draws in undergraduates and graduate students and faculty from here and elsewhere. Great research is interdisciplinary. It benefits from University-wide investment and strong graduate programs. These programs are designed around careful strategic choices of areas of need and opportunity. Syracuse University can and will get better in these areas. We have done it before. We can do it again.

We must also become the best place for America’s veterans. Syracuse has a deep and proud history of embracing our nation’s veterans following World War II. Currently, our Institute for Veterans and Military Families is the highest regarded service and research institute by the United States government and

private industry. We are training and transitioning veterans from service into careers upon their return to civilian life.

And finally, we must embrace change. I want us to be known as a university that does change right. We must be a University that is humane and decent and has the right values. But we must also have the courage to embrace change and opportunity.

We need to get better but need to do it in our way. That will involve some change. I think we are going to get there. But, I am going to need your help in doing that.

### **III. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

In recent months, we developed vision and mission statements for the University, which help to chart our future course

We welcomed new senior leaders, including Matthew Ter Molen, Senior Vice President and Chief Advancement Officer; and Andrew Gordon, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer

Four new academic deans were appointed, including Karin Ruhlandt (College of Arts and Sciences); Joanna Masingila (School of Education); and Teresa Dahlberg (College of Engineering and Computer Science), and David Seaman (University Libraries)

Our Men's and Women's Lacrosse teams each captured the conference title in their respective divisions.

We have lots of good things to celebrate, and there will be many more to come.

I travel the country to share the many exciting things that are happening at Syracuse. And I'm often asked, "how can I help?"

My answer is the following:

Help us send the very best students to Syracuse University. Undergraduate, graduate, and professional. We have great faculty, wonderful students, and a national reputation.

Come back to campus. We are tremendously proud of our students, alumni, parents, and other friends. We want to see you on campus for Homecoming or a basketball game.

Donate to Syracuse. All gifts are welcome and go directly to support the University. We have tremendous need and are worthy of your philanthropy.

Stay connected to your University. Come to club events. Follow us on Twitter and join us on Facebook. Help us network and find internships for our students.

Finally, wear orange! No matter where you are, wearing orange symbolizes the great Syracuse family.

Thank you—alumni, parents, students, and friends—for being here with us tonight. Your support is needed as we work towards our exciting future.

Thank you.

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