

Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on January 17, 2017

Location: Life Sciences Atrium

Remarks: Winter Address

The Chancellor was introduced by Student Association President Eric Evangelista

Good Afternoon. Thank you for being here on this wet day.

Thank you Eric, for your introduction and for your leadership this year of the Student Association.

I would like to begin by acknowledging with respect the Onondaga Nation, the indigenous people on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.

It is the start of a new semester. It is the start of a new calendar year, and, later this week, it will be the start of a new administration in Washington.

Our university, founded in 1870, has seen a lot of new things over its long history. Most countries in the United Nations are younger than our University.

Since 1870, during the service of 26 U.S. Presidents and 12 Chancellors, Syracuse University has set its own course, defined its own values, and built a place that, when it is at its best, has been uniquely good.

Three years from now, in 2020, our University will start celebrating its sesquicentennial year, our 150th birthday. It is not too early for us to look forward to that celebration, and to ask of our whole community how we want to prepare and what we want to celebrate. Those are questions that require us to be acutely aware of where our University and country and world are right now. The questions also require understanding of our own University's history.

I spent time over the holidays immersing myself again in that history. It is really amazing how many things Syracuse has done first or differently or better than anyone, transforming lives and leading in ideas in so many disciplines. There are so many Syracuse stories that need to be told more widely in an age where Syracuse values would help the world.

One question I asked myself over the holidays was how Syracuse University celebrated its Centennial in 1970, almost fifty years ago.

The answer is that the University had centennial lecture series with famous public figures, centennial symposia on current issues in many schools and colleges, and centennial art installations and concerts, including in Carnegie Hall. Both a centennial medal award and a set of centennial scholarships for students were created. A centennial time capsule was filled with memorabilia. I am not yet sure where it was buried.

Our centennial year was also marked by an intense debate and argument between some students and members of the Board of Trustees about governance of the University. And the students of the day, including the Daily Orange, urged that the University celebrate the centennial in a different way, by finally building a student center, which Syracuse had never had. The Schine student center was the eventual result.

While a lot was done in our centennial year of 1970, an honest history has to also report that turbulent events in the nation and within the university all year at times overwhelmed efforts to mark the University's birthday. A major centennial convocation was cancelled. Commencement was almost cancelled as well. By early 1971, the University faced both a severe budget deficit and a problem of significant deferred maintenance on our facilities. Melvin Eggers became our ninth Chancellor, and in a pretty amazing story the University eventually again thrived.

What I take from this history is that our University has to honestly face events going on in the world, and it has to look to its own values and ideas and resources even and especially when that world is turbulent.

I would highlight today some of our University's values. First, at our best we have insisted on excellence - in our teaching, in our research, and in our service. Second, at our best we have found potential for excellence in everyone, and we have excelled by including many

who have been excluded in different ways and times and places. Third, at our best we have treasured free speech and the open exchange of ideas. And fourth, at our best we have worked hard to model shared governance, respecting the significant roles of the Board of Trustees, University Senate, students, faculty, and staff in the decision-making of the institution.

Today I ask that we in the University work to hold onto these things in turbulent times and to celebrate and model them in the years ahead. This is going to be hard work. It is going to be hard not only because of changes in the world. It is going to be hard because at times these values we hold dear can seem to come into conflict. Passionate people in our community, who care about Syracuse, can confront the challenge of reconciling free speech and inclusion, for example. They can doubt whether shared governance produces excellence as fast or as simply as some more streamlined model. And yet I believe that at Syracuse University in the years ahead, we would do a great service to ourselves and to the nation and world by proving that these values can be reconciled well and successfully; that an institution characterized by both free speech and inclusion, by both excellence and shared governance, is a truly better place to learn and discover and work. In short, I believe that these are values that can reinforce each other and build a more successful University. That is what I hope to see more evidence by the time of our sesquicentennial year in 2020.

So how do we get there? The current semester poses us significant opportunities and challenges. Let me directly address three of them. 1. New University Leadership and Shared Governance, 2. Inclusion and policies of the new national administration, and 3. The finances of our University and the funding of our academic strategic plan.

1) New University Leadership and Shared Governance

During the past year, there have been significant transitions, departures, and retirements of former leadership team members. I have worked with many of you to build a new leadership team that is committed to embracing change, empowering research excellence and enhancing the student experience. The most recent new members are:

- Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Amir Rahnamay-Azar, who joins us from Carnegie Mellon University;

- Senior Vice President for Enrollment and the Student Experience Dolan Evanovich who joins us from Ohio State University; and
- Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate School Professor Peter Venable, who will continue as interim Vice President for Research while a search is conducted this semester for that position.

All the leadership team here have deep respect for Syracuse University tradition. Yet they are fearless about innovation, about new ways of thinking, about creating a University that can open its arms to and embrace the evolving world around it.

As a new semester begins, shared governance remains an important focus. A strong partnership between faculty, staff, students and University leadership, including the Board of Trustees and the University Senate, is important to our future. It is especially true now as Syracuse continues the important accreditation work required by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

In 2017, Provost Wheatly and I will work closely with the University Senate to prepare for and implement necessary and important change. That will include building our schedules around senate meetings. We both remain committed to our new tradition of proactively providing the Senate with updates on and engaging in conversation about important, timely issues at meetings. Similarly, we will continue to build relationships with the students leading the Student Association, the Graduate Student Organization and the Student Bar Association.

Our students, faculty, and staff are already witnessing the results of these important relationships and shared approach to governance. Our collaboration has led to recent accomplishments on issues related to Free Speech, promotion and tenure, and the Campus Climate survey, and collective efforts to prevent sexual and relationship violence.

Moving forward, there is much hard work to do in each of these areas:

a. Free Speech:

As of January, our new policies governing electronic communications and anti-harassment are in effect, subject to suggestions for later amendments on the “reasonable

person” standard and the Stop Bias website from the Senate Committees on Diversity and Academic Affairs. The posting policy needs thorough review which is now underway by the Senate Committees on Student Life and Administration & Operation.

b. Promotion and Tenure:

For the second year, the Provost is being advised by the Provost’s Advisory Committee on Promotion and Tenure and is reviewing 52 candidates for promotion and tenure. I look forward at the end of this Academic Year, to the Provost’s Office’s full review of the process, after consultation with the University Senate and the schools and colleges, to ensure it is serving the University and its faculty. I expect to receive this analysis in the early fall.

c. Campus Climate Survey:

In the fall, the Campus Climate Survey was released. We will use this report as a guide to make our campus more welcoming and safe. We can further explore these issues this spring through conversations within our classrooms, residence halls and at faculty and staff meetings. The Climate Assessment Planning Committee will provide facilitators and discussion guide materials to ensure that meaningful, candid conversations occur.

d. Sexual and Relationship Violence:

Last Thursday, January 12th, we shared with the Syracuse University community that representatives from the US Department of education’s Office of Civil Right’s will be on campus on January 24th to assess Syracuse University’s process for handling complaints of sexual violence and harassment. Let me remind you that these OCR visits are standard protocol and take place around the nation as part of the Title IX review process. OCR is currently looking at over 300 at complaints at institutions around the country, including one here at the university.

Because we want to learn from OCR’s visit, including about ways that we can maintain and enhance a safe and supportive environment, we are encouraging faculty, students and staff to participate.

As part of our comprehensive efforts to prevent sexual and relationship violence, on January 26th, the University will host Debbie Osgood, a nationally-recognized expert on Title IX. Ms. Osgood will train our Title IX investigators and University Appeals Board members as part of their annual training on sexual and relationship violence. Additionally the Task Force on Sexual and Relationship Violence will be bringing forth its recommendation related to the ongoing Climate Assessment.

Task Force members will also lead our campus participation in the national “It’s On Us” spring awareness campaign.

I ask all of us in the community to support shared governance efforts this semester in these four areas.

2) Inclusion and Policies of the New National Administration

I have encouraged the University Senate and university experts to examine and discuss issues related to the potential immigration policies of the new national administration. I look forward to that discussion, including at the University Senate meeting this week. In a resolution on November 30th, the Graduate Student Organization called for Syracuse University to be designated a “sanctuary campus” in response to possible policies of the government.

I want to remind all of us, in this context, of our longstanding values of inclusion at Syracuse University. On November 17, I added Syracuse University as a signatory in support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, known as DACA. This means that Syracuse University has joined other universities and colleges in a formal written commitment to students who came to this country as children, were raised and educated here, but remain “undocumented.”

By placing our University as a signatory in support of DACA, we are reaffirming our values and promising to embrace those who are vulnerable. We are showing decency, compassion and support that characterize this university at its best. I hope all in this community would join me in acknowledging the critical benefits of DACA for our students and its highly positive impact on our University and our community.

Our University's policy has been, and will continue to be, that we will NOT collect or voluntarily share information regarding any student's immigration status. In taking this position, the University is within its legal rights and authority.

I understand that the GSO asks us to go further and declare ourselves a "sanctuary." It is not clear exactly what that would mean. I will listen carefully to discussion on these issues at the Senate. There are, it seems to me, two meaningful constraints on us in that discussion. First, as a University subject to federal laws and a recipient of federal financial aid which affords many of our students the opportunity to attend here, we must be careful to not make designations that conflict with state or federal mandates. Second, as a University that holds sacred the principle that we care about every single one of our students -- that ALL our students must be welcomed, be safe, and be supported -- we have to do everything we reasonably can for our students, regardless of immigration status, subject to the very limits of the law. I look forward to working with the University community on these issues as the fast evolving national situation changes in the months ahead.

3) Finances of the University and Funding the Academic Strategic Plan

During the past year, the University, with the participation of hundreds of faculty, students, and staff, has made continued progress on implementing the Academic Strategic Plan. This great work will continue this semester and beyond.

We have also made substantial progress on the finances of the University.

This fiscal year, we are running a genuinely balanced budget without net use of carryover reserves and with appropriate investment in deferred maintenance of our facilities. Our endowment, after remaining essentially flat for a decade, is again now growing.

This is good news on both the financial and the academic planning front. We have stabilized things and have an Academic Plan.

But now the time has come to develop a long-term funding plan to support the new ideas and aspirations contained in the academic plan.

I have asked Vice Chancellor and Provost Michele Wheatly, Gwenn Judge in her current role as interim Chief Financial Officer, and incoming Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Amir Rahnamay-Azar to develop this plan. This effort will review the priorities, phasing and implementation goals contained in the strategic plan. It will also determine the level of funding required in both the short and long-term. This will include a look at retention and graduation rates, faculty resources, facilities, and the overall student experience.

I have also tasked this group with identifying new funding sources. This will include a review of the University's advancement goals as well as its historical and current tuition and room and board rates, and how that compares to our current and aspirational peers.

This effort will begin this semester and will require a candid conversation about priorities and tough choices as we enter our next phase of excellence.

Before I conclude, I would also like to share with you several pieces of news as we begin the spring 2017 academic semester.

Community Engagement Moving Forward

Last month I appointed longtime University College Dean Bea González, Vice President for Community Engagement. She was raised in this city and region. She believes in this community and knows its assets, strengths, and struggles firsthand. She has worked on community solutions in her role as Dean at University College as well as in her role as city council president and commissioner of education.

Mike Haynie, in his new role as Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Innovations, will work closely with Vice President González. They're charged with building on existing relationships with local governments and municipalities, foundations, corporations and nonprofit organizations.

This academic year, an effort has been underway to fully catalog all the direct resources we provide to organizations in our city and region. While that effort is still in process, it is initially estimated that our partnerships and collaborations, provide community organizations many millions of dollars annually. A comprehensive Economic Impact Plan will be completed by the end of June.

A key part of this effort is to build on the longstanding tradition of this university being a leader in offering students, faculty, and staff opportunities to connect, evaluate, and engage with the community around them. As we do this, we must more closely align our community commitments with our academic strategic plan, vision and mission, and the related work our students and faculty are doing.

New Enrollment Strategy

Today, I want to announce that I have tasked Senior Vice President Evanovich to work closely with Vice Chancellor and Provost Michele Wheatly to develop a long-range, University-wide strategic enrollment plan. Central to this plan will be two areas that have played an important part in Syracuse's past and are mission critical to our future:

- **Increasing and enhancing diversity:** This will include diversity across the spectrum, including race, ethnicity, international origin, socioeconomic status, disability, nontraditional populations, veterans and more, and
- **Growing academic quality:** We must continue to develop top-notch academic programs that match emerging student interests and societal needs, deliver 21st-century skills, and open up pathways to global careers.

150th Birthday

Finally, I am announcing today that I will work with the Deans, the Board of Trustees, and the University Senate to create a University-wide planning group to guide the efforts to mark our sesquicentennial year. I will do that with humility, but I think its worthwhile planning a little bit of a celebration and events that match our values. I expect this new group will include a cross-section of students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni. I expect it to engage the entire University community across the globe in a sustained reflection on the 150th anniversary of what is truly a great University.

As we head to 2020, I want to express confidence, even on gray and rainy January days. I have not the slightest doubt our University will thrive for the next three years and for many decades after that. I think it's going to take hard work by all of us, but looking out on all these people, many of whom I have come to know well, I have not the slightest doubt

that there is the talent and the dedication and the decency in each of you, so collectively this place is going to be doing very well in the future.

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