

Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud
Delivered on January 14, 2017
Location: Setnor Auditorium
Remarks: Spring New Student Convocation

*Chancellor Syverud was introduced by Joyce LaLonde, Vice President
of the Syracuse University Student Association*

Good morning. On behalf of my colleagues on the faculty and staff, I welcome you to Syracuse University.

After my welcome, you will hear from Jeffrey Mangram, a Professor at our School of Education. Professor Mangram has been part of the fabric of Syracuse University since he arrived here as a freshman football player in 1984. Since then he has earned his bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD at Syracuse. He has taught thousands of our students at Syracuse and in local high schools across our region. Professor Mangram has held many important roles at this University over decades, yet first and foremost he is simply a great teacher.

There are several very different audiences here at this convocation. In front of me, in the center section of the auditorium, are many of the more than 200 new freshman, discovery, transfer, and international exchange students about to begin your university careers at Syracuse. Some of you students are blessed to have parents or family members here too.

Let me first speak to the entering students of 2017: In a few moments, Dean Maurice Harris will ask you to rise and to receive and accept the charge. The words I will speak to you, and the words you will speak to me, are adapted from a charge first spoken on this campus 146 years ago in 1871.

The Chancellor who spoke them, Erastus Haven, and the students who heard them could not have imagined what Syracuse University would become in 2017.

Yet, those students in 1871 discovered many of the same things that you will discover here. They learned that education is not something bestowed on you, but something earned through hard work, and through discipline, as well as through unplanned and unexpected wonders that happen all over a great university.

A good education encompasses the full breadth of disciplines, from arts and humanities to the sciences. You will learn not only from your teachers but also from your peers. In the process, you will become a teacher yourself and you will forge friendships that will last a lifetime.

Those students in 1871 eventually left this University a better place, and they became better people. They were followed by 145 other cohorts of students and countless faculty and staff, each of whom contributed here and changed this place.

The University you see around you today is not just a bunch of buildings and people and course requirements; it is the accumulation of all the work and dreams and ideals and inventions of the students and faculty who came before you.

So much of what happens here is beyond the imagination of any administrator; it was invented and learned by students and faculty working here together. This includes the orientation leaders, resident advisors, and peer advisors, who for many decades have given their time to welcome the incoming class.

This inspired so many programs and departments and clubs and activities here, from the Daily Orange (one of the nation's top ranked college papers), founded in 1903, to the Crouse Chimes, installed in 1889 high up in the Crouse

College bell tower, heard across campus and played by student Chimemasters for more than 125 years. This includes many new student organizations created in just the last year.

So incoming 2016 students, when you hear and accept -- that charge -- the charge that dates back to 1871-- I ask you to resolve to make this University your own. I ask you to build something here, to make something here, to leave behind something here, that you alone uniquely contribute. We all want to help you do that. This is your university. Make it your own.

You can do this, as so many have before you. Let me give you two examples. First, years ago, a new transfer student came to Syracuse University. He had served his country in the U.S. and ended up studying at a small college in Nebraska. He transferred to Syracuse University in arts and sciences, not sure what he would study. He took courses across the curriculum, and eventually went into business. He became a master around failing businesses across various industries during five decades. He authored important books in the field of investing. He then taught and mentored countless Syracuse students. Our Martin J. Whitman School of Management is named in his honor. He was a transfer student.

A second example: A number of years ago, a new transfer student sat in this auditorium. She had done several semesters in community college and came here to major in economics, with a minor in math. In her second semester here, a professor told her that the air force had opened pilot training for women for the first time and urged her to try. She applied. She ultimately became the first female commander of the Space Shuttle; Eileen Collins, Syracuse Arts and Sciences Class of '78, math major, transfer student. And now she says parenting is in some ways more challenging than commanding a space shuttle.

Now, to the parents and families of the incoming class of 2017: To you folks on the sides of the auditorium! Three times now, I have dropped one of my own kids off at a University. Three times, I have sat where you now sit. Three times,

I have been happy and proud of my kid starting at a great university. Three times, I have been anxious and concerned, and not about the food or the residence hall.

I have been concerned because I suddenly realized, sitting where you sit, that there would be a piece of my soul walking around a campus far away, beyond my ability to completely control or protect or influence.

Some of you may be feeling right now what I felt each time I left one of my kids at a university. It doesn't get easier the second time you do it. It doesn't get easier the third time you do it. My wife, my family, and I, had poured so much into each of our children - so much time and love and energy and worry and inspiration. It was a labor of love, but it was labor, and we got very used to it. Indeed, it defined the best part of our lives.

And suddenly, one day, I was looking over at my kid, and all the effort was worthwhile - we were successful, our kid was ready to embrace a great university, or so we hoped and prayed.

My wife and I did a hard thing that day. We went home. I knew my kid had to make his own way. I hoped that the University would have good people - like Syracuse University does - among its faculty and staff and in the student body. People who would catch my kid and inspire him. Like the people here who inspired Marty Whitman and Eileen Collins.

I went home, as you now must do. The happy news I can share with you is that, after a few weeks or months, my kids started calling me often, and I could still be there for them. I could visit on Parents' Weekend. I could help do laundry. I could take joy, each day and in a different way, in my kids who were now truly adults.

Parents and family, thank you for all you have done and will do for these members of the 2017 entering class. Like all of Syracuse University, I am the

beneficiary of all your great work, in developing these students. Because of your work, these students are our most sacred trust.

Good luck to all of you, students and families, and congratulations.

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