

Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud
Delivered on Tuesday, January 16, 2018
Location: Life Sciences Atrium
Remarks: 2018 Winter Message

*The Chancellor was introduced by Student Association President,
James Franco '18*

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the start of the spring semester at Syracuse University. And thank you, James, for your introduction and for all you and all your colleagues in the Student Association have been doing to improve our University. You have made tremendous progress this year; you are candid about student concerns, I can testify personally; and the association has played a leading role in a lot of the news I'll be sharing in this set of remarks. It was the Student Association at Syracuse University that suggested that the Chancellor give an overview of salient issues to the University community at the start of this semester. In response to that suggestion, we had the first Chancellor's Winter Message a year ago in this space. I discussed what was going on at the University, particularly what was going on in response to events in the world, including the recent presidential election. I asked that we focus on our values and on what kind of University we wanted to be for our 150th birthday in 2020.

In the year since then, there have been a lot of challenges and opportunities coming at higher education, and at Syracuse University. Last year, I really did not anticipate just how much the landscape of private higher education would face challenges because of changing federal and state policies, including in the areas of taxation, pricing of public higher education, international relations, immigration and new education department policies.

There has been a lot coming at us. Even more important, there are increasingly high expectations for Syracuse University from the world, and from all the communities that matter to us, including here in this region and from our students, faculty, staff and our alumni.

At Syracuse University, this should not now be daunting. We are in remarkably good shape to respond to the challenges coming at us and to seize opportunities to have a better impact in the world.

Our student enrollment has never been larger, has never been stronger, has never been more international and, on many levels, has never been more diverse. Whether measured by our budget or our endowment or our fundraising, our finances have arguably also never been stronger.

Our faculty have been doing remarkable work and we can foresee significant and steady growth in our faculty for the coming years.

Our Board of Trustees and our advisory boards are deeply engaged and supportive in leading our University.

Unlike at so many universities, shared governance, which is so key to our history and to our future, is, I believe, getting stronger here, thanks to hard work in our University Senate.

And we have a lot of strong leaders in many areas of the University, including in schools, colleges and administrative departments.

I say this because for the past four years, our University has been fixing a lot of things, managing a lot of transitions and doing a lot of planning. The work of planning is really reaching a crescendo this semester. Every school and college at Syracuse University now has a strategic plan in draft, and our Board of Trustees is reviewing them this semester.

The plans contain deserving and important ideas and initiatives that will make this a stronger place for our students, faculty, staff and the world.

Many other parts of the University are in the process this semester of completing strategic planning. Just to name 10 of them: Research, Enrollment Management, all of the Division of BFAS (Budget, Finance and Administrative Services), Facilities and Deferred Maintenance, Marketing and Communications, Government Relations and Community Engagement, Athletics, Hendricks Chapel and University College through part-time and online education.

While there are some parts of the University that are farther along than others and some parts of the University that will need to do planning well into the future. But by and large, the vast majority of the University will complete strategic planning this summer.

As a University, it is therefore time that we start moving faster from reaction and planning and to proactive implementation of our strategies. By summer we will be very much in that mode.

What does that mean concretely for the coming semester? It means we have a lot to get done. Let me highlight five of the many things we need to get done beyond the important work of the successful completion of our strategic planning.

- 1. We need to deliver on our promises in connection with Invest Syracuse.**

This University made tough choices over the last six months in choosing to embrace the program we called Invest Syracuse. With leadership from our Board of Trustees, we decided to rebase our tuition for new students, to freeze the room and board, cut \$30 million from the operating budget from administration and to raise \$40 million for financial aid in the next two years for students to help cover the new tuition cost.

We decided to do those tough things, and they are tough, so that the money generated could be invested in our students and their experience,

and in our academic programs. We believe that this infusion of resources in our faculty and students, if invested wisely, will have a transformative effect on our University over the next five years.

In the coming semester we need to deliver on these promises. That means two things:

We need to successfully execute on generating the Invest Syracuse resources – the fundraising, the administrative cost savings and the enrollment of a fine entering class under the new tuition and room and board structure. And we need to quicken the pace of investing the resources we are generating into the highest priority initiatives that will transform our student experience and our academic impact.

The good news is that we have had success so far and we can expect significant progress on both these fronts in the coming months.

On cost savings, as of today we've identified more than \$22.8 million of the \$30 million in cost cuts. And we are well on our way to getting more than 50 percent of the \$30 million in cost savings implemented this year.

For example, we've realized \$5 million in savings as a result of eliminating 39 non-academic administrative positions and by reducing the use of consultants across 14 administrative departments.

In fundraising, our Invest Syracuse efforts have now raised an additional \$10 million towards student financial aid. We are on track to raise the first \$20 million of the \$40 million we have to raise by the end of this fiscal year in June.

Most important of all, we have made great progress to assure that our entering class in fall 2018 will continue to be strong and diverse. Undergraduate applications to Syracuse have never been more numerous and never been stronger than they are this year. Now we need to

redouble our efforts in the coming semester to make sure we yield an extraordinary entering class, including in our undergraduate and in our graduate programs.

I am asking every dean and department and every administrative unit that impacts admissions and student life to assist in this important yield effort.

As I said, this semester we also need to see faster progress in directing the Invest Syracuse resources to where they will do the most good for our students and faculty at the University. We're starting to see that happen, as well.

This semester, Invest Syracuse resources will be directed to programs to improve our graduation and retention rates. This will include piloting an integrated academic and career advising model with several schools and colleges. Career and life coaches will be hired to work directly with academic advisors. As a result, more of our students can get the support and the success they need to graduate with a career in four years.

This semester, as you heard President Franco say, with help from the Student Association and Graduate Student Organization, Invest Syracuse resources have been used to create the new Euclid Shuttle. It should, at its best (and we'll monitor it closely), provide frequent and reliable transportation in a loop around the Euclid neighborhood and the campus.

This semester our faculty will start to receive the funds from the first-ever internal research grants program funded in part with Invest Syracuse resources. This is just the start of Invest Syracuse resources directed to research.

And this semester we will start to see the results of the Invest Syracuse plan for faculty hiring as the provost and the deans complete the budget and the academic planning that will enable us to authorize searches for

15 to 25 new outstanding faculty this coming year and for each of the four years thereafter.

If the sacrifices involved in Invest Syracuse are to be worth it, we need to involve our whole community in clearly identifying and implementing more such strategic programs and investments in the coming semester. I expect that will happen over the coming months.

So that's Invest Syracuse, the first important priority I emphasize for this semester. The second is this:

2. We need to deliver on our promises to remain open and welcoming to the world – to all who Syracuse University serves.

That includes people from every state who study and work on this campus. That includes people from more than 150 countries. That includes people of all races, of all nationalities, of all religions, all belief systems. It includes all sexual orientations and gender identities. It includes those with disabilities. And it includes those with military backgrounds.

Given events in the country and in the world, I believe it has never been more important that we as a University and as a community embrace the ideal that we remain open and welcoming to the whole world.

I just want to repeat that:

We as a University need to embrace the ideal that we remain open and welcoming to the whole world.

This semester I ask that we redouble our efforts, therefore, in a bunch of areas. In internationalization, I ask that we drive to conclusion the implementation of our diversity and inclusion recommendations. I ask that we support our students and staff who have challenges due to

changing immigration laws and that we commence an inclusive evaluation of our policies and practices affecting those with disabilities. A few sentences on each of these:

On Internationalization:

Enhancing the student experience requires a keen focus on providing students with exposure to global perspectives. You will find a renewed emphasis on internationalization throughout the Academic Strategic Plan, in our dedication to creating a diverse student body and in our enhancing of our study abroad programs.

This semester we plan to further implement the internationalization component of the Academic Strategic Plan, and to focus on our international offerings through Syracuse Abroad, our global opportunities and partners, and our recruitment and retention of international students.

Diversity and Inclusion:

We continue to take strong steps toward building a more diverse and inclusive Syracuse University community on campus and beyond. Our focus this semester is bringing to life the short-term recommendations previously identified by the Workgroup on Diversity and Inclusion. To date, 12 of the 18 short-term recommendations have been completed. And the remaining six are in progress and I expect will be complete by June 30.

Looking ahead, we've begun work to address the 15 long-term recommendations. By June, we plan to have eight of the 15 long term recommendations completed. One of the long-term recommendations is to appoint a chief diversity officer. I expect to begin this process during this semester.

DACA:

In regards to the immigration laws, as the future of the DACA program continues to be debated in Washington, Syracuse University remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting our undocumented students. To assist our students through these challenging and uncertain times, we've reactivated the Ad Hoc Committee on DACA/Undocumented Students. The committee is working with University leadership to implement last spring's recommendations, and that includes the launch of a new informational web page, which is expected to go live this month.

Additionally, Senior Vice President Dolan Evanovich and the committee are hosting one-on-one meetings this semester with all impacted students. This is an area where I expect dynamic change to continue this semester and I want us to be nimble in response.

In the area of disabilities, I have asked Provost Michele Wheatly and Senior Vice President Dolan Evanovich to commence, this month, an inclusive process of evaluation of our disability services and related policies, including our process and policy on student housing, academic accommodations, medical leaves, service animals and other areas. I've asked that they include members of our disabilities community at each step of the way, including in designing the review process. I have requested also that the provost assure that this semester, we make substantial progress in assuring, under our new information technology accessibility policy, that our classroom materials, our library resources and many other areas of digital content are accessible to those with disabilities.

So I first talked about the priority of Invest Syracuse and then about the priority of continuing to welcome the world.

The third priority this semester is:

3. Delivering on our promises of major building projects.

Construction has now started on two major building projects on this campus: the National Veterans Resource Complex, or NVRC, and the Arch. The NVRC will serve as the center of veteran life on campus, in the local community and across Central New York. It will function as a bridge to forging public-private partnerships, a space for academic research and programming and a space for facility collaboration.

The Archbold Gymnasium renovation, including the Barnes Center at the Arch, will soon result in a state-of-the-art health, wellness and recreation complex. The new Arch will embody the Academic Strategic Plan's vision of establishing a holistic student health and wellness experience as a core value of Syracuse University.

Either one of these two projects would be the largest construction projects Syracuse University has undertaken in years. Each will substantially improve the student experience and the impact of our University. And each will involve significant logistical challenges and much bandwidth from many of our support units, including in facilities. We need to execute on these buildings well.

And yet, there's a lot more coming in the facilities area. Most important, while we are doing these major projects, the student leaders have emphasized to me, as have faculty and staff, we need to make sure our current students and our faculty and staff have a good experience in our existing facilities, and have as little disruption as possible due to construction. That's a real challenge, as major construction right between Waverly and Marshall Streets and right between the Quad and Mount Olympus is hard to avoid.

I am grateful to all in the University who work hard to make sure our students and faculty and staff have as smooth an experience during this

transition construction period as possible. I'm particularly grateful for the truly extraordinary effort over the holidays to successfully transition health and wellness facilities to the Women's Building and to new facilities constructed on the Mount.

This semester we also need to be continuing the planning for other upcoming construction projects. We've continued to engage the campus community about future renovations of the Schine Student Center, a high priority. I appreciate those of you who participated in the fall forums. We are in the early planning and design stages of this renovation.

Next, Link Hall is an important project and a necessary one. The new Allyn Innovation Center will enhance the student space in the engineering and computer science building, especially those spaces dedicated to advising student services and recruitment.

And lastly, I believe we should make a definitive decision on the future of the Dome roof by this summer.

All these projects proceed, but we also are finalizing in the midst of them the details of a long-range maintenance plan that will carry us through 2025 and leave all our facilities in good shape for the generations that follow us.

The fourth priority I want to emphasize today is that:

4. We need to deliver on our promises in the area of community engagement.

In October we shared two reports with the campus community and the Syracuse community. One highlighted the significant impact we have on this community and region as a University. And the second was an inventory of all the Syracuse University community engagement investments.

Building on those reports, under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Mike Haynie and Vice President Bea González, we will deliver a strategy for community engagement that aligns with both the Academic Strategic Plan and our aspirations as a community. We will be engaging the campus and community to determine our priorities for ongoing investments in the local region in the coming semester.

And fifth and finally, as a priority for this semester:

5. We need to re-examine our policies governing sexual harassment and abuse of power in relationships between faculty or staff and students.

Out in the world these last few months there has been a truly remarkable awakening as many step forward to recount their experiences of sexual abuse by those in power or authority over them in workplaces, academic and athletic settings.

This semester I have asked our University Senate and our deans to formally reassess our policies governing sexual relationships between faculty and staff on the one hand and students on the other.

There is a potential for abuse of power in these relationships, as we have witnessed here and we have witnessed it at other universities.

It's time to reassess whether we have the best policies and practices in place at Syracuse.

I ask that the administration and that the relevant University Senate committees report on this issue, on related issues and on any recommended changes before the end of this academic semester.

In closing:

Clearly we have a lot of hard work ahead this semester. And the most important work, of course, is in research and teaching and service, the

heart of what our University does. On top of that, we have the five priorities I have emphasized today and the completion of strategic planning and many other priorities. To get all this done, it really is time for us to be purposeful and proactive in implementing our ambitions for this University.

I am really confident we're going to get it done. I'm confident because I have gotten to know Syracuse University and its people. In four years, the most important thing I have learned here is this: there are so many amazing people across this University who do spectacular and important things really well. They care about our students and their success. They want to make this world a better place. There are so many of these folks and they're very focused.

Many of you here today are helping to nurture even more people like this, among our students, faculty, staff, alumni, community and those we are recruiting to come here. That work will make our University great. That work will take resources, which we really are now generating through Invest Syracuse. That work will take strategies, which we really are now completing, and that work will take tough choices, which we now have the courage and the ability to make.

But most of all, that work will require that all of us remember our values as a University and reinforce them in how we behave with each other and with the newcomers we want to continue to welcome here from all over the world.

So thank you. Be confident. And please be Orange. Thank you.

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