

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on October 10, 2018

Location: Maxwell School Auditorium

Remarks: University Senate

*The Chancellor was introduced by the Senate Chair, Professor Ramesh Raina*

Good afternoon. First, I just want to thank Bruce. Thank you for that presentation, which was helpful.

I guess I'd also add to it, by the way — all accurate from what I know from reading the governing documents and I haven't read the full unabridged Robert's Rules of Order in a while — but I would also say that those are the formal rules and there's more to it than that in terms of it sets up a structure, but we've been in this journey of the last five years, to actually strengthen shared governance at this university.

It may not seem linearly positive to you but we've come a long way from what was a pretty low point, which was around the promotion decision a long time ago, four or five years ago.

And part of that project is, from my point of view, going beyond the formal structures to basic understanding and respect of the rules and expertise of different groups.

So the reason curriculum and degrees have been assigned to this body is largely because of a view that the Board of Trustees should not be setting who gets a degree and should not be controlling the curriculum.

That should be with the faculty that have an expertise in it, which is why I think we talk about a faculty Senate.

And also the reason some things are left within the board's discretion is because of a view that there are some areas where the Board has more expertise or fiduciary responsibility.

My responsibility is sometimes uncomfortably be the representative of one body to the other and remind one body of the expertise of the other and that the university only works with each body understanding the expertise and the organic nature of the university as not being a corporation and not being a monarchy.

So I exist to take advice from this body.

I have been coming to all the meetings of this body for that reason.

I give brief reports, but candidly, more important than my brief reports, I view, is the questioning after the reports.

But it's important to keep that constrained so that the Senate has time for itself.

Let me go quickly because I've consumed five minutes of my five minutes.

My comments will be brief. First, I will update you on three things. 1) The comprehensive review of Greek Life, 2) a milestone for the Institute for Veterans and Military Families and 3) the student diagnosed with meningitis and our response. I then need to talk again about harassment and abuse.

First, the update on Greek Life: The Greek Life survey had a strong response rate (41.6%) from undergraduate, full-time students.

During their site visit, the external reviewers met with a broad group of stakeholders, including students not affiliated with Greek life, Greek-affiliated alumni, Greek Council presidents and Chapter leaders, new member educators, house directors and housing corporation representatives, staff in the Division of Enrollment and the Student Experience, Greek community members, representatives from DPS and Syracuse Police Department, faculty and staff advisors, and with me.

The draft report from the external reviewers is due by October 17. The report and recommendations will cover a number of topic areas related to Greek Life, including staffing, personnel, policies and programming.

Second, IVMF. On October 17th, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families marks a milestone. Over the past six years, IVMF has provided services that enhance the lives of veterans and service members and their families as they transition back into their communities. The number of individuals we have served in these programs has recently passed 100,000 people. A ceremony recognizing this milestone will be held in Heroy Hall Atrium at 5:30 on October 17th. So many faculty and staff of this university, from across all parts of the university, have helped make this possible. I thank all of you for this effort, as well as for helping our student veterans, whose numbers have continued to grow. We will continue to work to make Syracuse University the best for veterans.

Third, meningitis. As most of you know, we had one student diagnosed with bacterial meningitis earlier this month. We believe all individuals in close contact with this student have been notified and given antibiotics. The student and family report that professors have been extremely generous and helpful in making accommodations for academic work. I want to thank all faculty for support of this student. It is what I hope we aspire to for every student who finds himself or herself in challenging circumstances.

Now, on sexual harassment and abuse.

New York State has issued new guidelines for sexual harassment and abuse policies and procedures. They took effect yesterday. We have revised our Syracuse University policies to be in compliance. I again thank the Senate for approving new policies last May regarding potentially abusive relationships between faculty and students.

I want to again today remind us all that, in my view, we are in a transformational time in this country and at this university on these issues. We still have important work to do. I ask, indeed, I implore, this Senate to improve the procedures in Section 4.11 of the Faculty Manual for responding to complaints of sexual assault and harassment against faculty. I also ask that we ensure that new faculty we hire have consistently undergone an appropriate background check related to these issues.

I thank the Agenda Committee for tasking the AFTPE (Academic Freedom, Tenure and Professional Ethics) Committee to work with the Office of General Counsel and the Office of Equal Opportunity Inclusion and Resolution Services. I believe the Agenda Committee has requested that draft recommendations be submitted to the full senate. I ask that the Senate consider and resolve those recommendations before Commencement 2019.

Finally, you will notice a lot more people in orange soon. October 18th – 21st will be our Orange Central weekend, and we expect more than 2,000 alumni to return to campus for the most extensive set of reunion and alumni events we have scheduled in many, many years.

That is my report. I will take questions after the Provost speaks.

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