

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on November 2, 2021

Location: NVRC, K.G. Tan Auditorium

Remarks: NVRC Dedication

*The Chancellor was introduced by Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Innovation, Mike Haynie.*

Thank you, Vice Chancellor Haynie.

This is a happy day for Syracuse University and for the United States of America. This is an amazing building that we dedicate today – the National Veteran’s Resource Center at the Daniel and Gayle D’Aniello building. This place is so beautiful and functional and accessible that it is awe-inspiring. I am deeply grateful to everyone who made this building possible.

That includes an extraordinary team in the Office of Veterans and Military Affairs and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families. That especially includes their tireless leader, Vice Chancellor Mike Haynie. It includes staff and faculty and students and alumni from across Syracuse University who have worked to make our commitment to veteran and military connected communities strong – all of you. This includes many who pitched in on the design and construction and fundraising, and support for the students and staff who work in this building. And of course, I thank SHoP Architects and our builders and contractors and sub-contractors, led by LeChase Construction Services, and our entire team in facilities and Campus Planning, Design and Construction for their work.

I join in thanking our donors and supporters to the NVRC, the IVMF and OVMA, including Dr. K.G. Tan, for whom this amazing auditorium is named. Thanks to the State of New York, the Bisignano Family, the Lachowicz Family, the Haydon Family, the Dottle Family and the many donors and supporters who have made this building a reality.

I thank the trustees of Syracuse University, who believed in the vision of making this University the best place for veterans, and who backed it even when it was a glimmer of hope in Mike Haynie and my eyes.

Finally, of course, I thank Daniel and Gayle D’Aniello, for whom this building is named. Dan has told me in the past that Syracuse University took a chance on him. In retrospect, taking that chance was an excellent decision. I am so grateful to that admissions officer.

After attending Syracuse, Dan went on to be a leader in the Navy, in business and in philanthropy. In turn, his leadership has impacted Syracuse. He has been an active and involved Syracuse University Trustee and a source of valuable counsel. He has advised and supported budding entrepreneurs at the Whitman School of Management. He has enabled programs to assist veterans in launching the next stage of their careers. Dan D’Aniello’s love for Syracuse University goes beyond simple alumni loyalty or a feeling of responsibility as a Trustee. Not only did he take a chance on our vision for veterans – he became a major enabler for its achievement. Through his wise counsel and philanthropy, he has touched so many lives of past and current students and veterans. It is impossible to measure the ripple effect that his leadership has had. Going forward, this building, named for him and Gayle, will be a place from which even more individuals are launched for success.

Last year, a colleague of mine who leads another private university asked me this: “Kent”, he said, “what is the real reason for all this veterans’ stuff at Syracuse? After all, you never served. No other major university is doing this. What’s the real reason you care about this?” I get questions like this more often than this audience probably would expect.

Here is the two-part answer. First, it is a moral issue for me. This is a beautiful campus at an amazing private university in a great and civilized country. This University and this country, and all the opportunities they afford all of us, would not last a decade, let alone a generation, unless men and women are willing to fight and sometimes die for their country, and for their brothers and sisters. I am student of history, and this is the simple truth. We just ended the longest war in our history, fought by an entirely volunteer force drawn from less than 1% of our population.

And those who recently serve and have served, by and large, have not been drawn from places like Harvard or Princeton – indeed they historically have rarely seen the opportunities and advantages that a great private university can bestow. Yet we at great private univeresities have been given our freedom by their sacrifice. “To whom much is given, much will be required,” to quote St. Luke.

As a moral matter I believe, we at this university are required to be the best we can be for our veterans and our military connected students. This building is a stake in the ground on that commitment – a statement that we at Syracuse University will not forget this obligation as we enhance our programs to serve veterans and their families and to enable military-connected students to thrive at a great private research university.

That moral commitment is the first answer. The second answer is one of the university’s self-interest. When we started down the road that led to this building back in 2013, there were some at Syracuse University who were unsure that this would be a better university if we became the best university for veterans. Today, in 2021, there should be no doubters left. This University, and all its parts, are incomparably better because we have again welcomed and learned from our veteran and military connected community. That is true in our College of Visual and Performing Arts as well as in our Engineering School. It is true is our Architecture School and in Maxwell and Law, and Newhouse and Arts and Sciences. It is true in our student life, in our facilities, in our intellectual life, and in our research. We are a great university that has so much more to give the world because we are different from our peers in embracing those who are serving and those who have served.

One of those who served is here today, the namesake of this glorious building. No one played a bigger role in making today possible than Dan D’Aniello. It is with great pride and gratitude that I welcome Dan to the podium for his remarks.

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