

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on October 29, 2021

Location: Goldstein Alumni & Faculty Center

Remarks: Volunteer Leadership Lunch

*The Chancellor was introduced by Vice President, Alumni Engagement, Advancement and External Affairs, Susan “Sue” Ballard.*

Good afternoon. It’s a wonderful weekend at Syracuse University when we get to welcome back so many alumni. This Orange Central feels particularly special after two years apart. We are so pleased to have you here in person.

It is a particular pleasure to be able to thank all of our volunteer leaders. When you walk around campus this weekend, you’ll see that our students are happy to be here and they are taking advantage of all that Syracuse has to offer. If you haven’t walked through the Barnes Center at The Arch or the renovated Schine Student Center, I encourage you to do so. Take advantage of one of the Orange Central tours. You will see so much to be proud of, not just in facilities but in how today’s students are using these spaces to focus on wellness and involvement. You’ll see them meeting friends, studying and socializing.

We have a very strong class this year and our enrollment has bounced back almost to pre-pandemic levels. Our total enrollment of 21,722 is at 95% of the Fall 2019 record high. Students of color make up 27.9% of our total enrollment, the highest percentage in over a decade. This does not include international students. This fall, we welcomed 3,754 new undergraduate students, 31% of whom are students of color.

This year, we also welcome new leaders. Gretchen Ritter joined us on October 1, as Vice Chancellor, Provost and Chief Academic Officer. She most recently served as the associate provost and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio State University. Gretchen is a distinguished scholar of political science. Her track record of success spans positions at the University of Texas at Austin and Cornell University.

She brings a thoughtful and collaborative approach to academic leadership. This will be critical as she leads our efforts to refresh our strategic plan, with a focus on academic excellence.

Allen Groves and Cerri Banks arrived on campus July 1. Allen is senior vice president for the student experience. He previously served at the University of Virginia, where he spent more than a decade as associate vice president and university dean of students. Cerri Banks, our new vice president for student success, is a three-time Syracuse University alumna who was most recently dean of students and vice president for student affairs at Skidmore College. Both Allen and Cerri are already having an impact on how our students experience.

Thanks to new leaders on campus and to our alumni leadership in this room, your university is more vibrant than ever. Throughout the pandemic, you have found creative ways to continue to engage your fellow alumni, helping us achieve three quarters of our goal for alumni engagement within the Forever Orange Campaign. Because of your role as ambassadors, we have more than 90,000 unique donors and are moving well toward our campaign goal of 125,000. As a result, the Forever Orange campaign, has just surpassed the $1.044 total achieved during the last campaign.

During this final phase of the campaign, we are very focused on academic excellence, financial aid and scholarships. This includes endowed faculty chairs and professorships and innovative academic programs. It is my hope that this Orange Central weekend will provide you with new stories to tell about excellence at Syracuse University.

You are our most valued ambassadors and a critical part of your University’s success. Thank you for all that you do and all that you will do. And Go Orange!

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