

Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on August 22, 2016

Location: Skybarn

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at the Nya wenha Ska:nonh Welcome Luncheon

The Chancellor was introduced by Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz, Interim Senior Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs

Thank you, Rebecca. I would like to start by thanking the folks who worked so hard to organize this luncheon:

- Regina Jones, assistant director in the Office of Multicultural Affairs;
- James Duah-Agyeman, director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs;
- The staff in the Office of Multicultural Affairs;
- And thanks also to University Catering staff for their usual great service

I am pleased to have this opportunity to welcome all of our Native American students and your loved ones to Syracuse University. Today we welcome 22 new Native students to campus. That includes 13 new Haudenosaunee Promise Scholars. Also represented are Cherokee, Navajo, Abenaki, Choctaw, Kickapoo, Yaqi and Zuni. Syracuse has a long association with Native American students and participation with our Haudenosaunee neighbors. This bond is deepened further by the fact that the University sits on the ancestral homelands of the Onondaga Nation. It is important that the University acknowledge and honor that fact always, because it is part of who we are.

It is especially fitting at the start of a new academic year to celebrate our connections with the Haudenosaunee and all Native nations. And at the start of this academic year, we are expanding how we acknowledge our connections.

I am happy to tell you that the Haudenosaunee flag will fly at major University locations beginning this semester. The flag has already been installed at the Carrier Dome. In addition, the flag will fly at Manley Field House, Hendricks Chapel, and the Goldstein Student Center, among other locations.

Also a statement acknowledging that Syracuse University sits on Native land has already been developed. It will be disseminated to relevant event organizers and read at major public events on campus. I will use this statement during my remarks at the New Student Convocation on Thursday evening. These outcomes are just some of the results from the substantial work done by Chancellor's Workgroup on Diversity and Inclusion. Let's give that group a round of applause.

Many of you here are incoming Haudenosaunee Promise Scholars. This program was created 11 years ago to honor the historical, political, and cultural legacies of the Haudenosaunee to the University and to the region.

The Promise Scholarship and our Native Student Program have put Syracuse at the forefront of universities reaching out to recruit and support Native students. Today we count hundreds of indigenous alumni among our extended Syracuse University family.

The diversity that these programs bring to the campus makes the entire University a better place. A diversity of perspectives—shaped by different life experiences, cultures, and belief systems—is essential to academic excellence.

But amid the diversity, we find shared values. Concern for the natural environment is an important priority at Syracuse just as it is for the Nation.

In fact, some of our faculty right now are working with the Nation to train teachers about the cultural and ecological significance of Onondaga Lake. The project is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. And it draws on both modern science and Native wisdom to help inspire responsible environmental stewardship.

To our new students, I want you to know I am glad you are here. You will get a great education here.

But there also will be times, I am sure, when you feel alone. So much is new at once. I started college in 1974, and I felt alone most of my first semester. I'd only been on an airplane once before, and I was 500 miles away from my family, including my identical twin brother. It was a Catholic school, my first time in one, and I wasn't Catholic. I struggled personally and academically. I did not talk to a professor for the first five months. I was determined never to show weakness, and to succeed on my own.

I learned the foolishness of this in my second semester. I learned there were so many people—students, faculty, staff—who wanted to know me. I just had to give them the chance. The same is true for you here. Please don't follow my example. Learn from my mistake.

I encourage you to take advantage of the resources and services of the Native Student Program. This office is dually supported by Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. It is there to provide academic and social support through your transition to college life.

I encourage you to approach professors and deans early and often. They do care about you. They want to be here for you—from your very first day on campus.

Finally, I encourage you to add your voices, your energy, and your talents to the life and work of this campus. Find out what excites you and get involved. We will all gain from your contributions.

To the families of these new students, thank you for entrusting them to us. I want to assure you that the staff and faculty of Syracuse University are here to teach, support, and encourage your students. And we will do our best to help your student adjust, learn, and succeed.

Thank you.

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