JAKIA DURHAM ’13 SAID AT THIS SPRING’S SAY YES TO EDUCATION Syracuse festive fifth anniversary celebration, “Now I’m ready to give back to my community what was given to me, and possibly more,” therein capturing the whole reason for being of this groundbreaking partnership with the Say Yes to Education Foundation, Syracuse City School District, and many others. Newly empowered as one of 47 Say Yes students in the SU Class of 2013, Jakia (see page 26) helped us mark a major milestone: To date, Say Yes has propelled more than 2,100 students like Jakia to attend one of the more than 100 colleges in the program’s Higher Education Compact—a list that has now grown to include new partners Harvard, Northwestern, Duke, Georgetown, and Notre Dame.

Yet, we are by no means ready to declare “mission accomplished.” For as Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof told the Class of 2013 at Commencement, “Talent is universal, opportunity is not”—insightful words that echo well beyond the Carrier Dome in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision in Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, which reaffirmed our “compelling national interest” in assuring that colleges and universities reach the next generation and prepare a diverse student body to lead our country and strengthen our democracy. Drawing a map to get us there was the subject of a recent National Press Club event sponsored by the Brookings Institution titled “The Economic Imperative of Expanding College Opportunity,” at which I joined economists and other higher education leaders in sharing strategies to meet that imperative.

SU is well positioned to thrive in this new era, thanks to the unprecedented support of the SU family in driving us across the finish line of our $1 billion fund-raising campaign. The generosity of record numbers of you doing all you can to support our diverse new generations of students, build on the strengths of our faculty, and catalyze the development of our signature learning environments on and off campus—such as the soon-to-be-opened Fisher Center in New York City—has put SU on an impressive upward trajectory for all to see. We know it hasn’t escaped notice by the record number of new applicants we had for fall 2013: more than 28,000!

These are among the many reasons why I take some solace as I prepare to leave SU next year, knowing this great University will continue to become even greater. The search for SU’s 12th Chancellor is well under way, under the sage guidance of our search committee chair and Trustee, Judge Joanne Alper ’72, and our Board chair, Richard L. Thompson G’67, and my own plans have firmed up, as I look forward with great excitement and anticipation to continuing the critical work of expanding opportunity through higher education as Chancellor at Rutgers University-Newark, as of January 1, 2014.

In a sense, SU has done for Jakia Durham what it has done for the SU family as a whole—including me: It has prepared us to continue giving back to our communities, to our nation, and to our world in ways that we couldn’t have imagined. I look forward to continuing to partner with all of you in the coming months to do just that.

Cordially,

Nancy Cantor
Chancellor and President