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Golden Key Induction Ceremony

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Recommended Citation

Syverud, Kent, "Golden Key Induction Ceremony" (2014). *Chancellor's Office (2004 - 2013)*. 98.
<https://surface.syr.edu/chancellor/98>

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud
Delivered on Sunday, November 16, 2014
Location: Hendricks Chapel
Remarks: Golden Key Induction Ceremony

The Chancellor was introduced by President, Daniel Piccininni

Thank you Daniel, and good evening everyone.

So many folks worked hard to make this special evening possible.

Of course, the event was planned by the Executive Board of the Syracuse Chapter of Golden Key:

President Daniel Piccinninni; Vice President Uzo Unabaga;
Secretary Marissa Fenning; Treasurer Qi Yin Wu, Public Relations
Director Richard Baker; Advisor Dawn Long; and Co-advisor
Sabina Redington.

Can you join me in thanking the executive board?

The newest inductees to the Honor Society join a very select group of young men and women. They come from among the top 15% of college and university sophomores, juniors and seniors and from top-performing graduate students. I know you come from across all schools and colleges at Syracuse, and I know you are pursuant widely varied courses of study. You do have many things in common, however, and that is why you earned this honor.

First, you have been blessed by many people who supported you along the way to this achievement. You have been fortunate to have people who care about you and who believe in you. I speak of your family, your friends, your mentors, and your teachers, many of whom are here to

celebrate with you today. I thank them for their support and for their faith in you, which today proves has been richly justified.

The second thing you have in common is that each of you worked hard to get here today. You don't get selected for Golden Key by coasting along on your intellect. You get selected by passionate pursuit of learning and achievement, over many years, during late nights, summers, exam periods, and all the times in between. This is a committed group, and one all of us at Syracuse are proud of.

So tonight we celebrate a job well done, and ask you as members of Golden Key to move forward in pursuit of the three pillars of this Society: Academics, Leadership, and Service.

Let us start with a Golden Key approach to Academics: I deeply believe that, for a bright person, the key to happiness is to keep learning always. By temperament, by habit, and by curiosity, you are new members of Golden Key who cannot and should not stop pursuing knowledge now that you have this great achievement behind you. You need always to keep learning, always to seek to know the truth so that you may be free. The youngest people I have ever known were those who kept learning always – a 66 year old law professor who embraced new ideas like they were oxygen; my 93 year old grandmother who learned new piano music until the year she died; and a 20 year old college student who always kept wondering why and pursuing the answers.

I believe every member of Golden Key has the capacity to keep learning across a whole lifetime, and therefore to remain young always. All you have to do is keep doing what you have done to earn this honor today.

The second pillar of Golden Key is Leadership. Each of you was picked for this honor because you have manifested leadership at this University. You took initiative among your peers and made a difference in countless activities and organizations. All of us here today believe you are destined

to lead in even greater ways in the future, and Lord knows we all will need your help.

I want to call your attention to one aspect of leadership that I believe will serve you well. It is the ability, in the words of Alex Haley, to “find the good and praise it.” In your whole life, in every organization you will lead, in every situation you will find yourself in, in every institution you attempt to steward, you will find challenges – things that are not perfect, people who are frustrated or unhappy, problems that seem tough to solve. And if you are a leader with curiosity and respect for others, you will also, in every situation, also find good – you will find hidden talents among your people, you will find ideas and inspiration from every corner, and you find reasons not to be discouraged. You will need, in every situation, to find the good and praise it, to show it to all and to inspired all by the good.

In Classical Chinese there is an aphorism, a four character saying, that goes like this “I wu Jih Wu”. It means literally “Love house, love blackbird.” But the leadership thought embedded there is complicated. What the Classical Chinese means is this: If you truly care about and love something, like a house or a person or group you lead, then you should embrace and love everything about it that defines it, including the idiosyncratic or sometimes annoying things. They can be as vital an ingredient as any other. If you love a house, it is defined not just by its beauty but also sometimes by the blackbird that wakes you up in the morning by cawing under the eaves. A leader loves the whole house and all that defines it, and finds a way to embrace and praise the good in it. I urge you, in all your leadership, to love the whole house, not just the parts you pick and choose.

The third pillar of Golden Key is service. You are called to service as part of Golden Key – you are called to get involved and make a contribution in your communities. This University has a glorious legacy of service

within this city and around the world. Golden Key members nationally each year perform more than 200,000 hours of community service, in countless roles.

Members of the Syracuse chapter have conducted book drives, participated in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, worked in the Ronald McDonald House and the Golisano Children's Hospital, and taught English as a Second Language in the Syracuse City School District. You will have many opportunities to serve as well, and I urge you to do so.

Finally, I want to thank all of you tonight for welcoming me to Golden Key as an Honorary Member. I am very proud of this honor, and very eager to learn from you in academics, leadership and service. Once again, congratulations and thank you.

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