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ROTC Commissioning Ceremony

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud
Delivered on Friday, May 8, 2015
Location: Hendricks Chapel
Remarks: ROTC Commissioning Ceremony

The Chancellor was introduced by Air Force ROTC, Operations and Recruiting Flight Commander, Lieutenant Bruce King

Thank you, Lieutenant King. And thank you, General Combs, for your message this afternoon. I will be brief. It is wonderful to see and hear from one of our distinguished ROTC alumni. We are proud of you General Coombs and proud that Syracuse University played a role in helping you prepare for your military career.

To the families of these 20 Army and Air Force Second Lieutenants. I have watched your sons and daughters in ROTC since 2013. I have seen them at work and at sporting events. I have seen them very early in the morning when I wait to get into Archibold Gymnasium at 6:20 on winter mornings; they are there before me. Even when your sons and daughters are in civilian clothes on campus, I always know who they are. It is not just how they carry themselves. It is also that they are the only students who call me sir.

I just want to tell the families- and mothers—one thing about these second lieutenants. I don't know how you did it—I don't know how you raised a kid in today's world to get up early; to work harder; to suck it up and do the job; to serve others and our country. But you did do it and I owe you my highest compliment as a parent: if I ever was in trouble or in need—if ever my country were in trouble or in need—there are no people I would rather have around than these second lieutenants. Thank you for raising them.

General Coombs, that goes for you and your family and supporters too. I welcome your mother, Mrs. Pat Huther, who was an Army Reservist and encouraged you to apply for an ROTC scholarship so you could attend Syracuse University.

Also here is General Combs' lifelong friend Lynne Browne, with whom she learned leadership lessons as a team co-captain in high school. Also here is her high school coach, Marcella Majka, who was an important mentor to her.

Welcome Patricia, Lynne, and Marcella.

I would also like to welcome David Hewitt, who is here today representing Assemblyman Al Stirpe.

I want to recognize the many people responsible for today's ceremony.

- Lieutenant Colonel Jon Landis, Commander of Air Force ROTC Detachment 535 and professor of aerospace studies
- Lieutenant Colonel Michael Bianchi professor and chair of military science
- Dr. Michael Haynie, Vice Chancellor for Veteran and Military Affairs
- Retired Army Colonel Ron Novack, executive director of the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs.
- Captain Erik Anderson, project officer for Army ROTC
- Laura Bates, Syracuse University Army ROTC office coordinator
- Virginia O'Connor, Air Force ROTC office coordinator
- Michelle Larrabee of Hendricks Chapel
- ... and our University Organist, Dr. Anne Laver

Second Lieutenants, today it is really true - today you become part of a great history. It sounds pompous but it is true. A great history of both this place and of the Army and Air Force.

Today, May 8, 2015, is the 70th Anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. I know because I have my father's pictures from that day. He was in the United States Army Air Corps in Europe.

World War II was the first war in which ROTC - trained officers fought and led American troops. They included many of the 373 Syracuse University's ROTC program's commissioned officers.

On a plaque at the bottom of the stairs to this Chapel you will find the names of 356 Syracuse University alumni, faculty, and students, who died in service during that war.

Lieutenants, today you have joined generations of our alumni who prepared for military leadership here.

ROTC is a uniquely American institution. The United States pioneered training officers in civilian institutions to ensure our military would be led by officers who identified with the American public.

This University is committed to ROTC. It is not simply part of our legacy. It is not something we remember when convenient and forget when popular culture shifts. ROTC is one of the major ways this university contributes to our democracy.

Generations of Syracuse - educated officers have gone before you. Generations will follow you. All I ask is that you remember that past and inspire that future. You sure have inspired all of us here today already.

Keep it up, congratulations and Godspeed.

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