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Chancellor's Remarks at the 2015 Arents Award for Excellence Ceremony

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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on October 23, 2015

Location: Goldstein Auditorium, Schine Student Center

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at the 2015 Arents Award for Excellence Ceremony

*The Chancellor was introduced Mark Verone,
President of the Syracuse University Alumni Association.*

Good evening, everyone. It is a great pleasure to be here for this awards program and dinner.

A special welcome to our alumni and their families who have returned to Syracuse for Orange Central Weekend. This evening's event celebrates our collective commitment to Syracuse University. And it recognizes four outstanding alumni who exemplify the spirit of Syracuse.

I want to acknowledge and thank our Board of Trustees and our Advisory Board leaders who are here with us. And thanks to the Syracuse University Alumni Association for coordinating this event.

This evening's program also would not have been possible without the staff support of several offices across campus, including:

- Alumni Engagement
- Special Events
- Marketing and Communications
- Electronic Media Communications
- Schine and Campus Catering
- Student Centers and Programming Services
- And the Alumni Association Board of Directors

Thank you all for your hard work.

The reason so many folks and offices are involved in planning this program is simple. The George Arents Award is the highest honor Syracuse University bestows on alumni. As such, this annual awards ceremony marks one of the most festive and distinctive high points of Orange Central Weekend.

The George Arents Award is presented annually to alumni who have made outstanding contributions in their fields. Its namesake, George Arents, served on the University's Board of Trustees from 1930 until his death in 1960.

He endowed a fund in 1939 to create the George Arents Award. His purpose in creating the fund was to recognize Syracuse alumni for their extraordinary achievements.

Since the award was created, more than 200 outstanding alumni from all walks of life have been honored. They represent the best of what Syracuse University collectively stands for: A place dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and to the power of that knowledge to unleash greatness in ourselves, our communities, and our world.

Syracuse University has a long and proud history of being a place that attracts unentitled people. People who are hungry for knowledge and willing to work hard to achieve it. People who crave an education not because it's a birthright but because they understand the distinctive difference learning can make in their lives and in the lives of others.

People like the four alumni who are this year's Arents Award honorees. They have pursued very different paths in life. But they have each distinguished themselves as visionaries and innovators. And they have used their Syracuse education to make a distinctive difference in the world.

They are inspiring. And they each tell the Syracuse story in a different, yet equally profound, way.

Today's event honors our past Arents Award recipients and welcomes into the fold this year's newest class of honorees:

- Eric Mower [Class of '66, G'68], for excellence in advertising and public relations
- Erica Branch-Ridley [Class of '87], for excellence in media and education
- Brandon Steiner [Class of '81], for excellence in sports marketing

- Donna Shalala [G '70, Honorary Doctorate 1987], for excellence in public service and education

You will hear more about each of them shortly. But I want to touch on their distinctions just briefly to give you a sense of the incredible range of achievements within this group.

Eric Mower—A creative and entrepreneurial leader who stewarded his advertising, and public relations firm from its local roots in Syracuse to national prominence. In the process he established himself as a role model for wise and ethical leadership.

Erica Branch-Ridley—An Emmy Award-winning transmedia executive. She has helped pioneer the power of creative and emerging technologies to promote literacy and enhance preschool educational programming for children, parents, and teachers.

Brandon Steiner—A sports marketing powerhouse who parlayed hard work and a desire to excel into a career working with the most elite names in professional sports and creating once-in-a-lifetime experiences for the fans who love to follow them.

Donna Shalala—An honored scholar, university president, public administrator, and current president of the Clinton Foundation. She has served presidents on both sides of the “aisle” and earned accolades as one of the most successful government managers of modern times.

These honorees have taken very different professional paths. But each has followed his or her distinct passion, pursued excellence, and made a lasting mark. At the same time, they have stayed connected and engaged with Syracuse, generously sharing their expertise and supporting student learning.

Eric Mower has long served on the University’s Board of Trustees and today is a life trustee. He is a member of the Newhouse School’s Advisory Council and a past member of the Whitman School’s Corporate Advisory Council; and he has advanced student learning in multiple ways, including internships, scholarship support, and visiting professorships.

Erica Branch-Ridley sits on the Newhouse School’s alumni board of directors. And she has worked to open doors for students, faculty, and alumni, and to

advance the Newhouse School as the premier producer of communications industry professionals in the nation.

Brandon Steiner was one of the first members of the Sport Management Advisory Board for the David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics. He has provided strategic insight and guidance to the Department of Sport Management, delivered guest lectures, and generated experiential learning opportunities for students.

Donna Shalala has served on the Maxwell School Advisory Board since its inception. She has given talks and provided generous guidance, advice, and support for Maxwell and the University in multiple ways. Earlier today, I had the pleasure of hearing her give the Tanner Lecture at Maxwell on the subject of “Ethical Leadership in Higher Education.”

Eric, Erica, Brandon, and Donna represent the high aspirations we hold for each and every one of our students. They are outstanding role models. And they exemplify the best of Syracuse University at work in the world.

It is a privilege to honor them tonight for all they do to perpetuate the legacy of excellence embodied by the George Arents Award.

Thank you.

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