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Chancellor's Remarks at the Holden Observatory Ramp Dedication

Kent Syverud
Syracuse University

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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on October 23, 2015

Location: Holden Observatory

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at the Holden Observatory Ramp Dedication

*The Chancellor was introduced by Paula Possenti-Perez
Director of the Office of Disability Services.*

Thank you, Paula. It is great to be here.

First I would like to thank the folks who made this dedication possible, especially:

- Ellen King, executive director of special events
- Alicia Lewis, associate director of special events
- Lisa Honan, executive director of development
- Karen Weiss Jones, assistant dean for advancement, College of Arts and Sciences
- Lisa Balogh (BAY-Low), administrative assistant, College of Arts and Sciences
- Ruth Chen

And many thanks to the staff of:

- The Office of Campus Planning, Design and Construction for their swift work in getting this wheelchair ramp completed

I am especially delighted that Emeritus Professor Marvin Druger could be with us today. Last spring I had the pleasure of speaking at the dedication of the newly refurbished Holden Observatory. The restoration effort was led by Marvin in honor and memory of his wife, Patricia [who passed away in January of 2014].

At the end of this program, you will have the chance to join Marvin on a tour of the observatory, including the Patricia Meyers Druger Astronomy Learning Center. I urge you to do so, because this truly is an iconic building.

I believe it is iconic not only because it is one of the oldest building on campus [second only to the Hall of Languages]. It is iconic because it embodies, in a very literal way, what the University stands for—the search for truth and meaning amid life’s great unknowns.

It is especially fitting that this classroom be accessible to all students, staff, faculty and guests. This ramp further reflects Syracuse’s long history of commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

In fact, Syracuse has been a global leader in inclusion. And it is an important part of our commitment moving forward. To name just a few indicators of that commitment:

- Inclusive U
- Brian Mc Lane Fund
- The College of Law houses the nation’s first joint degree program in law and disability studies. It also is home to the Disability Rights Clinic, which pursues precedent-setting cases on behalf of those with disabilities in the city and region.
- The University is home to the Burton Blatt Institute, named for pioneering disability rights scholar and a former dean of the School of Education. The institute works locally and nationally to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities.

In the recently completed Academic Strategic Plan, the University cites as one of its primary goals: To “Sustain an inclusive, accessible campus of opportunity for a richly diverse student body ...,” including those with disabilities. One crucial piece of that effort is ensuring that this campus and University are free of any and all barriers to learning and discovery.

This ramp signifies our continued attention to, and progress toward, achieving that goal. Not just accessible, but beautifully accessible in a way that models inclusion as an integral part of a great education and a great university.

And now I urge you to remain after the ceremony and join Marvin Druger for a tour of the observatory. It really is a great facility. And I can assure you he is a great tour guide. I know you will enjoy it immensely.

I thank University Professor, Stephen Kuusisto for his beautiful remarks. I want all of you to know I am working with Stephen to explore pulling together help from all parts of this great university toward a truly interdisciplinary initiative and disabilities research and education. I thank him for helping us lead this effort.

Thank you all for being here, and thank you for all you do for Syracuse University.

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