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Chancellor's Remarks at the Student Veterans of America Award Event

Kent Syverud
Syracuse University

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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on January 9, 2016

Location: Orlando, Florida

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at the Student Veterans of America Award Event

The Chancellor was introduced by Kyle White and Ryan Pitts.

Thank you.

It is an honor to receive the William Pearson Tolley Champion for Veterans in Higher Education award. This award is particularly meaningful to me because William Tolley served as Chancellor at Syracuse University from 1942 to 1969 and more than any other higher education leader in the nation, he championed Veterans in everything he did. He clearly understood the value that our returning veterans added to our campus community and to society. It is my responsibility to ensure that we continue the legacy of Chancellor Tolley.

This award honors a great team at Syracuse University, led by Vice Chancellor and Professor Mike Haynie. Mike is here, and he co-founded and directs a team of more than 60 professionals at our Institute for Veterans & Military Families. It is Mike's team that enabled Syracuse, last month, to win a competition that will invest \$500 million in Central New York, and will among other things make the region the nation's center for excellence in thought leadership, education, research, training, and innovation related to veterans and military families. This plan includes significant funding for a new National Veterans Resource Complex, to be constructed on the campus of Syracuse University. The Resource Complex is a first-of-its kind facility. It will be based on a partnership model between both private and public sectors to advance academic research. It will also emphasize programming and community-connected innovation serving the social, economic, and wellness concerns of the nation's veterans and their families. The Resource Complex will build upon

and advance Syracuse University's already strong national leadership in the veterans' community. It will serve as a class-leading exemplar of academic, government, and community collaboration.

My role as Chancellor in all this has been less demanding: all I have to do is set the tone. And that tone is this: we will be the best place for Veterans- both the Veterans studying on our campus and the Veteran's around the world who benefit from our research and service.

We will do this not because our Veterans are victims who need our charity- they are not. What they are is an incredibly diverse set of honorable people who share some common skills and experiences that are woefully lacking on some campuses, and that can make the University much better. I have found that if you set that tone, people come out of the woodwork all over campus life to help. Faculty, staff, alumni- they come from physics and engineering, and admissions, and traffic and parking. And they work wonders.

One of our students was Technical Sergeant Forrest Lee Vosler. After graduating from High School, he enlisted in the Army Air Force where he became a radio operator in World War II. He was a crewmember of a B-17 Flying Fortress.

He won the Medal of Honor in 1944, when he saved his whole crew over Germany. Despite being blinded by shrapnel, he managed to tend to the wounded tail gunner, repaired the damaged radio equipment, and sent a distress signal before crashing into the North Sea.

He matriculated at Syracuse University in the Spring of 1945. Despite being named the Army Air Force's "Greatest Hero" of World War II, his injuries to his eyes made it difficult for him to complete our four year degree. He persisted for 17 years, dropping in and out of school, trying to earn the Syracuse University degree he so dearly wanted. Vosler passed away on February 17, 1992 with an unfulfilled dream.

But the Syracuse University Veteran's team doesn't leave people behind. Last year through a commitment of 11 different departments, staff worked together to prove that while Sergeant Vosler did not meet the criteria for Bachelor's degree, he did meet the criteria for an Associate's degree, and that he would have received it had he known how to make the case. In November, we posthumously awarded Forest L. Vosler an Associate Degree of Arts, thus

making him a Syracuse University Alumnus, Class of 2015! That took a large team to accomplish. We found them at Syracuse. They are at your University too, just look.

Many thanks for this award.

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