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### Chancellor's Remarks at the Newhouse School's Toner Prize for Excellence Award's Celebration, featuring President Obama

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# SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on March 28, 2016

Location: Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, Washington D.C.

Remarks: Chancellor's Remarks at the Newhouse School's Toner Prize for Excellence Award's Celebration, featuring President Obama

*The Chancellor was introduced Lorraine Branham,  
Dean of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.*

On behalf of Syracuse University, I welcome you all tonight for the presentation of the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting.

I want to thank and recognize:

- Peter, Jacob and Nora Gosselin, and Trustee John Chapple, for their vision in establishing this award.
- Dean of the Newhouse School of Public Communications, Lorraine Branham.
- And Charlotte Grimes, longtime administrator of the Robin Toner Program in Political Reporting.

Robin Toner was a great journalist with dual degrees from Syracuse. She exemplified the high ideals of our Newhouse School of Communications. And lived out the passion for citizenship that represents the spirit of our Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

Robin was lost all too young. The Toner Prize is a testament to her ideals

With us tonight are a group of students from the Newhouse school. They are the ones charged with carrying Robin's vision forward. We'd ask them to stand and be recognized.

We could provide no better role model for you than Robin Toner.

We are greatly honored, by the presence of tonight's keynote speaker. First, on behalf of Syracuse basketball fans everywhere, I offer a tongue in cheek apology: We are sorry we blew both of the President's brackets.

Syracuse has a rich heritage of interaction with American presidents: Woodrow Wilson. Herbert Hoover. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Harry Truman. Lyndon Johnson. Bill Clinton. All served at pivotal moments in the American history. All brought the perspective of their great office to our students.

In 1957, John F. Kennedy as a young senator came to Syracuse to deliver a commencement address. Speaking in old Archbold Stadium, today the site of our Carrier Dome, he described American politics as "an abused and neglected profession." He spoke with passion of the nobility of elected office. He called on the graduates to apply their "talents to the public solution of the great problems of our time."

The challenge of that speech in Syracuse has been met by Barack Obama, the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. 44 is a number that is sacred at Syracuse. It was carried with honor by Jim Brown, by Ernie Davis (the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy), and by one who is here tonight and will be honored in seven weeks by a honorary doctorate of humane letters at commencement Floyd Little.

American politics today seems more bruising than the gridiron. Despite that, President Obama carries himself with a reaffirming grace and dignity that is a reminder of the gravity, the stature, of his office. He has calmly steered us through moments of national trail.

As Syracuse graduate Vice President Joe Biden has said of our President: "This man has courage in his soul, compassion in his heart and a spine of steel."

Ladies and gentlemen: The president of the United States.

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