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Brightman Professorship Installation Luncheon

Kent Syverud
Syracuse University

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on October 20, 2016

Location: Lubin House, NYC

Remarks: Brightman Professorship Installation Luncheon

The Chancellor was introduced Vice Chancellor and Provost Michele Wheatly

Thank you, Provost Wheatly. Good afternoon, everyone. It is a pleasure to be here to honor Duncan Brown, one of our finest scholars with a distinction that memorializes Charles Brightman, another one of our finest.

So much of what we do at a University can seem ephemeral. Endowed chairs are not; they last a long time, and celebrate scholarship and teaching that will outlive all of us.

So, to mark this Ruth and I select and purchase a rare book to give to the chair holder to emphasize that fine scholarship, like endowed chairs, endures.

Finding the right timeless book for Duncan was important to us, was a challenge, as his scholarship in some challenges our understanding of space and time. Our work took several months.

With help from Dean of the Libraries and University Librarian David Seaman and Professor Peter Saulson, we searched for books related to your field.

We settled on this one—this is a first edition of Arthur Stanley Eddington's Space, Time, and Gravitation: An Outline of the General Relativity Theory, published by Cambridge University Press in 1920 almost a century ago.

Eddington was an English astrophysicist in the early part of the 20th century—a contemporary of Charles Brightman—and an early proponent of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity.

As secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society during World War I, he was among the first to receive word of Einstein's theory. And in 1919, his observations and photographs taken during a solar eclipse would be hailed at the time as confirmation of the theory.

Eddington was also an entertaining writer and lecturer who knew how to speak to lay audiences as well as to his scientific peers.

In his preface to this book, he says he sought to provide an account of the theory "without introducing anything very technical in the way of mathematics, physics or philosophy." This capacity for wit and clarity on the daunting subject of relativity helped build public awareness of the theory throughout the English-speaking world.

The book would go on to become a classic—distinctive for its straightforward and engaging account of one of the most stunning and consequential achievements of 20th century physics.

Like Eddington, Duncan has played a significant role in advancing our understanding of the universe.

Like Eddington, he has a passion for discovery *and* for sharing the fruits of those discoveries with the world. He is equal parts scholar and teacher, and Syracuse University is fortunate to call him our own.

It is therefore with great pleasure and admiration that I present this book to you, Duncan Brown, in honor of your appointment as the inaugural Charles Brightman Professor of Physics.

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