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The Barnes Center at the Arch Dedication

Kent Syverud
Syracuse University

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on September 13, 2019

Location: Barnes Center at The Arch

Remarks: The Barnes Center at The Arch Dedication

The Chancellor was introduced by Sean McDonough '84

This is the Barnes Center, or the Archbold Gym, as it was burning down in 1947. There's a reason I'm starting there. I would like to let you know that we are honoring Sean McDonough tonight with the University's highest alumni award for achievements across their career and for countless kindnesses for this University. So I'd like us to clap for him now.

I wanted to let you know that it is a great time to be Orange. And this occasion is a big reason why. There's so many distinguished people here today for this event that I want to recognize, including our mayor, Syracuse mayor Ben Walsh. Our County Executive, Onondaga County Executive, Ryan McMahan. New York State Assembly Member Al Stirpe, State Senator Rachel May, Governor Cuomo's representative in central New York, Colleen Deacon and the staff representing our other elected officials who are joining us here today. Can we clap for all them?

We're not just dedicating a beautiful new facility. We're recognizing something even more important today. The transformation of the student experience at this University. And we're so pleased that in doing this, we're doing it in partnership with the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, our partner for more than a hundred years. We have reached an agreement with ESF that's awaiting ratification by the state of New York. And that's why we're so happy that ESF students, are using this facility as well, and will into the future. And I want to recognize two people that have helped

make that happen: SUNY ESF interim president David Amberg and Chief Operating Officer, Joanie Mahoney.

So it's our 150th anniversary, it's appropriate to acknowledge the role of Archbold Gym in our history. Archbold is named for John Archbold who named and built not only this gymnasium originally, but also the stadium, the main stage of what's now Syracuse stage. Gave the University of the Chancellor's house, his name is engraved on many buildings on the old row. He supported students in many ways. And this building, now renovated as the Barnes Center at the Arch, is the home of so much history and fearless firsts. So let's not forget some of them. It's where students registered for classes in long lines for years and years. It was the incubator for a great football program. It's where Heisman trophy winner, Ernie Davis and Coach Ben Schwartzwalder spent much of their time at Syracuse. It was connected by a tunnel in Archibald stadium right next door.

It was where ROTC drills were held, and for many years, the ROTC offices and classroom were located. It is where Eileen Collins, a community college transfer student, was first suggested that she should change majors and she could be a pilot. She became the first female commander of the space shuttle. It is the home of the first and still, I argue, the best rowing practice tank in the world. And hopefully you'll be able to see that. It was built in 1907, but it burned on January 12th, 1947 as you see behind me, it was very quickly and cheaply rebuilt. And cheaply because in 1948, construction materials were in short supply. And that cheaply rebuilt facility you see in front of you, this photo could have been taken in 2018. This photo was the main recreation facility for our 23,000 students until 2018. And again, this space, most of this floor was covered by exercise equipment. There was a curtain that hung at one end so people could play basketball, but sometimes the balls came over the curtain into the exercise space. It was not just the recreation facilities we needed to work on.

So our counseling center was that house on Walnut Park. A beautiful, cozy, quaint house. It was warm and inviting, but the parlor of this converted house, arranged for five people, was the waiting room for 23,000 student's mental health and counseling services at this University. And it was on the other side of campus, in a way that, boy was it public you were going there. And our health center, this is that building. Our health center, our regular student health center, everybody recognize that building? Isn't that warm and welcoming? That's over on Waverly, blocks away from each of the other things I showed. That has a similar size waiting area. That was where students went when they were not feeling physically well. All of these things are now transformed. I'll let the new spaces speak for themselves. You'll see them. The transformation I just want to emphasize is the result, most importantly, of the passion and the tenacity of our students, as have been most things in Syracuse University and its history. They advocated for programs and facilities, to better integrate and support health and wellness.

But it's also possible, in this transformation, because of the selfless generosity of Steve Barnes, his wife Deborah, and many other donors, who we're going to honor inside this building later this afternoon. When Steve was Chair of the Board of Trustees, he heard the needs of our students. He clearly communicated to all stakeholders the need for a holistic, coordinated, health and wellness facility as the first construction priority for the University. And he therefore made just a terrific impact on the trajectory of our student experience.

So what we see today is momentum. We are not stopping here. We have a deep commitment to supporting our students, their health, their wellness, and their academic success. So today is not just a construction project, or a former old dedication of a facility. Today is the beginning of a transformation that will be the start of an ever better student experience at Syracuse University, and together with our partners at ESF, there is much more to come. So I thank you all.