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Winter Message to the University Community

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on January 13, 2020

Location: Melanie Gray Ceremonial Courtroom, Dineen Hall

Remarks: Winter Message to the University Community

The Chancellor was introduced by Bea Gonzalez, Vice President for Community Engagement and Special Assistant to the Chancellor

Thank you, Bea, not only for your introduction, but for your continued leadership within the University. Good afternoon. Welcome to the Spring 2020 semester at Syracuse University. I also thank Dean Craig Boise and all of the folks on the law school team for opening the law school to this event. Thanks to all of you for joining us today.

Let's start with grace. This University—our students and our community—went through a hard time at the end of the fall semester. A time when our students and community were exposed to hate and fear and racism and anti-Semitism and uncertainty. I am so thankful to so many who came forward with courage and with voice and with action to reaffirm the values of this community. I am thankful to those who called upon us all to live up to those values and to improve.

Our University is celebrating its 150th anniversary year. Across history, there have been many challenging times. I am proud that, more often than not, our university community has taken advantage of those challenges to learn, to teach, to get better and to strengthen our values. For example, in 1988, 35 of our students studying abroad were killed in a terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

It would have been reasonable to expect that, after such an experience, our University community would turn inward in anger and fear. We might have pulled way back from study abroad, from international experiences for our

students, from embracing people from around the world. We might have given in to hate.

That is not what happened here. After the shock and the fear and the numb sorrow, this community instead reaffirmed its values in new and creative ways, and this University grew better in the process. We grew better through the Remembrance Scholar program, emphasizing memory and peace and paying good forward through service. We grew better through the Lockerbie Scholar program, reaching out to the community in Scotland. We grew better through a scholarly Archives and academic engagement with the archives, and so much more. The result is that, today, this semester, thousands of our students will have an experience abroad, and all of our students will be exposed to a global perspective because we continue to welcome on this campus thousands of students and faculty from all over the world—at last count from 150 countries and many indigenous peoples.

I believe we have arrived at another key moment of challenge for Syracuse. We have a choice right now. A choice whether to seize this moment today to learn, to teach, to get better and to reaffirm our values. I have great confidence that we as a University community are going to choose to do that. That choice, made many times over our 150-year history, is a key characteristic of what has made us uniquely Orange.

I have spent much of the last two months listening. Listening to our students, our faculty, our staff, our alumni, our community partners, to our Board of Trustees. There are many opinions, as there should be at any great university. But there is also a strong consensus that Syracuse can and should now become a world-class model of an academic powerhouse that truly embraces, welcomes and values all people. That aspiration is consistent with our values and our Orange history.

Today, I want to address four aspects of how we can seize this moment to become such a world-class model. First, I want to speak to our academics, and particularly our faculty hiring. Second, I want to speak to our student experience outside the classroom. Third, I want to address our more recent

specific commitments to diversity and inclusion and safety, including the progress our Board of Trustees has worked hard to advance in the last six weeks. And, finally, I want to address the resources that will secure our Orange Future, including the world-class model I have mentioned.

So starting with Academic Excellence: To be an academic powerhouse that truly embraces, welcomes and values all people, we need world-class leadership, faculty, research and innovation. These are all ingredients that lead, I believe, to student success and growth.

This year, together, we have recruited new leadership, including Cole Smith, the new dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science, and Rajiv “Raj” Dewan, the new dean of the iSchool. Today is Dean Dewan’s first day at Syracuse. These are great new leaders. Similarly, our search for a permanent dean for the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications is very promising. I believe we will be able to announce the appointment of an outstanding leader for Newhouse in the coming weeks. We are also blessed with steady guidance at the helm of Academic Affairs, with John Liu now serving as interim vice chancellor and provost and Ramesh Raina stepping into John’s previous role as interim vice president for research.

Only one week into his tenure as interim provost, John is already having impact. John has repeatedly emphasized that recruitment and retention of great faculty will return 10 times the investment for this university in terms of student learning and research impact.

Today, I am pleased to share with you that John is introducing a new initiative—the Diversity Opportunity Hires Program. This new effort will give us an immediate edge in the competitive market for hiring diverse faculty candidates. The University already provides financial incentives for hiring from underrepresented minority groups, in the form of an increased cost share from Invest Syracuse to cluster hires. But later this week, John’s team will be announcing the details of this new program to intentionally increase diversity among tenured and tenure-track faculty, spread across disciplines and across the University’s schools and colleges. These hires will:

- attract diversity to disciplines that currently have little of it;
- provide resources to departments to compete for top talent; and
- incentivize hiring committees and academic leadership to expand searches to ensure diverse candidate pools.

I am also grateful to the outstanding faculty across this university who are collaborating in our research clusters. These clusters are areas where we are investing in existing academic strengths as well as areas where we believe we can be among the best in the world. Some of these involve whole new areas; others take an innovative approach to existing fields.

There's been so much hard work by our faculty and academic leadership in getting these seven clusters identified. We will be adding three additional cluster hire areas to the seven that we identified last year. The first area is Quantum Information Science, which builds on our expertise to unlock the potential of the next-generation technologies being developed. The second area is Citizenship and Democratic Institutions, which leverages our strong programs touching on all aspects of politics, law, policy, journalism, veterans research and broad areas of thought across the social sciences and humanities. The third area is Virtual and Immersive Interactions, which builds on our faculty's innovative work on virtual and extended reality across multiple schools and colleges. You will be hearing more from Provost Liu about these areas as the details are finalized.

Thanks in part to Invest Syracuse funds and these cluster hiring initiatives, we have added 116 new faculty members this academic year—116. We have hired 20 more to start next fall—so far. Sixty-eight of these new hires are tenured or on the tenure track. Let me put those faculty hires in perspective.

In December, the Chronicle of Higher Education ranked Syracuse University in the top 25 private universities in the nation in terms of hiring tenure-track faculty. That was based on our hiring of 34 tenure-track faculty members in 2018. Let me repeat that. Thirty-four hires put us in the top 25 in the nation.

We have hired 68 tenured or tenure-track faculty this academic year—so far. We have hired more than the vast majority of universities in the nation in the private realm. At this rate, SU is going to be among the very top level of universities doing hiring both this year and next year.

Very few other universities are building their tenured and tenure-track faculty at this rate. Many are, in fact, shrinking their tenure-track faculty. Not only have we been able to retain world-class scholars and researchers, and need to do even better at that, but we are adding new expertise, new colleagues and new peers, we are building for the future. And it is in context, of this much hiring, this extraordinary hiring, that we are even more strongly incentivizing hiring of faculty from underrepresented groups. I think we can move faster than in the past, because of this.

We also need to continue to innovate in our curriculum, including through online degree program offerings that extend our reach. Right before the holiday break, the College of Law and the Whitman School announced the launch of the nation's first online joint J.D./MBA degree program. We moved quickly to get first-mover advantage, and I want to congratulate Dean Craig Boise and Dean Gene Anderson on their partnership. Our existing online J.D. and MBA programs have been highly successful, and I anticipate that this joint program will be as well. They bring very high-quality and diverse students who could not otherwise benefit from a Syracuse education because of job and family commitments.

Also, this fall, Falk College launched an Online Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy, which has now received full accreditation. This puts a quality therapy degree in reach for working professionals and prepares graduates to work with veterans and military families, couples, children and families.

Student Experience

To be a world-class model of a university that truly embraces all people, we need more than great faculty and academic programs. We need also to continue to enhance every aspect of our student experience, especially for

those students who have felt uninvolved or unsafe. In addressing this student experience, I'd like to begin again with leadership.

The Division of Enrollment and the Student Experience is in the midst of a major transformation, under the leadership of Dolan Evanovich.

This slide shows five recent senior hires or promotions to support student engagement and student success. These individuals significantly expand the expertise and diversity of our Student Experience leadership team. They are: Amanda Nicholson, interim deputy senior vice president for the student experience, who will work closely with Dolan to implement divisional strategy and work with partners across campus on student initiatives on behalf of Enrollment and the Student Experience. Kal Srinivas, interim executive director of student success, who will oversee first-year and transfer programs, career services and retention initiatives. Ryan Williams, vice president for enrollment services, who will now oversee the Office of Institutional Research to ensure that we are making data-driven decisions in both admissions and the student experience. Brittany Zaehring, senior associate vice president for operations and strategic initiatives, who is serving in a critical role in implementation of recommendations from multiple student groups to make sure that we follow through and execute on what we promised. And today, we announced the hiring of Meredith Davis as the new associate vice president of student engagement—she is shown on the far right side of this slide. Dr. Davis, whose appointment begins on Feb. 3, brings two decades of experience creating innovative programs and initiatives for student engagement that advance the values of diversity, inclusion and equity in programs, policies and practices. She will be overseeing the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the LGBT Resource Center, the Disability Cultural Center, the Center for International Services, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, Student Activities, and Student Centers and Programming Services.

This new leadership team is joined by more than 20 additional new hires and positions in student-facing areas. These are professionals in admissions, in student living, in international student services, in the Disability Cultural

Center, in student health and wellness, and in student career services. Together, they are deeply committed, indeed resolved, to build on an Orange history of inclusion to even better model the community and values this moment requires. I am grateful to all of them for rising to this moment.

There has been significant progress already recently in student life. The Barnes Center at the Arch was an important step. We are seeing use of programs and services at much higher rates than in the past. Recreation visits have increased by 153 percent, fitness class participation has increased by 383 percent, and participation in wellness events has increased by 19 percent. Counseling drop-in appointments have been very well-received, particularly with expanded hours because we have increased by 70 percent the numbers of hours and appointments available.

We also continue to work on enhancing on-campus safety and security. In the fall, we committed to hiring 84 residential community service officers and 12 supervisors to provide 24/7 staffing in our residence halls. I am pleased to share that we have hired 11 of 12 supervisors and have hired 63 of the 84 officers. With the remainder of positions being well into the process of being filled. And we have been able to hire diverse candidates for these positions. One-third of the supervisory positions and 48 percent of the officer positions have been filled with people who identify as part of an underrepresented group. In addition, there is now a strong protocol for daily review of all security cameras for functionality and immediate correction of any issues.

We remain focused, as we really should be, on community engagement and community service by our students and all who work on our campus. This fall, more than 485 students used the Shaw Center to participate in academic community engagement. And you just heard Vice President Bea González report that we have exceeded the goal of 15,000 hours of community service to the Syracuse community that we set as part of our 150th-anniversary recognition in a way consistent with those values. She now wants another 15,000, and I will commit to donate a big group of those.

I could give many further examples of recent progress toward a world-class and inclusive student experience. The extraordinary academic support and success of our 600 student-athletes, who last semester posted the highest average GPA in our history. The exciting projects coming out of the SOURCE grants program for undergraduate research. The entrepreneurship infrastructure here, which continues to grow and deepen.

These are remarkable signs of advancement on the student experience front, but to leapfrog ahead of our peers and be world class, we need to go further. In particular, we need to continue to enhance community engagement and we need to better nurture student organizations and student leadership opportunities. We also need to create even better housing options for all our undergraduate and graduate students and our faculty and staff.

To expand opportunities for students to work in the community, the Office of Career Services has implemented a tool called Handshake and is working with the Office of Community Engagement to add volunteer opportunities to that database. There are currently trainings being held for community-based organizations to bring more organizations to bear to get help from and give education to our students. This will be promoted to students on campus beginning this month. We have also added additional budget for the Shaw Center for Community Engagement and Hendricks Chapel to enhance volunteer opportunities in the months ahead. And we will double funding to support summer internships for undergraduates with financial need.

I think we must work to nurture student organizations that contribute positively to our campus community, including—and indeed especially for—those students with diverse identities. This has already happened in the work of Hillel, which is being continued by the new staff we welcomed this fall after a national search, including a new rabbi and a new executive director. Recently, our SU Hillel chapter received the Phillip H. and Susan Rudd Cohen Outstanding Campus Award from Hillel International. The award recognizes campus Hillels that exemplify the mission of Hillel and continuous efforts to identify and implement best practices to engage every Jewish

student. So many people's work was honored by that award, and I am so grateful to you.

In terms of better housing options: we have now surveyed students, faculty and staff. We are currently analyzing the data to gain insights into demand for University housing and preferences for different housing options and configurations. This work will be completed by May, thanks to the leadership of Chief Financial Officer Amir Rahnamay-Azar and the Enrollment and the Student Experience team. In the meantime, we have signed a contract with My College Roomie, and that new selection system will be implemented this spring, including and incorporating feedback from student advisors. Our team is also working hard with students on expanding the Multicultural Living Learning Communities. A survey to gather additional feedback is live right now. Additional opportunities for input will take place this month with a decision on program expansion by the end of January.

Finally, this spring, we will open the Daniel and Gayle D'Aniello Building, home to the National Veterans Resource Center. This is a world-class facility that is the first of its kind in the nation. It provides a hub for student veterans and connects the University with the veteran community in Central New York and across the nation. It demonstrates our seriousness about being an inclusive place for veterans, both for our students and in our community. The NVRC's impact is already being felt across the University. For example, the new facility will include a gallery space for arts projects, which is facilitating a great partnership with the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

Diversity and Inclusion

So we talked about academic excellence and the student experience. In addition to the progress in these areas, I must further address the specific commitments I made last semester on behalf of our university related to diversity, inclusion, and safety. We made a lot of promises. One of them was a commitment to provide regular updates, including specifically in this winter message.

In November and December, we made 50 commitments to our students. We have a project management team that worked all through the holidays to make sure we track, perform and achieve these commitments. We have allocated an additional \$5.6 million for diversity and inclusion initiatives that address these commitments—so far. Sixteen new staff members will be added to work on these new and improved programs.

The steering committee working on our campus commitments will be sharing a regular schedule of regular updates starting later this month, so you will know when and how to expect updates. Rather than march through every commitment today, for it would take hours, there are five I will highlight. They are:

- the engagement of the Board of Trustees and Independent Advisory Panel;
- interim steps to address space issues for multicultural students;
- a commitment to our Native American students both on space and permanent recognition of the University's location on ancestral Onondaga lands;
- concrete steps to ensure the dignity and security of the Jewish students on campus; and
- significant investment in international student services.

So, starting first with the Board of Trustees, there has been remarkable recent hard work and progress by our Board of Trustees to engage in making us a world-class model of diversity and inclusion. I want to acknowledge the countless hours members of our board have invested in this important work. As you are aware, the board has formed a Special Committee on University Climate, Diversity and Inclusion. The board has also helped recruit an Independent Advisory Panel of national and international experts on diversity and inclusion and on safety. By June, our board will receive a report from the Special Committee, with input from the Advisory Panel, that includes a comprehensive analysis and recommendations regarding policies,

programs and other initiatives required to build a sustainable world-class approach to diversity and inclusion.

This report will reflect lots of input from students, faculty, staff and alumni this semester. That engagement has already started, as the board committee leaders were interviewed by our student press yesterday. The report will reflect engagement with our chief diversity and inclusion officer, Keith Alford; with the Council on Diversity and Inclusion; and with the Inclusive Leadership Assembly, which is composed of the individual school and college diversity representatives. Through the University Senate, faculty, staff and students will continue to engage on initiatives, including curriculum changes, the first-year experience and faculty hiring. The report also will benchmark successful practices and programs at the best peer institutions and explore whether these programs can—and should—be introduced and sustained on our campus. That’s the board role.

Second, I have heard many students in the Barnes Center about the serious concern for the lack of space on campus for African American and multicultural students—a lack of space that has long plagued multicultural Greek organizations and has also become an issue for all of our multicultural student groups during the Schine Center renovations, which will not be done until the fall. I am pleased to announce that we are designating Room 550 in Bird Library to address this need—a study lounge and a meeting-and-convening space that will be open during all of Bird Library’s hours. This arrangement will be in effect until the renovated Schine Student Center is opened. For the longer term, Student Experience and Campus Planning staff have been working hard over the winter break to identify excellent options for permanent new space for multicultural Greek life on this campus. They will be meeting with student leaders soon to review those options. I am optimistic we are about to move dramatically forward in this area, too.

Third, before Christmas I met with our Native American students, and I assured them we will work with them on options for retaining the space they currently have on Euclid or will find them even better space that meets their needs for a home on this campus. There will be no decisions made about the

space for our Native American students, our indigenous students, without their input and agreement—I have personally made that commitment. We are also working to form a broad committee to make recommendations for the form of and location for a permanent marker on campus that acknowledges that Syracuse University stands on the ancestral lands of the Haudenosaunee and the Onondaga Nation.

Fourth, we are working with our Jewish students to complete a security assessment of Hillel and to review that assessment with Hillel’s leadership. We think this is particularly urgent and important in light of continued anti-Semitic violence that occurred around the country in the last few months.

And finally, we have appointed Juan Tavares, director of the Center for International Services, as the formal liaison to work directly with our international students on their concerns. In December, \$400,000 was allocated to expand the center’s programming, including the Intercultural Conversations Project. Four additional staff members will be hired to support various aspects of services that international students need.

There are 50 commitments; this is just five examples. We are taking prompt action on the commitments we made last semester. We are making investments in programs and people. I believe this work requested emphatically by our students is helping us become a better place.

Securing our Orange Future

I have described things we have promised to do, things we are already doing, and actions we are determined to take to make Syracuse University truly world class. As I have talked about many new investments that we are making, savvy people among you who know our history might be asking: Can we really afford all this? We already had great ambitions for our university in our strategic plans. Now we clearly are committing to do more to model a world-class university that truly welcomes and includes all people, no exceptions. This is expensive in terms of time and money. Can we secure the Orange future that we have just been promising? I want to tell you that the answer is emphatically yes.

Syracuse University is in a stronger financial position than it has ever been. This is not something that every university is able to say. If you read the higher education press regularly, you know many institutions—institutions more famous than us—are in financial difficulty. They are cutting faculty, programs and services. We are not. We are growing, and we have a brighter future. This is true because of important steps we have taken together to secure our future in schools, colleges and departments. We have a truly balanced budget, and we have now done that for years.

Second, we have been managing our endowment responsibly and well. The University's total endowment stands at \$1.43 billion as of Nov. 30. We are drawing less than 4 percent a year from the endowment. By balancing our budget and managing our expenditure from the endowment, we are giving the University degrees of freedom to respond to urgent priorities in the future. We are building our finances to assure a long-term, sustainable Syracuse University that really can afford to aim high to model a world-class experience for all.

In December, Chief Financial Officer Amir Rahnamay-Azar's team successfully completed a bond issuance that restructured the University's debt. It was a great achievement. It takes advantage of historically low interest rates. Our University debt structure, and particularly that taken on in 2010, was complicated, risky and represented a serious challenge for our University. This restructuring in December simplified our debt in a way that is very advantageous for the long term. This restructuring was only possible—even in all of the challenges we were facing then—because of our recent outstanding financial performance and strong credit rating.

These accomplishments in budget, endowment and debt help put us in a strong position to do the things we have described as well as weather economic change.

The fourth key resource for our future is philanthropic performance. That is why in November we launched Forever Orange: The Campaign for Syracuse University. The campaign has enabled us to have our best first six months in

fundraising ever (from July 1-Dec. 31, 2019)—best as measured by both cash and new commitments.

We have raised more than \$55 million for scholarships over the last two years, including millions focused on helping first-generation students, students of color and international students. We now are focused on raising much more as one of our major priorities in the Forever Orange campaign.

In the fall, we celebrated a \$25 million commitment from the Lally family to enhance the student-athlete experience.

And as of today, our generous supporters have pledged well over \$800 million on the way to our \$1.5 billion goal. These are big numbers. They might seem abstract, but these dollars will help countless students and programs at Syracuse, including the things we have promised, and will make us even better and stronger. I am so grateful to all who have helped.

And finally, just today, we announced the largest gift in Syracuse University's history.

That intention from the Newhouse Family Foundation to pledge \$75 million is for people and programs that will ensure that the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications maintains its position as a world-class leader for educating students across the range of communications disciplines. This tremendous investment in curriculum, innovation and student support not only benefits students at the Newhouse School, but raises the national profile for and impact of the entire university. I want to thank Donald Newhouse and the Newhouse Family Foundation for this historic gift and their leadership in ensuring that Syracuse University continues to educate the leaders of tomorrow.

So, when we make commitments to seize this moment to become an even better university for all, there is every reason to believe that resources are on the way to follow through. I certainly intend to work hard to make that true.

In conclusion, these are challenging times in this community, in this nation and in the world. There is hate and there is fear, and they have a long legacy that we must now acknowledge and confront, in part, because some who have no love for our university are at times encouraging that hate and fear. But we have an opportunity now to rise and do what Syracuse University has often done when it is at its best. We can seize this moment to become better and a model for the world.

It's not going to be easy or simple. It requires using our voices for input, discussion and advocacy. It requires us to listen to those who disagree with us at times and learn. It requires going beyond words to action. It requires us to be unwilling to give up, for the sake of this university we love.

I am realistic. Given our world right now, I don't expect that our campus, our community or our world will be free from incidents of anti-Semitism, racism and hate. We cannot magically change everything overnight. But we can respond appropriately, proactively and positively, true to the values we aspire to.

I believe in this university. I believe that we can be world class in ways that reflect our values and history. I believe that the people here truly care about our university and our community. I believe that our students, faculty, staff and alumni of Syracuse University aren't ever going to be satisfied with the status quo. I believe we will always have suggestions and criticisms about how to improve, and that's Syracuse—thank goodness. We are determined to be better than we have been in the past and better than our peers. We are ambitious. We are clear-eyed about the amount of work before us. So let's start doing it.

Thank you.