

# SYRACUSE

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To promote learning through teaching, research, scholarship, creative accomplishment, and service.

### • UNIVERSITY VISION •

To be the leading student-centered research university with faculty, students, and staff sharing responsibility and working together for academic, professional, and personal growth.

# Opening Remarks

## Recalling What Happened to Rip

I first encountered the tale of Rip Van Winkle at my grandparents' home. A well-worn copy of Washington Irving's classic short story rested on a nightstand in the bedroom where I slept on vacation visits. Before bed, my grandmother often shared Rip's unfortunate tale with me. And, as I grew older, I remember reading the book on my own, thumbing through the pages of this "profusely illustrated" edition and thinking what a troubling time it was for Rip when he woke up after that legendary 20-year nap.

Rip, of course, was a likable sort, but his inclination for procrastination and lazing about didn't exactly make him a role model. Despite this, I suspect I was attracted to Rip because he liked to wander in the woods and hunt squirrels. As a kid, I spent many a day roaming the woods, but never had much luck bringing squirrels home for dinner. I did, however, approach any consideration of napping in the great outdoors with a slight reluctance. Admittedly, I had an active imagination and wanted to be certain I did not suffer the same fate as Mr. Van Winkle. I figured if I saw a man shouldering a keg of grog headed to a bowling party, I'd politely decline any invitation, cancel thoughts of a nap, and scoot because there was no way I'd fall for the ploy like Rip did. After all, he slept through the American Revolution. Who knew what I'd miss?

Aside from thoughts of waking up with a long white beard, a rusty firearm, and a dog gone missing, I dreaded the idea of being pestered by small children (my peers at the time) and not being recognized by people I knew. Looking back on Rip today, I appreciate his proclivity for napping (Who doesn't need a good doze now and

then?), but realize he needed a good shot of ambition to get him through the day. If Rip had slipped off into a snooze on the SU Hill just a decade ago, he'd be desperately disconnected at wake-up time.

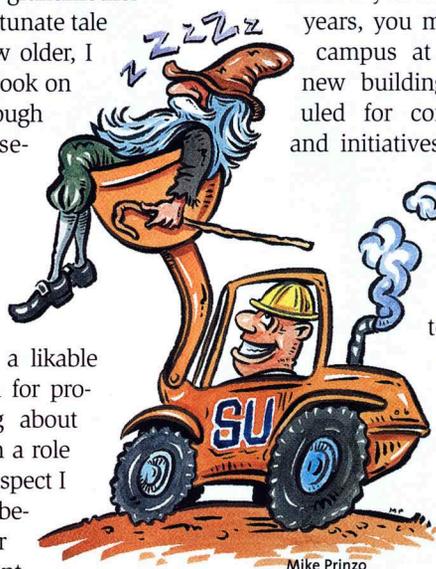
As you'll see in this issue, the University has achieved a great deal in the past decade and, with a new academic plan in place, will accomplish even more in the future. If you haven't returned to SU in

years, you might not recognize the campus at first sight. There are new buildings (with more scheduled for construction), programs, and initiatives, and there's a strong sense of energy.

Like any well-respected institution of higher learning, Syracuse can't afford to sit still and let time pass without confronting challenges, fostering change, and making progress. It just doesn't work in today's world.

Nor, apparently, did such an approach bode well in Rip Van Winkle's day. True, after realizing what had happened, Rip had a helluva story on his hands—one that he could share with interested town folk and curious travelers for years to come. But in the end it was always the same story. Rip unfortunately had grown old without aim or any notion of progress.

Thanks to the talent of Washington Irving, this cautionary Catskills tale has endured for close to two centuries, and its lessons still apply. These days we'd say: "If you snooze, you lose." And, as I remind myself when occasionally faced with Rip-like lethargy after a filling lunch, a good walk across campus beats dozing at a desk any day.



Mike Prinzo

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