University Senate Meeting
Chancellor Kent Syverud Remarks
Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 4:00 p.m.

Good Afternoon.

I am happy to be here today to listen to the reports of the work of the University Senate, including the report of the Budget committee on issues of RCM, athletics, and enrollment.

I wanted to talk to you a bit about the two motions that are at the end of your agenda today, and also about issues of strategic academic planning and promotion and tenure policies.

It has been a year of many ongoing transitions at Syracuse University, and a year with a steep learning curve for me. I have learned a lot about the governance structures of the University, and a lot more about how we communicate and fail to communicate about issues of shared interest. I wish I knew back in January everything I know now, but the important thing is that I have learned a lot and hope to do a better job because of what I have learned.

I. <u>On the two motions on the agenda:</u> One is the motion on the Centennial Declaration of the AAUP, and the other is the motion regarding faculty responses to the issues raised by THE General Body Sit-in.

In particular, the first motion states that it is resolved that the Syracuse University Senate affirms and adopts the Centennial Declaration of the American Association of University Professors as part of Syracuse University's guiding principles.

The second motion states that it is resolved that the Syracuse University Senate affirms and applauds the attempt of the General Body to increase diversity, transparency, and shared governance in university practices and pledges to continue these efforts as part of your own work until concrete measures are taken to achieve these goals to the Senate's satisfaction.

I just want to make clear that I affirm the spirit of both motions. I know you will want to discuss some of the details, but I have read them carefully and I think I understand well and support the values underlying both motions.

An attribute of both motions, I believe, is concern about respect for shared faculty governance in the affairs of the university. In particular, one thing among many I have learned this semester is that there needs to be more and better communication, and better genuine inclusion in decision-making, before there can be increased trust in the processes by which we do things like strategic planning and promotion and tenure. I have learned I have to work hard to build that trust in the coming weeks and months, and I intend to do so.

I want to make that assurance more concrete, and more concrete in the context of strategic planning and tenure and promotion.

II. <u>On strategic planning, I want to address two big matters</u>: the vision and mission statement of the University that was proposed out of the strategic planning process overseen by the Provost, and the operational excellence program that has been doing much work since last summer.

a. <u>Vision and Mission Statement</u>:

My goal has been and continues to be ensuring that there are multiple opportunities for the campus community to provide ideas and feedback about the University's mission and vision statement, the first step in the strategic planning process. As part of strategic planning, the draft mission and vision statements were made public early this semester for review and comment by students, faculty and staff. Given a lot of concerns that were raised, the comment period was extended by another month to allow more time for campus feedback. I also asked the Board of

Trustees in November not to approve the vision and mission statements in final, but only in draft, and they did so. Today, with the goal of increased involvement and transparency, I ask that the Senate formally provide input on the draft vision and mission statements. I hope to work with you to figure out how you can have that input on a timely basis next semester.

I also want to point out to you that, to my knowledge after some due diligence, the presentation and consultation with the Senate on a draft mission and vision statement was NOT part of the process either of the last two times the University developed a mission and vision statement. I believe that shared governance would be better respected by including this formal consultation this time around, and that the resulting statement will be better as a result.

b. Operational Excellence:

There has been relatively little communication about concrete academic strategic planning ideas as of yet, beyond the vision and mission statement. There has, on the other hand, been a lot of communication about operational excellence, and particularly the work of various workgroups on issues like travel and procurement. I need to say this about operational excellence. Operational Excellence is and should be entirely subordinate to the academic strategic plan. Most decisions about operations are made to support academics, and the academic strategic plan should drive operational decisions. So it is premature to make significant operational decisions before that academic plan is fleshed out. We are restricted in operations to working on the margins, on things like travel or procurement, while an academic plan is developed.

I say this because we have a serious communications problem related to the operational excellence part of 'Fast Forward". It is this: many on our staff and faculty, across the university, are convinced that the words "fast forward" mean layoffs, and that those layoffs will occur fast. Many believe this because of rumors, but they also believe it because some units are going through an operational excellence exercise in which they model how they would handle a 10% or a 20% cut in their budgets. This is a new experience for some units here. It is a good thing for any administrator to think about how you would handle a budget cut – the exercise

forces you to look for efficiencies and ask whether everything you are spending is supporting your mission. But is it hard to cut 20% or even 10% without a smaller staff, through retirements, attrition, or in the last extremity involuntary staff reductions. And hence people are anxious about layoffs here.

Look, in my last three jobs, of the last 19 years at three fine universities, I was expected at all times to have plans in place for a 10% and 20% reduction so that I could move nimbly if needed. I never in those years had layoffs, though I did at times need to absorb some budget cuts. I tell you this for context, but also as a preface to alert you that I have recently intervened with top administrators at this University to make clear the following:

1. While the operational excellence work will continue and will focus on making the University more efficient and less bureaucratic, there will be no University Fast-Forward driven layoffs unless and until the academic strategic planning process effort is complete. That will take at least until the summer and realistically probably longer. Even when the academic strategic plan is complete, layoffs would be a last resort after all alternatives to achieve the plan are first carefully assessed and pursued. We are a long way from that hypothetical point right now.
2. As always at this University, like all universities, individual units can and are addressing their own challenges and opportunities. Some of them as always are facing shifts in their budgets and circumstances. I would not be surprised if some units for their own reasons in the coming semester shrink or grow. That is happening this year no more frequently than it has in the past or in previous years, and I do not expect that to pick up in the coming months – and certainly do not expect that there will be some university wide effort by administrators to make the pace pick up.
3. I regard our staff as by and large dedicated, loyal, talented, and one of the greatest assets of this university. Treating our staff respectfully and humanely is very important to me as I believe it is to the Senate, and I hope we will work together to continue that as part of our planning.

A great strategic plan helps us all – faculty and staff and students – by making the university succeed and grow, thus producing great results for our communities and

more opportunities for professional development. Operational excellence has to be subordinate to that plan, and hence I am focused now on getting the academic strategic plan right first.

III. On tenure and promotion. I spoke to the academic affairs committee of the Board of Trustees at their recent meeting about the Senate and about the board's decision regarding promotion processes of the University. I told the committee that I value shared governance, and that historically at this university the Senate has done many things, but the three most important have been approving curriculum, approving degrees, and approving promotions of faculty. I noted to them that the Board's decision in May took the third of these away from the Senate, and replaced it with a still undefined process within the Provost's Office. I told them that I viewed it as understandable that, given our long history at Syracuse, this decision was viewed as hostile to shared governance.

The academic affairs committee did then decide that they would respond to the Senate's request with an explanation for their May decision on promotion. I know that their response, which you have received, is unsatisfying to a significant number of you for a variety of reasons.

What I want to say to you is this. I personally very much support having a process for university-wide faculty involvement in both tenure and promotion, though an appropriate committee advising the Provost. I know that is different than having a Senate appointed committee do just promotions. I know there is distrust about the Provost selecting a tenure and promotions committee, and worries about how that committee process would work. I am committed to addressing that distrust and process directly, and working as best I can with both the Senate and the Board to get this right. I do devoutly believe that the Board genuinely wants to get to a tenure and promotion process that includes faculty input and models practices at the best private research universities; and that with the right people we can get to a result that involves more faculty involvement than previously, because it will include faculty involvement at the university level in both tenure and promotion, rather than in promotion alone. I know this is different than the Syracuse way in the past, and I can't change what the board has done. But I can work directly to

ensure that going forward we get to a better system that is worthy of trust from faculty, including from the faculty senators. The last semester has taught me that a lot more and better work, and a lot more communication, has to occur on this front, and it will.

I know that the co-chair of the Senate Academic Affairs Committee, Ian MacInness, and the Provost have worked together to determine the membership of the task force that will develop the proposal for the all University faculty review and advisory committee on promotion and tenure. I know that the task force is comprised of senators, faculty who are not senators, chairs of school and college promotion and tenure committees, a senior faculty member who has gone through a similar process at another university, and a recently tenured faculty member. This group had its first meeting this week. I am told it is committed to provide a plan to the Senate by February for your consideration and advice, with the intent of having a final proposal ready for the Board of Trustees at its May meeting. The goal is to get this new shared governance mechanism in place for the 2015-2016 academic year. I will be watching this work closely, and will value your advice as it goes forward.

Thank you for letting me address you on these issues. I look forward to listening to the discussion of all the issues on the agenda today, and to working with you on the matters I have raised.