

Chancellor Kent Syverud Addresses Recent Events and Directs Urgent Action

Syracuse University

MONDAY, FEB. 24, 2020

Dear Members of the Syracuse University Community:

It has been a tough week on campus, including for the students who are protesting in Crouse-Hinds Hall. Last Wednesday, at the University Senate, I said we needed to step back from the edge so we can continue productive ongoing work to address issues of diversity, inclusion and safety that have caused significant concern across our campus since November. We have done that. Operations have resumed in Crouse-Hinds Hall, and all suspensions have been revoked.

I am not proud of how last week's events involving student protesters in Crouse-Hinds Hall were handled. I take responsibility and apologize to the students—especially those misidentified in suspension letters sent out. I apologize also to our broader community for how this has distracted from the good work that has been done since November on our Campus Commitments, including engagement by a Board of Trustees Special Committee and a separate Independent Advisory Panel of experts.

Over the last week, I have had the opportunity to speak with many students, deans and faculty, and to get feedback from early engagement sessions conducted by the Special Committee and Independent Panel. While the work of those two groups continues, I have directed that we take immediate action in three specific areas.

First, in the future, faculty and deans must have greater involvement, oversight and authority around how we handle protests. I have assigned this to Interim Provost John Liu and asked him to work with the deans, faculty and administrators to develop protocols to achieve this mandate.

Second, we have engaged former United States Attorney General Loretta Lynch from the Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison law firm to lead an independent, expedited review of our Department of Public Safety (DPS).

Ms. Lynch served under President Barack Obama and has been known throughout her career for her work in the area of police-community relations and is widely respected for bringing voice to all sides. I believe this review is necessary given that concerns have been raised through several channels about how DPS engages with our community and how it has managed various interactions with students, including protestors. Our DPS officers work very hard every day and night to protect our students and our community. Our community expectations and our needs have evolved, and this review will result in recommendations on how DPS can best meet today's community's needs going forward.

Finally, I have directed an independent review of our Student Experience function. Here also, our staff are dedicated to our students and work hard each day in service to them. I am concerned that our students' needs have evolved and changed, and that our team must be able to effectively execute on these needs, even in rapidly developing circumstances like the protests this week. We will announce the leader of this effort soon.

I believe these three steps are needed now for the sake of our students and university. There will be more steps to come, including from the continuing work of the Special Committee and Independent Panel. Our university is making progress on many fronts—including on the many Campus Commitments, and in identifying, and holding responsible, three students for hateful acts so far.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Syverud". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'K'.

Chancellor Kent Syverud

Syracuse University

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