

Provost Michele Wheatly
University Hill Corp. Annual Meeting
Nov. 29, 2016

Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here for this wonderful luncheon and to have this opportunity to tell you a little about myself and get to know all of you a little better.

I assumed the position of Vice Chancellor and Provost at Syracuse University in May of this year. In that capacity, I serve as chief academic officer for the University and member of the Chancellor's Executive Team.

I am a native of London and earned my undergraduate degree in biology and Ph.D. in comparative physiology, both from Birmingham University. Came here with my husband, Stan, from West Virginia University, where I had served as a professor of biology and as provost from 2010 to 2014. Prior to that, I was a professor, department chair, and dean of science and math at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Before I say anything more, I would just like to assure you that you don't have to convert me to appreciating the important role universities can play in their community and region. In both my prior positions, I was deeply involved in partnerships and collaborations designed to leverage the strengths of the institution to help drive economic growth, spur opportunity, and enhance community well-being. At West Virginia, in particular, that was a founding principle and core value as a land-grant university.

But I was thrilled to learn that Syracuse—while not a public university—shares that same commitment. And as you know, it has a very long and unique legacy of backing up that commitment by engaging in partnerships and collaborations that both enhance the student experience, drive discovery and innovation, and positively impact the local and regional communities and beyond.

In the short time I have been here, I have come to appreciate the many ways the city of Syracuse functions as the economic, cultural, and social “hub” of Central New York—and how big a part University Hill—all of you represented in this room—plays in maintaining the city's status as the regional center of commerce, culture, and community life.

All of you in this room have done and are doing so much to make our city and region stronger and more vital. And as Provost—the University's chief academic officer—I am committed to working with you in as many ways as I can to continue advancing productive partnerships that make our city and region stronger and provide substantive, innovative, and hands-on learning opportunities for our students.

Syracuse University recently completed an Academic Strategic Plan to help us collectively refine our strategic vision in light of current and emerging challenges and opportunities, and to better position the University to flourish in the years ahead. As part of that work, a new mission statement was developed, committing the University, in

part, to “Maintaining pride in our location and history as a place of access, engagement, innovation, and impact.”

Some of the most important ways we can do this is by:

- Supporting cutting-edge research and scholarship that cut across multiple disciplines and areas of strength to pursue solutions to real-world challenges [ie., aging studies, biomedical research, disability studies, natural resource protection]
- Building our capacity to attract and retain the best and brightest faculty and students to Syracuse University
- Expanding access to bright, talented, and motivated students across all demographics and areas of difference
- Continuing our membership with Campus Compact—a national initiative in which colleges and universities commit to their role as a public good and to educating students for responsible and engaged citizenship. Among many of our peers, Syracuse University is looked on as a leader in engagement and often invited to participate in mentoring, presenting, and participating in studies on the subject.
- And of course collaborating with groups like the University Hill Corporation toward shared goals and the common good.
 - As a scientist myself, I know how essential it is to explore challenges from multiple perspectives and through many different lenses. I also know that as impactful as each of our organizations is, individually, when we pool our strengths and collaborate in common purpose, we magnify our impact many, many times over.

But I think the single most important role Syracuse University can play in advancing Central New York as a thriving, vibrant, economic powerhouse is by further distinguishing it as a thriving, innovative, student-focused, research university.

In the past year, we have taken many steps to ensure that campus programs, academics, services, physical spaces, and operations all prioritize the diverse and evolving needs of students.

We are in the process of implementing an Academic Strategic Plan that builds on existing strengths and identifies new strategic opportunities to further distinguish the University. Among the immediate actions:

- Creating an Internationalization Council to enhance our global focus—by supporting the international community of scholars that make up Syracuse University right here on campus and by expanding opportunities for global study and engagement.
- Constructing a National Veterans Resource Complex, which will further distinguish Syracuse University and the Central New York region as a hub for innovation in services, programs, and resources for veterans and military families. The complex will be a first-of-its-kind facility and serve as a home for the Institute for Veterans and Military Families and many other veteran-related programs and services. It will house state-of-the-art programs designed to seed opportunity for veterans and

serve as a platform to promote and coordinate veteran-related academic research and technology.

We have been working hard to maximize the campus physical spaces as well. One of the most visible projects has been transformation of University Place into a pedestrian pathway now named the Einhorn Family Walk. The project converted the portion of University Place stretching from College Place to South Crouse Avenue into a pedestrian pathway that prioritizes foot traffic, enhances accessibility, encourages social interaction, and showcases the University's "front lawn" and the buildings of Old Row.

Of course, we also are making important improvements to the Carrier Dome, including enhancements to improve accessibility throughout the facility and eventual replacement of the aging roof.

Down the road:

- Plans for relocation and expansion of student housing on Main Campus—although South Campus will still play an important role in our housing strategy.
- Expanded campus health and wellness facilities

These and all of our efforts are designed to meet the evolving needs of our students and further distinguish Syracuse University and the city and region it calls home.

We are committed to giving our students an education that will maximize their impact on their profession, on their communities, and on the world, and prepare them for engaged citizenship. We cannot do that from an "ivory tower." We do that by ensuring that our students and faculty scholars have plentiful opportunities to get off campus, get into the community, and collaborate together on challenges facing our city and the world.

We do that by partnering with many of you—on research, service projects, student entrepreneurship activities, and other programs that simultaneously drive scholarship, spur innovation, and address important needs in the larger community and region.

All of you have invested so much in this neighborhood, this city, and this region. It is wonderful to be a part of such a dedicated and supportive group of neighbors. I share your passion for partnering in common purpose for the betterment of this city. And I look forward to our continued collaboration to ensure a robust future for the city and region—and for all who live, study, and work here.

Thank you.