

SU President Eduardo Penalver's Address to CCE's 20th Anniversary Event Audience – March 14, 2024

Thank you all for being here this afternoon. It's really a pleasure to be able to celebrate this 20th anniversary of the Sundborg Center for Community Engagement. I know we're going to hear from Father Steve after I'm done, but I just want to make sure everyone knows that Father Steve is coming back to Seattle University this summer. He'll be joining us as our Chancellor, the title that we give to former university presidents at Jesuit institutions. He's going to be around and he's going to be involved. He's going to be serving Seattle University as a Jesuit priest, working on formation and communal discernment and in some of our community relations. We're very excited to welcome him back.

At Seattle University, we like to say that we are Seattle's university. And I think the Center for Community Engagement is one of the ways we live that out. Seattle University is inextricably bound up with the city that we share a name with. And this is almost always a good thing, since Seattle is known around the world as a vibrant, dynamic, entrepreneurial and beautiful place.

As I look out the window today, I can be very optimistic to say that winter is behind us, though I have "Juneuary" to look forward to. But, it is a beautiful place even in the winter. And according to Axios, Seattle is the number one place that young people graduating from college want to end up living in.

Of course, we all know that Seattle also has its challenges. As Seattle University, we share in those as well. Those include an escalating cost of living that puts homeownership and even renters in the city increasingly out of reach of the middle and working class. They include a legacy of racial exclusion, dispossession of indigenous communities, redlining, racially and religiously exclusionary covenants and the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, just to name a few.

As Seattle's university, we're committed to advancing and understanding Seattle, its opportunities, its history and its present challenges. And we're committed to serving the city as only a university can by studying and teaching about the city - its past, its present, its future - and by providing educational opportunity for those who've been historically excluded from higher education, including higher education here in Seattle.

The most important way we accomplish our mission is through the education and empowerment of our students. They become force multipliers after they graduate and head out into the greater Seattle community to make the world a more just, humane place. 80% of

Seattle University undergraduates participate in some form of engaged learning experience before they graduate. And most of our students stay in Seattle after they graduate.

As we seek to educate our students in the Jesuit tradition to become people for others, we aspire to make community engaged learning an essential part of the Seattle University educational experience. CCE is intimately involved in achieving that goal as we reimagine and revise our curriculum over the next several years to include community engaged learning experiences. The most salient of barriers to higher education are economics, it's just financially out of reach for many young people. Seattle University is committed to addressing that financial barrier through increased financial aid and through initiatives like CCE's Change Makers program, which guarantees admission and full financial aid to students from neighborhoods around our campus who complete that program. We also address accessibility through programs like Fostering Scholars, Seattle Promise, and our scholarship efforts through Rainier Scholars and Costco Scholars.

We're proud that programs like these have allowed us to become the most economically diverse, selective university in the state and we're proud to be investing in the economic health of the communities around Seattle University. One way we do that is through our Supplier Diversity Initiative, which the CCE has been instrumental in helping to launch and grow. We're committed through that program to increasing our procurement spending from black- and brown-owned businesses, and to spending more of our dollars in the neighborhoods around Seattle University.

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One local business, Boon Boona, has a special place in my heart. It became our coffee of choice on campus and it is now the exclusive supplier for coffee in our law school. If you don't know Boon Boona, get to know Boon Boona. It's also the exclusive coffee in the president's dining room – Chartwell's knows when I'm coming, and they serve Boon Boona coffee. Sometimes I show up at events where they don't know I'm attending, and it's what they serve.

For some, the barriers to higher education are more than economic. They're barriers of culture, or imagination, or a feeling that they might not belong on a university campus. We seek to address those as well. We do this by investing in the cultivation of a culture of inclusive academic excellence, in which students of all backgrounds and experiences can have a sense of belonging on our campus. Our racial diversity is among the highest of any university in Washington state. And just this week, the federal government recognized Seattle University as an Asian American, Native American and Pacific Islander serving institution, making us one of

just three minority serving institutions in the state. We've committed ourselves to officially becoming a Hispanic serving institution in the next few years.

Another way we are addressing cultural barriers to higher education is by welcoming the Seattle community onto our campus. At one of the earliest meetings I had with Kent Koth and the CCE advisory board, someone - I think it might have been Miss Evelyn - said that Seattle University is like Seattle's living room. It's like a place where community can come together to discuss, to agree and disagree. A place where people from all walks of life feel welcome. And more recently, this past October as Kent mentioned, we celebrated Halloween on our campus by setting up Trick-or-Treat stations around the campus, inviting children from the community to trick or treat. Kids from Bailey Gatzert Elementary came over during the day as a field trip, bringing their joy and energy to our campus on a beautiful October day. They had lots of fun, made lots of noise and collected an amazing haul of candy which was donated by our board chair, Pat Callans.

They also got to spend some time on a university campus, right? And they got to see lots of students, staff, faculty and administrators who looked like them. And just maybe, they got to imagine themselves on a college campus a few years down the road and see themselves belonging there. And needless to say, the staff at CCE with their many connections to the neighborhoods around our campus, were the first people we turn to about the idea of hosting such an event on the Seattle University campus. They were instrumental in making this past Halloween a fun and meaningful day for the children who we welcomed that day.

So, if Seattle University is Seattle's living room, then CCE is like Seattle University's inviting front porch. And I guess that makes Kent our kind of crazy uncle - he's the one welcoming you up onto the porch. We're really proud of CCE, proud of what it's accomplished during the past 20 years and very much look forward to seeing what it will accomplish in its next 20 years.

Thank you.