



John Boccacino:

What is it about Syracuse's Welcome and Syracuse's move-in program series of events that really stands out from its peers?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Well, we do hear from families that the logistics of this is the best process I've seen. This is my third child going to school, and we really do take pride in the way we organize the move-in process. But for me, what makes us stand out is the Orange, John, for lack of a better expression. When students get here and through that Syracuse welcome period, we just introduce students to our pride, all the things that Syracuse University has to offer, and really instill that Orange Spirit right as they get here.

And I think that that's a wonderful just moment we can be there together with the students as we welcome them. So I know my colleagues across the country do amazing jobs as well, but we are sure proud of the experience that we can give the students. I think the other thing that sets us apart too is the way our program is very intentionally scaffolded for students.

So when they arrive, our goal is to welcome them to the university as a whole and welcoming them to there for our residential students to where they're going to be living in there, acclimating them to the residence hall. So it's that university welcome. Then after that, we really want the students to be connected to their schools and colleges, right?

So they have the school of college programming the next set of couple days, and then after that we have our huge program in the city of Syracuse. So that introduces them to our city and all the exciting things the city of Syracuse has to offer. So there's this intentional rollout of the experiences that the students have.

So when they start the first day of classes, they have been connected to all these various layers that makes up Syracuse University.

John Boccacino:

I want to set the stage for our audience who's checking out our podcast today. So Syracuse Welcome starts August 24th and runs through August 27th. There's orientation programs, there's social gatherings, there's introductions to the city of Syracuse where the students will have a relationship during the course of their time here as students. But this is not something that comes together easily or lightly.

Carrie, you and your team with the New Student and Family Programs team, you've been working hard on orientation for quite some time. When does the process of planning Syracuse Welcome begin, and what kind of challenge is it trying to assist thousands of students with the move-in process?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

That's a great question, thank you for asking. So planning for Syracuse Welcome is a year-round activity. As soon as we finish Syracuse Welcome in August, we debrief and start planning for the next upcoming year. So truly, it really does take a year to plan and execute what we offer for the new students. The entire campus comes together. Certainly I'm kind of the conductor of the orchestra, but it does take every unit and all of their pieces of the puzzle to make Syracuse welcome happen.

My colleagues in Alumni Engagement, for example, doing the new student send-offs, my colleagues in schools and colleges preparing the advising process for students, all the onboarding they do. Our friends

in Auxiliary Services and Residence Life, getting the buildings ready and all of those pieces that just takes everybody, really, to make it all happen.

A lot of the work we do over the summer too is what I call a digital onboarding process. So their orientation is really taking place as they're preparing to arrive through the newsletters that we provide, through the Zoom sessions that we do for both new students and for their families so that when they get here, they are prepared to start their Syracuse Welcome experience.

John Boccacino:

It really feels like it's changed so much since when we were students. We both went to Syracuse-

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

It really does.

John Boccacino:

... you got your master's, I got my undergraduate, but the university bent over backwards trying to find

... a lot of students that are, we mentioned more than 4,000 new students and first-year students will come during Welcome. It can be a challenge, it can be nerve-wracking trying to find that community. What do you think are some of maybe from your expertise, from your role, some pointers you might have for parents, for students, for family members, who want to help their son or daughter, their grandchild, whoever it might be, find that community on campus?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Taking advantage of what we're offering is huge, right? So attending these events, going to the sendoff, or making sure you're attending all of the Syracuse Welcome programming that we have to offer. Chatting with the person next to you when you're in your sessions for your school or college, meeting the people on your floor. But that's not always easy, John, either, right?

It does take amount of courage to be able to even introduce yourself to somebody new, particularly if you've grown up in a tight-knit community, you've gone to school with the same kids since you were in kindergarten, and now you're kind of forced to start over. So I also want to



returning students to welcome, plus staff volunteers such as yourself who are out there welcoming our new students, and it really helps with that standout welcome experience as you

I've always found it interesting to see the groups of cars that pull into the circles. You have the one





John Boccacino:

... do that again until their graduation, until their Convocation Commencement Ceremony. So make sure to soak it up, take all the photos that you can. Are parents, what's the decor for New Student Convocation? Is it just for students or families, can they still stick around at that point?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

We welcome families to attend that program, and so if families are still here, we would love for them to come to New Student Convocation. And I appreciate you naming that tradition and that specialness that is Convocation. It's a formal academic ceremony. It is the bookend to commencement, and so you and your student and their peers are not going to be in the same space in that same way until they graduate. So it's a really, really special and meaningful opportunity. After that, we do have a dinner on the Dome turf, so it is that unique chance for both students and families to kind of be on the field and experience that, because it's true as a student, you really don't get that opportunity really too often. It's really a special kind of unique opportunity.

John Boccacino:

There's such a buzz, there's such a hype in the air, and you can sense the excitement of the new academic year, but you can also get the sense, Carrie, that, would you agree that probably right after New Student Convocation, that's a good time for the parents and the family members to say goodbye and let their families, let their son or daughter, their family member, start their Syracuse journey. That's a pretty good departure point, right?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Yes, I would say so. We do ask, so there is some programming for families that people can stay on Friday morning. The schools and colleges hosts sometimes an info session with the staff or the dean in the mornings. So we definitely recommend that folks say "Goodbye" by noon on Friday, but knowing sometimes our students aren't up and ready to go Friday morning, that Thursday night might actually be their kind of official "Goodbye" moment.

And I see it. I see those moments where families are saying goodbye to their student and it's emotional, but it's also a really beautiful moment to witness as well.

John Boccacino:

There's so much, and we hope our audience has really picked up on the attention to detail that Carrie and her staff put into planning this week-long "Welcome to the Syracuse Family." For you, what is the most rewarding part? What is it when you're looking back and you're seeing everything play out, what really makes you feel so content with what your team has brought to these students?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Well, I'll tell you, I appreciate you noting the attention to detail, because it takes a lot. It is the planning down to the line item of all the things we need to order and the people we need to organize and all those pieces. But I have to tell you, John, I remember my "Why," "Why do I do this? Why does my team spend all of this time dotting the i's and crossing the t's?" And it's because we truly want our new

