

Oneonta Mayor – Hometown Oneonta Column – 10-28-2022

500 words

Funny Hats and Serious Business

Mortarboards and tassels have been on my mind (and head).

What a wonderful couple of weeks!

The City of Oneonta hosted two college inaugurations within 8 days.

They were spectacular. There was genuine pageantry.

And pomp.

They also featured a similar and particular circumstance.

Which is this. That in this moment in Oneonta's history, we've been blessed. In the inauguration of these two men, we've been gifted with exactly what we need.

Now, and in this post-pandemic / pre-recession next few years, we face issues and opportunities that are equally seismic in their potential to change Oneonta's trajectory.

Our only way to ensure that we arc upward with growth and opportunity, and not plummet into service cutbacks and diminished quality of life, is to mobilize every resource and every partner in the cause.

In their histories, our colleges have never played the role that they are going to play in the resurgence and reimagining of Oneonta.

At just over a year in, Dr. Alberto Cardelle is our new president at SUNY Oneonta and recently arriving, Darren Reisberg is now manning the helm at Hartwick.

Both leaders share very collaborative and community-focused agendas. And both men embrace their potential to be key players during this important chapter in the story of Oneonta.

Both too, are very nice guys, and easy to work with.

For the first time – at this critical time – we are seeing long hoped for collaboration between colleges, and a partnering mindset regarding the city.

There's been a blossoming of collaborations that are already improving lives in the city. That, however, is the tip of what lies below. There's an unseen mountain of exponentially growing strategic partnerships, think sessions, and proposals being generated. It's going to be game changing for Oneonta and its neighbors.

And soon. This is talk that leads to action.

Already, our colleges are spearheading efforts to build upon the region's economic and infrastructure strengths.

Importantly, in the public's perception there is growing hope and confidence. I see it every day.

And so, I was honored to deliver the congratulations of our city and a welcome to both college presidents in speeches at their respective inaugurations.

My experience with mortar boards and especially those dangling tassels dates to my high school graduation, which recently held its 50th reunion. So that's a while ago.

What I learned while delivering my remarks at the inauguration of Darren Reisberg, was that a tassel worn on the backside of a mortarboard will not attack your face when speaking like one worn in the front. There was some comic relief in watching me struggle with it.

So, another thing learned.

Although I don't expect that I will be speaking at any future inaugurations. If we are lucky, we will be blessed to have these two leaders – and their two families – as members of our community for many years.

They are Oneontans.

Watch as the banners begin to fly. Watch our downtown transform.

These are exciting times.