



Good evening.

I want to convey my deep gratitude to the SUNY ESF Alumni Association for this recognition.

I want to thank my family, my wife Julia, and our four daughters, Neve (a Junior at Le Moyne College), Mira (who just began her freshman year at Florida Southern in Lakeland, Florida), Alia (a Junior at Jamesville-DeWitt High School), and Zavi (who just started second grade); my mom Elna, and my mother-in-law Nancy, most of whom are here with me this evening. They are a guiding light in my life.

As an undergraduate student, I attended three schools in four years. Though I grew up nearby in Chittenango, I initially went to Hofstra on Long Island, transferred to SUNY Oswego my second semester freshman year, all before landing here at ESF as a junior in the Fall of 1995. I had found home.

ESF nurtured my yearning to protect our planet Earth. It was here that I began to learn how to deeply listen, how to translate scientific understanding in ways that can resonate with the broader public, and how to harness my deep awareness of the needs of our communities, society, and planet into concrete actions that further our overall well-being.

I had many different professors during the six or so years that I was here on campus. But one, in particular, has had a lasting impact on me as a professional and as a human being. Emanuel Carter nurtured my inquisitive spirit and guided my development; his encouragement led me to a semester abroad in Barcelona in 1998, where I witnessed how Barcelona's preparative work for the 1992 Olympics had lasting and transformational impacts that continue today. This experience had a profound impact on my professional development by demonstrating how thoughtful, forward-thinking, interdisciplinary planning and design can create lasting community change.



In 2005, I was afforded the opportunity to work in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, thanks to Emanuel's connections with the Center for Environmental Studies. The CEA, was advancing one of the most successful greenbelt initiatives in the European Union. That period planted the seeds for what became "Elevating Erie" and the transformation of Erie Boulevard in Syracuse into a route for the Empire State Trail. After the bikeway on Erie Boulevard opened, I had a former DeWitt colleague say to me, " When I first learned that you wanted to build a bikeway on Erie Boulevard, I thought it was the dumbest idea I had ever heard...but now I have ridden on it, and I just want to say, thank you."

As a young professional working for the City of Syracuse in 2001, I was in a meeting at City Hall where the challenges associated with the maintenance of the I-81 viaduct were being discussed. What should we do? I piped up and said, "We should tear it down like they are doing in Milwaukee." People listened; Syracuse is in the midst of a multi-billion dollar transformation as a result.

That is what my training here at ESF prepared me to do, to see the world in terms of its possibilities – and to translate those into reality.

Today I am blessed to work at EDR, headquartered here in Downtown Syracuse. I want to express my sincere thanks for the leadership of our president Jo Anne Falco, who is with us this evening. EDR has provided me with a platform to truly translate my passion and experience to communities throughout New York State and beyond. Every day I get to collaborate with other passionate and dedicated multidisciplinary professionals, many of whom were trained here at ESF, translating visions into reality.

I wouldn't be where I am today, continuing to help Syracuse, the Central New York Region, and Upstate, NY, were it not for these gifts.

Thank you ESF, for everything.