In delivering opening remarks, Penn State Executive Vice President and Provost Nick Jones discussed the Fall 2021 reopening of the renovated Ryan Family Student Center Sciences and the project’s importance to student success in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences.

Thank you, Lee, and good afternoon, everyone. I’m thrilled to be here to help celebrate this semester’s opening of the renovated Ryan Family Student Center. And it’s especially nice to be able to say a few words in person today.

This center opened in 2004, when President Barron was serving as Dean of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, and it was named in honor of alumni John T. Ryan Sr. and Jr. and their families.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in mining engineering from Penn State in 1908, John Ryan Sr. co-founded the Mine Safety Appliances Company, which helped improve safety in the mining industry throughout the 20th century. John Ryan Sr. and Jr. served on Penn State’s Board of Trustees and were highly influential in the University’s development.

As chief academic officer, I take pride in the many ways in which we support learners in all our colleges and at all our campuses. Our top-tier faculty and staff are integral to our mission, but facilities are, as well.

We are always looking to identify investments and commit University resources to new and renovated buildings and spaces that will foster even greater excellence.
The Ryan Family Student Center is a prime example of our commitment to student success. Since its opening, the center has integrated tutoring, advising, student workspaces, and areas for casual interaction into what could be called a “one-stop shop” for EMS undergraduate students.

Access to free one-on-one tutoring helps students master the concepts of writing, math, and physics, providing a foundation to excel in higher-level classes. And advisers help EMS students plot paths to graduation that ultimately lead to rewarding careers in their fields.

The center was renovated and expanded while it was closed due to the pandemic, enabling opportunities for growth in student engagement and career success services.

Students can now meet with the director of student engagement to plan their beyond-the-classroom experiences, and a career counselor will be added to the team soon. The additional space has also allowed students to do work during the day and participate in tutoring in the evening.

Beyond academics, the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences has always strived to foster a warm and welcoming environment for its students amid the hustle and bustle of this large campus. This is a place where EMS students feel welcome, study together, and can be in community with the college.

And I must say, as we conclude Homecoming Week, this space certainly feels like home. You have computers and access to free printing, which I understand is a very popular offering here.

But there’s also a microwave. A refrigerator, too. All you need is a place to do laundry, and you’ll be all set! I know the College also hopes to resume offering complimentary coffee, tea, and hot chocolate in the center next year – even more to look forward to.
I’d like to thank Lee, Yvette, and everyone in the College who spearheaded this project. I’m very pleased that this space will help support the education of the next generation of leaders in the Earth and Mineral Sciences.

As these hard-working students build credits and confidence, this renovated space will allow them to create, collaborate, and develop the skills to drive their success. This is great news for EMS students, their families, Penn State, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Please join me in recognizing the vision and hard work that brought us to this day.

On behalf of the University, congratulations and thank you.