Making the Ask: 
Key Strategies to Engage Your Peers
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Preparation

• Consider why Stevens is important to you, and why your classmates will want to support the University.

• Most people enjoy giving to a worthwhile cause and will respond willingly. Present your classmates with an opportunity to give rather than an obligation or argument.

• Before you begin making calls, get up to date on the University by visiting the Stevens website at www.stevens.edu
Preparation

• Set goals or deadlines for yourself. For example, making all of your initial calls by December 31 or if sitting down to make calls in the evening, talking to two classmates that night.

• Nervous? Make a practice call to one of your fellow volunteers, friend or family member

• Start with an easy call to get past the first hurdle. Why not call your classmates who gave last year first to thank them (especially if they’ve increased over last year, or haven’t given for a few years) and catch up? This should give you some good positive energy to make the rest of your calls!
Writing Effective Class Letters

• Make the case for giving to Stevens. Why do you give? Evoke memories of campus life, share your own Stevens experiences, and incorporate items that elicit pride in the University.

• Make your letters warm and personal. Use humor or a light-hearted approach when appropriate - this can be effective in making the case for support and keep your classmates reading.

• Keep your letter to one page if possible.
Writing Effective Class Letters

• Be positive. Concentrate on the successes your class has experienced. If you feel your class is capable of doing more, mention it, but be sure to focus on the positive. Everyone likes to be associated with a successful cause.

• Be appreciative. Thank donors for gifts they have made in the past and for those you expect them to make in the future. Make them feel good about what their past support has meant to the University, and how much their future support means to the students at Stevens.
Writing Effective Class Letters

• Clearly specify what action you want your classmates to take. Don’t “hide” the message or make it seem like an afterthought. Don’t apologize for asking classmates to support the University.

• Include an ask amount. This gives classmates a specific level to consider.

• Tell your classmates how to give to the University and encourage classmates to set up automatic installment payments.
Phone Solicitations

• **Connect** – Create or re-establish the link you share with your classmate.
  - Talk about Stevens today, the campus you remember, or other things entirely.
  - Listen to your classmate to pick up cues on how invested they are in the University and which direction the conversation should go.

• **Collect** – When calling to make a specific ask for a gift to Stevens:
  - Thank your classmate for previous gifts.
  - Make the case for giving to Stevens.
  - Be specific about the dollar amount for which you are asking.
  - Provide information about the different giving options.
Phone Solicitations

- **Follow Up** – to ensure the greatest success, keep the following in mind:
  - If you don't reach your classmate the first time, keep trying! It is up to you whether or not to leave a message, but the ultimate goal is to actually talk to your classmate.
  - Your classmate may need some time to consider a gift to Stevens and may require a follow-up call. Allow a reasonable amount of time to pass before you contact them again.
  - Write notes, as appropriate, to thank them for taking the time to speak with you and for their commitment to the University.
Phone Solicitations

• **Follow Up (continued)**
  
  o Update your class agent and staff contact with gift, pledge, or refusal information. Also notify the Office of Development of any phone number and/or address changes or important anecdotal information such as a marriage, divorce, or employment change.
  
  o Your classmate may choose to not give to Stevens this year. However, your positive attitude and endorsement of the University may result in a renewal of their relationship in the future.
  
  o Share successes with other volunteers so that everyone can feel good and learn tips from each other.
Email Solicitations

• Most emails are read within seconds. Try to make an immediate impact.

• The subject line should be attention-grabbing, but not misleading.

• State your purpose early in your text and be clear and upfront.

• Making the case for support in an email is more effective when using your personal style.
Email Solicitations

• If you don't know a classmate, try a thank you or invitation first. If your first email is a solicitation, subsequent email may be ignored.

• Always include the link to Stevens’ online giving page: www.stevens.edu/makeagift

• Include links to other pages on the University’s website. Fresh news is appreciated.

• Honor a classmate’s request not to be solicited by this method.
Remember...

• **Be positive, upbeat and direct.** Do not apologize or let anyone put you off. If your classmate says he or she already knows all about the University, say that you would still appreciate a chance to tell why you believe his or her participation is important to the class effort.

• **Be personal.** Explain why you are giving to Stevens this year and why the University is particularly important to you.

• **Listen.** Do not expect an immediate commitment. Your classmate may need time to think it over or to consult with others.