

Convocation Speech

September 9, 2009

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board of Trustees, President Raveché, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Administrators, Faculty, Staff and returning students. To the Class of 2013: Welcome to the Stevens Community. You are now part of a unique collection of students; and you are its most important part. You, the Freshman class, carry with you new ideas, new energy, and a revitalized spirit for all of campus. Some of you may have given the Orientation Leaders and RAs strange looks when they cheered your arrival on campus, eagerly helped move you in, and played icebreakers and other games with you on your first days on campus. No, it's not because we're a little "too unique." It's because we know what you're capable of, who you can be, and what you bring with you (besides Ramen Noodles).

What makes Stevens so unique? In my opinion, it is the collected passions of its student body. We have many research opportunities available, a stellar Division III sports program, and over 70 clubs and student organizations on campus. These student organizations range from Alpha Phi Omega, our service fraternity, and the Black Student Union to the Society of Physics Students and WCPR, our campus radio station. The Entertainment Committee hosts regular events throughout the semester, including trips to Broadway and on-campus standup comedians. The Movie Committee holds weekly movie screenings in a Dolby Sound theater here on campus; a few times a semester they also premiere first run films on campus. Students have regular concerts and recitals either in the Library's Great Hall or in the DeBaun Center for the Performing Arts. All of these organizations and events are either entirely student-run or display the amazing talents of our students. Most do both. By exposing yourself to what the clubs do, you will learn that Stevens is not just about becoming Engineers, Entrepreneurs, and Innovators. Outside of academics it is about exploring the many opportunities made available to you, learning about yourself, and making the most of the four (or five) short years you will have here.

So, I am going to ask of you what many people have asked of me before. Get yourself out there. Take action. Join these clubs. Start a new one. Do something that interests you. Do not let yourself be caught saying "There's nothing to do today." Do not let what the Orientation Leaders and RAs saw in you on your first day go to the wayside. Even if you put all your energies into a single club, you will be gaining as much as you contribute. These organizations are a great way to expand your circle of friends and meet the upperclassmen. These are the people who have already been through the transitions of Freshman year. They are a well of advice and experience that are more than happy to share these things with you. Make sure to take advantage of what they have to offer you. Plus I'm pretty sure the upperclassmen wouldn't mind a little attention. Getting to know them better will make your first year at Stevens much easier. Also, student organizations provide what may, for many of you, be your first test of leadership. Some of you will become the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of these organizations. You will be the ones running these clubs and the ones choosing what events will be on campus. Making the choice between an open-mic night and an indie band performance; or, even better, creating the framework for a new

Stevens Tradition. You are the ones who will be here long after today's leaders have left Stevens and I know you will make it count.

After you leave this building, there will be a club fair on Palmer Lawn. Many of our organizations will be there and you will get one of your first tastes of the diversity of interests and opportunities on campus. Make that your first stop. Tonight also marks the start of Techfest. We will be having a movie showing tonight, a Casino Night tomorrow, and very funny standup comedian on Friday. These are the first big events of the semester, make the most of them.

I will close with a challenge to each of you. Today, when you're at the club fair, sign up for at least one club that you are interested in and meet the person behind the table. They're here to make your time here more interesting. Then, and this is the most important part, attend the next meeting they have. Get to know the other Freshman and upperclassmen who are interested in the same things you are. It's a pretty simple formula, but these will be the first steps you take towards making a positive difference in our Stevens Community. Thank you.