



June 26, 2017

To Stevens Students, Faculty, Staff, and Alumni:

As many are aware, there has been a great deal of recent attention from members of the Stevens community regarding the naming of the Gianforte Academic Center, our planned new academic building. The Gianforte Family Charitable Trust has pledged \$20 million in support of this new facility.

Members of our campus community first raised concerns about the naming of the building in the spring semester in response to the public statements and philanthropic record of Mr. Greg Gianforte '83, who was, at that time, a candidate from Montana for the U.S. House of Representatives. In response to these concerns, a town hall meeting was held to address this issue, and a [statement](#) to the community reaffirming Stevens' commitment to academic freedom and our values of diversity and inclusion was issued.

Following an incident on May 24th, which has been reported in the media and for which Mr. Gianforte subsequently pled guilty to misdemeanor assault, there has been a resurgence in the level of input and interest from the Stevens community on the naming of the new academic building. Since that time, Mr. Gianforte has publicly apologized, been sentenced and settled a related civil claim related to the incident. Several articles have appeared in the local media, as well as in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *The Wall Street Journal*, reporting on the controversy regarding the donation to Stevens and the naming of the building. There has also been activity on social media among students, faculty and some alumni, as well as other forms of expression about this issue. We, the President and the Chair of the Board of Trustees, and others have received considerable input from members of our community on this issue.

These issues have generated a range of opinions from people who care deeply about Stevens—some who feel strongly that the naming of the building as originally planned is not in the best interests of the University, and others who believe equally as strongly that Mr. Gianforte's generosity to Stevens and his record as a successful technology entrepreneur should be honored. It is clear that this is a very serious matter about which reasonable people disagree, and that whatever decision is made could be viewed either favorably or unfavorably by some members of our community.

It is for this reason that we must approach this issue in a thoughtful, deliberate, and objective manner. We must come together, use our collective wisdom, sound judgment, and best reasoning to identify a path forward that is consistent with the mission and values of Stevens.

In order to reach such a resolution, the Board of Trustees has approved a process that will have two goals. First, the process will collect available facts and input from the Stevens community about the issues and recent incidents involving Mr. Gianforte. Then, the process will consider various factors including the history, mission and values of Stevens, applicable Stevens policies, Stevens' relationships with donors and other matters with the goal of arriving at a set of guidelines and principles to assist the Board in decision-making about the possible renaming of donor-funded structures and activities when such situations are presented.

This process will commence with the appointment of a committee of fair-minded and well-respected members of the Stevens community including students, faculty, alumni, staff and Trustees, and which

will also include Chief Justice James Zazzali, former Attorney General and Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, who will facilitate the committee's discussions. At the conclusion of the process, the committee will provide to the Board of Trustees a set of guidelines and principles for decision-making by the Board.

As President and the Chair of the Board, we are both enormously grateful to the members of the Stevens community who have agreed to serve on this committee, listed below. We encourage all members of the community to provide input to the committee and to give its members your full cooperation and support as they undertake their very important work.

- J. Scott Swensen B.E. '74, Committee Chair and Member, Board of Trustees
- Shane Q. Arlington, B.E., B.S. M.S. '16, Member, Board of Trustees
- Dr. Anthony Barrese, Industry Professor and Interim Dean, School of Systems and Enterprises
- Thomas Daly, B.E., Class of 2018, President of the Stevens Student Government Association
- John R. Dearborn B.E. '79, M. Eng. '81, Member, Board of Trustees
- Joseph G. DiPompeo, B.E. '98, M. Eng. '99, President, Stevens Alumni Association
- Robert Fiocco, M.E. '58, M.S. '61, Sc.D. '64
- Melissa Fuest, Assistant Vice President for Alumni Engagement & Annual Giving and Executive Director of the Stevens Alumni Association
- Daniella M. Kranjac B.E. '99, Member, Board of Trustees
- Olivia Schreiber, B.S. Class of 2018, Chair, Stevens Honor Board
- Dr. Michael Steinmann, Professor, College of Arts and Letters, Chair of the Faculty Senate
- Victoria Velasco, B.E., 2004, First Vice President, Stevens Alumni Association
- James R. Zazzali, Retired Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, Of-Counsel to Gibbons P.C., Committee Member and Facilitator

Our goal is to support the committee in completing its work as expeditiously as possible. To this end, the committee will undertake its planning and outreach in the coming weeks. However, because we are starting this process at a time of the year when many faculty and students are unavailable, we expect this process will continue into the fall 2017 semester.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the sentiments of those who have already expressed their thoughts and to thank them and all who will participate in this process. Stevens has been on an incredibly positive trajectory over the last six years thanks to the collective efforts of faculty, staff, alumni, and students. Through a thoughtful and deliberate process, we are confident that we will find a resolution that is in the best interests of the University and the extended Stevens community.

Per aspera ad astra,

Virginia Ruesterholz
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Nariman Farvardin
President