



Office of the President

Welcome to Fall 2024: A New Chapter of Innovation at Stevens

From: Nariman Farvardin, President

To: Faculty, Staff and Students

As we launch into the Fall 2024 semester, I'm invigorated by the boundless potential that lies ahead for our Stevens community. To those returning, welcome back to your academic home. To our newcomers, you're joining an institution at the forefront of innovation and discovery. The energy on our campus is palpable!

Much has happened at our university since we last gathered in the spring. I'm pleased to highlight some key developments that underscore our momentum.

The Fall semester kicked off with a flurry of activity, **showcasing the Stevens spirit at its finest**. Here's a snapshot of our welcome events by the numbers:

- 1,986 students moved into campus residence halls during our "Unpack the Quack" Move-In Days
- 382 volunteers, including 142 staff and faculty, 68 resident assistants, 47 peer leaders and 125 student volunteers, supported this massive undertaking
- 359 airport pickups were conducted for arriving international students
- 113 events and activities were organized for New Undergraduate Student Orientation
- 47 peer leaders guided new undergraduates through orientation
- 43 peer leaders staffed the New Graduate Student Orientation
- 10 orientation events and activities were held for graduate students
- 7 different pre-orientation programs were offered to undergraduates

These numbers tell a story of remarkable coordination and community spirit and of Stevens' commitment to student centrality. Led by our Division of Student Affairs, with crucial support from Campus Operations, Campus Police and countless volunteers, we've orchestrated a warm Stevens welcome for our new and returning students. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone who contributed!

As classes begin today, I encourage our students to carry this warm welcome forward. All members of our community are invited to join our new undergraduates at the Wittpenn Walk tradition tomorrow, Sept. 4, at 3 p.m., followed by New Undergraduate Student Convocation, where New Jersey Sen. Raj Mukherji will welcome the Class of 2028.

Undergraduate and Graduate Student Enrollment

The Class of 2028 has officially joined the Stevens community, and what a remarkable group they are. The following highlights underscore the strength and diversity of our new undergraduate cohort (please note that these statistics are preliminary and will be finalized at our census in October):

- We've welcomed nearly 1,130 new undergraduates, our second largest class ever
- These exceptional students were selected from a highly competitive pool representing all 50 states, seven U.S. territories and 113 countries
- Our international student representation has hit a new record, increasing by 6% over last year's already impressive numbers, with students from 28 different countries
- The most diverse class in Stevens' history with 24% from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, this incoming first-year class is approximately 34% female
- More than 100 students in this class previously attended a Stevens pre-college program
- This class stands among the most academically distinguished in our history
- With this addition, our total undergraduate enrollment now exceeds 4,200, aligning perfectly with our Strategic Plan goals

I am proud of our Enrollment Management team for navigating the challenges posed by FAFSA changes and delays. Their strategic approach allowed us to modestly increase our class size while ensuring our campus infrastructure can support our growing community.

On the graduate front, we're equally excited to welcome 1,603 new students, including 102 Ph.D. candidates. These bright minds were chosen from a pool of more than 10,950 applicants, bringing our total graduate enrollment to 4,094. These numbers are as of Aug. 30 and may increase in the coming days.

To everyone involved in shaping these outstanding incoming classes — from our Enrollment Management and Office of Graduate Education colleagues to our faculty and staff — I extend my heartfelt congratulations. Your hard work has set the stage for another exceptional year at Stevens.

New Leadership

As we begin this academic year, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to two key leaders who recently joined our community.

Gert-Jan "GJ" de Vreede just took the helm as dean of the School of Business, bringing his expertise in artificial intelligence, crowdsourcing and collaboration engineering to further strengthen our technology-driven business education. His impressive track record in growing enrollment and research support at his previous institution bodes well for the continued success of our School of Business.

I also want to recognize **Dean Gregory Prastacos** for his distinguished service as dean from 2012 to 2024. Under his leadership, the School of Business transformed into a highly ranked, accredited institution. We are grateful for his dedication and vision.

This past spring marked a significant milestone in our commitment to expanding educational access and innovation with the establishment of the College of Professional Education (CPE). This new college is designed to strengthen Stevens' professional education programs, especially enhancing and growing

Stevens Online and addressing the evolving needs of students and employers in the digital age. To lead this important initiative, we welcomed **Arshad Saiyed** in April as our inaugural chief online learning officer and dean of CPE. Dean Saiyed brings extensive experience in digital education. His leadership is already helping to position Stevens at the forefront of technology-driven, flexible learning solutions.

Student Experience

At Stevens, we're constantly innovating to enhance the student experience. This fall, we're launching several initiatives that exemplify our commitment to student success and well-being:

SUCCESS Core Curriculum: This fall, we inaugurated our innovative Stevens Undergraduate Core Curriculum: Essential Skills for Success (SUCCESS). This comprehensive program ensures all students, regardless of major, are well-prepared for the dynamic and technology-focused 21st-century job market. SUCCESS encompasses a First-Year Experience course, Foundations courses in computing, entrepreneurship, communication, leadership and ethics and cutting-edge Frontiers of Technology courses. Students will explore emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, data science, biotechnology, sustainability and quantum technology. This forward-thinking curriculum is designed to equip our graduates with the essential skills and technological savvy needed to adapt, innovate and lead in our rapidly evolving digital economy.

Faculty Growth: Our academic community continues to expand. We've welcomed 26 new faculty members this fall, bringing our full-time faculty count to a record high of 336. This includes 15 tenured/tenure-track and 11 non-tenured faculty. Their expertise and fresh perspectives will undoubtedly enrich our academic environment.

Mental Health Initiatives: Student well-being remains our top priority. We've partnered with the Jed Foundation to assess and enhance our mental health practices. Our new Wellness Garden, located behind the Wellness Center, offers a tranquil space for relaxation and de-stressing. Thanks to the State of New Jersey, our students continue to have access to free teletherapy through **Uwill**. Additionally, our Student Health Services now provide vaccines and physicals, further supporting our students' health needs.

Feed the Flock: I'm particularly proud of this new initiative. This food-swipe donation program tackles food insecurity on campus, embodying our commitment to a supportive and inclusive community. It's a testament to the collaborative spirit of Stevens, involving multiple departments and student organizations including Student Support, Residential and Dining Services, Student Culture and Belonging, IT, the Residence Hall Association and the Student Government Association.

Living-Learning Communities (LLCs): We've expanded our LLC offerings to 10, adding three new communities this semester: Clark Scholars, Connect4 (a gaming community) and Stevens Spotlight (an arts community for returning students). These LLCs foster deeper connections among students, faculty and staff around shared interests.

As we implement these programs, I'm excited to see their impact on our community.

Research Enterprise

I'm thrilled to announce that Stevens has once again surpassed its record for externally sponsored research activity. In FY24, our research spending reached \$63.8 million, a 23.4% increase over last

year's \$51.7 million. Our total research awards for FY24 totaled \$57.9 million, with the School of Engineering and Science setting a record of \$38.2 million. These achievements underscore the innovative spirit and relentless pursuit of knowledge that defines our faculty and our university.

Our research portfolio continues to expand in both breadth and depth — from biomedical engineering to complex systems behavior and AI-based underwater navigation. In March, we announced that Stevens secured a new grant to establish the **Stevens Extreme Event Coastal Preparedness and Response System (SEECPRS)**. This state-of-the-art assessment and warning system will leverage our existing sensor networks and predictive tools to benefit New Jersey communities. By predicting coastal storm impacts, validating models and developing mitigation strategies, we're translating research into real-world solutions. I'm grateful for the support of U.S. Rep. Rob Menendez (NJ-8) and U.S. Sen. Cory Booker in championing this crucial work.

Last semester, we celebrated a transformative \$1.45 million gift from the PSEG Foundation, which established the **Stevens Center for Sustainability (SCS)**. Led by Professor Dibs Sarkar, this center serves as a hub for innovative solutions to complex environmental sustainability challenges. The gift funds scholarships from pre-college to doctoral levels, fostering a diverse pipeline of talent in sustainability.

Last spring marked a significant milestone that illustrates Stevens' contributions to innovation and economic development with the establishment of the **New Jersey Fintech Accelerator at Stevens Institute of Technology (NJFAST)**, powered by Plug and Play. Announced at Stevens by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, NJFAST builds upon our expertise in financial systems technology, AI and cybersecurity, including our NSF-supported **Center for Advancing Financial Technology (CRAFT)**. This Strategic Innovation Center, a collaboration between Stevens, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Plug and Play and Prudential Financial, has already begun positioning Stevens at the forefront of fintech and insurtech innovation. On Sept. 16 in the UCC TechFlex auditorium NJFAST will formally launch its first cohort of companies selected to move through the accelerator. Gov. Murphy will again be on hand to celebrate this milestone.

Alumni Engagement and Fundraising

Our alumni network continues to be a powerful force in the Stevens community, guided by the goals set forth in our Strategic Plan. **StevensConnects**, our career engagement platform, has seen remarkable growth, now boasting 2,381 alumni and 1,161 student users. This platform isn't just about numbers — it's about forging meaningful connections that drive career success.

Key achievements in alumni engagement include:

- Launch of a structured mentorship program on StevensConnects
- Expansion of Industry Torchbearers networks, including a new fintech network
- 67% growth in regional event registrations
- Increased activity in our Old Guard and affinity networks

On the fundraising front, I'm proud to report that our Stevens community of 4,090 donors contributed \$19.9 million in gifts and pledges for FY24 — a 9% increase over last year. This generosity directly translates into enhanced support for our students, faculty and programs, including significant endowments for professorships and scholarships. These achievements not only reflect the dedication of

our alumni and friends but also the tireless efforts of our Division of Development and Alumni Engagement in nurturing these vital relationships.

Athletics Success

The Stevens Ducks will begin the Fall 2024 season coming off another successful year, earning 18th place in the NCAA Learfield Director's Cup of all 437 Division III institutions. Highlights from the last year include:

- 18th in the Learfield Directors' Cup Standings
- 15 All-Americans
- 12 team Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC) championships
- 12 NCAA tournament appearances
- 8 MAC Senior Scholar Athletes
- 6 College Sports Communicators Academic All-Americans
- 3 MAC DIICA Student-Athletes of the Year Nominees: Laura Mathews, Aashi Kulakarni, Bruno Andino
- 1 individual national champion: Laura Mathews (Women's Track & Field)
- 1 national top 10 finish: Men's Volleyball (4th)
- 1 MAC Woman of the Year: Laura Mathews
- 1 Elite 90 Award (for highest GPA at the Men's Volleyball Championship): Brandon Rogers
- 1 NCAA Men's Volleyball event hosted in Hoboken (selected as hosts by the NCAA)

We all look forward to cheering on the Ducks as they compete this fall!

Facilities and Campus Operations and Information Technology

Our campus continues to evolve, mirroring the innovative spirit of our academic programs. Over the past year, we've made significant strides in enhancing our physical and digital infrastructure to support our growing community and advance our educational mission.

In our physical spaces, we've completed:

- 3 classroom renovations
- 6 lab upgrades
- 20 faculty office improvements
- Modernization of the Burchard Lobby and Plaza, including an ADA-compliant ramp
- Renovation of Palmer Hall's first-floor bathrooms and lounges
- Installation of LED sports lighting at DeBaun Athletic Complex
- Replacement of Martha Bayard Stevens Hall's roof and windows
- A new HVAC system in the McLean Building
- Electrical upgrades for the Williams Library and Data Center
- Initiation of the historic Walker Gymnasium restoration
- Edwin A. Stevens Building landscape and plaza upgrade (due to be completed by the end of September)

Our commitment to sustainability has earned us a Gold Rating in the AASHE STARS program, placing us among only three New Jersey universities to achieve this distinction. We've also renewed our pledge

to source 100% of our electricity from renewable energy. The campus landscape has been further enhanced with new pavers, a water feature outside Palmer Hall and, as mentioned earlier, a Wellness Center Reflection Garden.

The Division of Information Technology has also made remarkable progress in FY24, significantly enhancing our digital infrastructure. Key accomplishments include the implementation of Zoom Phone, a state-of-the-art cloud-based telephone system, and the expansion of our Workday ecosystem. Our restructured IT Project Management Office (PMO) efficiently managed more than 55 collaborative projects, demonstrating our ability to tackle complex technological challenges.

Research Computing Services launched a High-Performance Computing cluster, complementing this with new consultative services. This initiative now supports more than 100 faculty researchers and students, amplifying our research capabilities across disciplines.

We've also strengthened our cybersecurity, data governance and analytics capabilities, fostering a data-informed culture through executive dashboards. Thirty-two classrooms and collaboration spaces have been upgraded, more than 3,500 Canvas course sites are now supported and our Extended Reality (XR) lab has facilitated more than 12 virtual reality projects, advancing our teaching and learning methodologies. On the ground, the IT team has deployed more than 700 laptops through the Computer Asset Standardization, Procurement and Replacement (CASPR) program and handled more than 25,000 support requests, significantly enhancing our community's technological experience.

These improvements reflect our commitment to creating a campus environment that fosters innovation, sustainability and efficiency. I'm deeply grateful to our Facilities and Campus Operations and Information Technology teams for their tireless efforts in bringing these enhancements to fruition.

Rankings and Recognition

Stevens continues to garner national recognition for exceptional value and academic excellence. We are No. 1 on Payscale's "**Best-Value Colleges in New Jersey**" 2024 ranking. This recognition is further bolstered by our recent five-place jump to No. 12 on The Princeton Review's "**Top 20 Best Career Placement**" list. These accolades, along with our inclusion in The Princeton Review's "**The Best 390 Colleges: 2025 Edition**" and *Money magazine's* recognition as one of America's best universities, reflect the growing recognition of Stevens' top-tier education that translates into real-world success for our graduates.

The Stevens School of Business maintained its position among *U.S. News & World Report's* top 100 business schools for the fourth consecutive year. Our online programs are also gaining recognition, with our MBA program ranking as the highest in New Jersey for online offerings.

Our faculty and colleagues continue to distinguish themselves as thought leaders in prestigious media outlets. From *Inside Higher Ed* and *The New York Times* to *U.S. News & World Report* and ABC News, Stevens experts are shaping conversations on critical topics such as cancer research, social media's impact on mental health, college access and economic trends. I was honored to contribute to this dialogue, discussing our new **SUCCESS core curriculum** in *The Wall Street Journal's* coverage of AI education trends.

Beyond these individual contributions, Stevens' overall visibility in the media landscape has grown significantly. Our social media presence experienced a 7% overall follower growth and a remarkable 64% increase in visibility over the last fiscal year. Concurrently, our web presence has strengthened, with page views, visitors and organic traffic increasing by 54%, 33% and 33% respectively, compared to last year. The Division of University Relations has played a key role in these achievements, effectively raising Stevens' profile in alignment with our strategic plan's reputation goals.

Our partnerships with government and industry continue to strengthen. In addition to the federal funding for our coastal observing system mentioned earlier, we've secured Department of Defense support for AI, quantum and resiliency research. We also received \$7.25 million for institutional priorities through the State of New Jersey's FY25 budget. Our visibility is set to increase as NJ TRANSIT prepares to unveil a permanent sign designating Hoboken as the home of Stevens Institute of Technology in the fall.

Corporate relations are poised to expand significantly through deepening partnerships with industry leaders such as Bristol Myers Squibb, Nokia Bell Labs, Prudential Financial and PSEG, among others. These collaborations enhance our research capabilities while creating valuable opportunities for our students and faculty. Furthermore, we're actively showcasing Stevens' contributions to New Jersey's innovation economy at high-profile events. Notably, Stevens' Provost Jianmin Qu will join Gov. Murphy, members of his cabinet and leadership team and industry leaders like Johnson & Johnson on a trade mission to Canada in early September. Collectively, these efforts reinforce Stevens' position as a key player in the technological advancement and economic growth of the state and region.

As we begin this new academic year, I encourage each of you to engage fully with the Stevens community. Our campus thrives on the open exchange of ideas, respectful debate and the pursuit of knowledge. These principles are not just ideals — they're the foundation of our daily interactions and academic pursuits. The achievements I've shared today reflect our collective commitment to pushing boundaries in technology, research and education. As we move forward, let's continue to foster an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and where we can tackle complex challenges together. I'm excited to see how our community will grow, innovate and make a positive impact in the coming year.

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