



November 7, 2012

To the Stevens Community:

As we are all recovering from what was an unprecedented weather event on our campus, in the City of Hoboken and throughout New Jersey, I wanted to take a few moments to share with you some impressions of the Hurricane Sandy experience and to recognize the enormous efforts of the dedicated team who brought us safely through this ordeal.

There are a number of observations and images that stand out vividly in my mind:

First, our high level of emergency preparedness and the capable and experienced members of the Stevens Emergency Management Team (EMT) gave me a great sense of confidence that Stevens would come through this experience safely.

Second, the enormity, the evolving nature and the dynamic pace of the challenges that presented themselves required that the EMT and other units caring for the health and safety of our students use all their energy, creativity, and perseverance to get through the emergency. And they responded magnificently!

And third, the truly inspirational spirit exhibited by all members of our community—the EMT, the Physical Plant staff, Campus Police, Residence Life, the IT team, Sodexo food services, Student Affairs, the communications group, and the students themselves—made me immensely proud. This event surely brought out the best in us! Stevens demonstrated excellence, innovation, collaboration, and a true sense of community in so many ways and on so many levels during and after Hurricane Sandy.

Our Preparations

The first email scheduling a meeting of the EMT was sent on Thursday, Oct. 25th, when weather forecasts predicted a storm with potentially severe impacts for the New York City metropolitan area. On Friday, Oct. 26th, the first meeting of the extended EMT was held to plan our response. At that time, it was determined that, due to the timing of the storm, Stevens would be closed on Monday, Oct. 29th. Emails then went out to faculty, staff, and students, advising them of the closing and alerting them to check the Stevens web site and email to ensure they

were registered to receive text updates for the latest developments and instructions. Emails were also sent to parents alerting them of the weather threat, the closing, and how to stay apprised of campus announcements.

The probability of flooding in the River Street parking lot and the Griffith (Physical Plant) building was a significant concern; therefore, the River lot was closed on Saturday, Oct. 27th and all equipment stored there was moved to higher ground. Students living in leased Hoboken housing were given the opportunity to relocate to campus for the duration of the storm. The EMT officially opened the Command Center at noon on Sunday, Oct. 28th. This facility, located in the Schaefer Athletic Center conference room, would be staffed 24/7 to be the clearinghouse for up-to-the-minute information on all aspects of the emergency. Chief Griffin was in constant contact with Hoboken's Office of Emergency Management for the latest developments affecting our campus.

Power and the IT infrastructure were also concerns. We determined that IT had sufficient back up power to keep the email and web servers functioning for the duration of the storm. We had anticipated the possibility of losing power and arranged for two emergency generators to power the Command Center and the Howe Center to enable food preparation.

We knew that if Stevens experienced a loss of power, backup power would be mostly limited to emergency lighting. In anticipation of moving off-campus students to campus, we installed a tarp on the floor in Walker Gym on Monday morning and moved mattresses there.

A white board in the Command Center listed a roster of all buildings where Stevens students were housed, the number of students living there, and the status of the building. This board was a vital tool throughout the week and would be the source of constant updates on the status of all buildings and students. The extended team was in close contact with the RAs in the buildings, the students, their friends, and their parents. Within the Command Center, there was a non-emergency phone number that had been circulated and which could be used 24/7 to get in touch with the EMT.

Sodexo, the food service vendor, was well supplied and arrangements were made for the EMT to have access to food at the Command Center while all students, staff, and emergency support team members were invited to eat in the Pierce Dining Hall. This would be the only campus dining facility in operation during the storm.

Landfall

On Monday, the winds intensified throughout the day, and we learned that the storm was expected to make landfall at the Jersey Shore around 8 pm. We knew that high tide and wind conditions would make the New York Harbor very vulnerable. Until then, we had taken all necessary precautions. The Residence Life

team reached out to understand exactly where each and every student was, both those in on-campus housing as well as those in leased units throughout Hoboken. We alerted them about the precautions and communications measures in place, and we asked them to stay tuned.

The Pierce Dining Hall was closed at 2 p.m. on Monday and “to go” meals were provided. The first “shelter in place” alert was issued, directing all students and others to remain inside their buildings, at 5 pm on Monday.

At about 8 pm, Provost George Korfiatis, Dean Michael Bruno and I rode in a campus police car with Chief Griffin and took a tour of the City of Hoboken. This was one of the most memorable experiences for me. We were on Sinatra Drive when the surge of water from the Hudson engulfed Sinatra Drive. We saw and heard the force of the wind as it lifted a huge construction trailer off its base and banged it into the adjacent trailer. There was water pouring into the city from all corners...Sinatra Drive, 14th Street, and throughout the eastern side of town. We knew then that something bad was going to happen. We returned to campus with a sense of dread.

In Hoxie House, the wind pounded the windows of our family room so hard that I was sure they would blow out. I told my wife, Hoveida, that it was not safe to remain in the family room and urged her to go to another part of the house. Water came in all areas of Hoxie House, the fence behind the house collapsed, and many heavy slate shingles blew off the roof.

Soon after the wind intensity increased, we lost power at about 9:30 pm.

Although the storm raged outside, there was not much we could do but wait it out. We slept until the morning, when the wind finally subsided slightly at about 6:00 am. On Tuesday morning when I went out to walk our dog, Martini, I saw that a huge tree had uprooted. I later learned that there were branches, limbs, and debris all over campus. There was damage to roofs and to solar panels, there were water leaks in some buildings, there were a couple of windows blown out in the Morton building. The Griffith building, nearest the Hudson, was standing in a few feet of water. The majority of the campus had no power, and heat and hot water were fading fast.

The Impact

The first day our IT infrastructure went down briefly. This could have been disastrous, as our web site and email communications were our primary means of getting updates out to our community. During the outage our communications team used social media sites and our electronic newsletter to parents to push out updates. Immediately, our IT group got to work and within a few hours our system was restored and the team kept it going throughout the emergency.

From Tuesday until Saturday, the EMT held three meetings in the Command Center

each day.

The generator that was supposed to power the Howe Center was not working, which meant that there was no power, no lighting, and no water in the Howe Center and therefore, no food could be prepared. Also, the bathrooms could not be used. In order to provide water for meal preparation, Campus Police, Residence Life staff, student volunteers, and Sodexo staff scavenged through the upper and lower floors of the Howe Center to locate containers of bottled water for the kitchen. We soon realized this was not a sustainable situation.

A generator was located to replace the one that was not functioning to power the Howe Center. It provided enough electricity to pump water to the top of the building and to supply power to freezers and refrigerators. However, there was not enough power for lighting, so the chefs and kitchen staff had to work in the dark. We obviously needed more power.

In the meantime, the temperature was dropping and we were all getting very cold. Being unable to take a shower for a long period of time proved to be very unpleasant. We were constantly trying to come up with solutions to these problems. We were trying to find large and small generators from anywhere we could. We needed only a little electricity to ignite the pilot light for the gas water heaters. Through some inventive problem-solving, our team found a solution to provide hot water to all campus residence halls.

We were in constant communication with all off-campus students. At one point, we lost contact with three of the buildings where students were living in Hoboken. Provost Korfiatis, Chief Griffin, Captain Maggi and I drove to the buildings but, because of the flooding, we were unable to get close enough to make contact. As the Provost prepared to “borrow” a boat from the Davidson Laboratory to make our way to the inaccessible buildings, we learned that the students had exited through the back of the building and were safe in Jersey City. With the help of the RAs, we were finally able to re-establish contact with all three buildings and ascertained that our students were cold, but safe.

The streets of Hoboken were an amazing sight. In some places, the water was chest-high. Several cars were left abandoned floating in water in the middle of the street.

The Edwin A. Stevens building never lost power. The building was staffed continuously to care for the students. They could go there during the day to power up their devices and get warm, and in the evening, for entertainment: a talent show, an “open mic” night, game show night, etc. We also had Halloween Trick-or-Treating on campus. In addition to these organized activities, students found new ways to be productive: a new running club, yoga classes, tutoring sessions on differential equations, volunteering in Hoboken, and much more.

By Thursday, we heard of another storm forecast to hit the following week. We

decided we must assume the worst and prepare for the worst case scenario—colder temperatures, possibly a snowstorm, and continued power outages. Our strategy became to minimize the number of students we would have to care for on campus. Once again, we made an appeal for students to go home if they could safely do so. We also did everything we could to find additional generators, since we might need to sleep several hundred students in a building on campus.

Two large generators were located in Virginia and they were shipped to campus within a day. Once they were hooked up, our plan was to provide heat to Hayden, Davis, and Canavan Arena. And we did it! We were planning to bring in cots and mattresses into the buildings if needed.

During all this time, our researchers at the Center for Maritime Systems were braving the elements to contribute to the media's coverage of Hurricane Sandy's impacts. Among the more than 60 media placements that resulted were: The Weather Channel, Popular Science, Good Morning America, Fox and Friends, 20/20, Anderson Cooper/CNN, The New York Times, and many more.

At a little before 3 pm on Saturday afternoon, power was restored to the campus and many of us breathed a huge sigh of relief. However, there were still more than 250 students in 10 buildings in Hoboken without power. By Monday morning, all but one of those buildings had been restored, and by Tuesday morning, Nov. 6th, a week and a day after the storm hit Hoboken, all students living in on-campus and leased housing had power.

Upon Reflection

On Monday, Nov. 5th offices opened and today, Wednesday, Nov. 7th, our classes resumed. While there remain some serious infrastructure and transportation problems in Hoboken and throughout the state, we are anxious to return to normal business operations. We have adjusted the academic calendar to make up the lost time without compromising the quality or quantity of the instruction or curricular content. We have heard positive feedback from many members of the extended Stevens family, students, alumni, faculty and staff, parents, Trustees, and friends, about the way in which Stevens handled this situation.

I must say this was a remarkable experience for me, a relatively new member of the Stevens community. I could not have been more impressed with the dedication, the solution-oriented focus, and the tireless effort of our EMT, and our key units responsible for restoring our infrastructure, our RAs, our student affairs team, IT, communications, and the many members of the community who played a large and small role in getting us through this potentially disastrous incident. The leadership and wisdom exhibited by Provost Korfiatis, AVP Joe Stahley who co-chaired the EMT, Chief Tim Griffin, VP Hank Dobbelaar and Norm Forster, Deans Trina Ballantyne and Ken Nilsen, Shane Topping, VP David Dodd and the IT group, the communications team, and all the members of the extended network that space does not allow me to mention by name, proved that Stevens is already living up to many

of the strategic priorities we have set for ourselves in the Strategic Plan.

Our commitment to *Student Centricity* was palpable. In fact, what brought the team together and what drove every decision was the safety and welfare of our students. Because of this guiding principle, there was never any dispute, controversy, or question about any of our decisions.

We surely exhibited the standard, *Through Collaboration, Impact*. Our team effort was nearly flawless. And because of that, we came through a potentially very dangerous situation stronger for the experience.

And while we will surely learn from this experience and do better if another emergency presents itself, I can honestly say we demonstrated our commitment to *Excellence in All We Do*.

You may be interested in a snapshot of our activity during the emergency:

Since the first conversations among the Stevens Emergency Management Team occurred on Oct. 25th to marshal our resources and plan for the crisis, to today, when classes have resumed, our university has:

- Provided more than 3,000 meals each day to almost 1,000 students, staff, and volunteers, sometimes without light or power in the dining halls
- Provided 500 blankets to students in on-campus housing and Stevens leased housing
- Kept the IT infrastructure running, allowing constant communication with students both on- and off-campus, parents, prospective students, and others
- Enlisted staff working in remote locations to issue more than 60 critical stakeholder communications about safety precautions, meal availability, power updates, shower availability, social programming, where to charge up and get warm, assurances to parents, and volunteer opportunities via our web site, email, text, social media, and Twitter.
- Engineered creative solutions to provide hot water and heat to dorms and buildings in order to provide comfort to our students.
- Logged more than 2,000 volunteer hours by more than 300 students to assist the City of Hoboken, by delivering water to residents of high rise buildings, supervising and cooking meals for city shelters, organizing and staffing a City command center, sorting/organizing donations, working alongside the National Guard to rescue stranded citizens, checking in on elderly residents, providing the City with an audio system so they could hold town hall

meetings, serving as members of the Hoboken Volunteer Ambulance Corps, and much more.

- At the request of the City of Hoboken, we provided an emergency center in Walker gym to triage 250 people for the Hoboken Ambulance Corps and 20 additional paramedic units from three other states. This occurred when all roads out of the City were flooded and Hoboken University Medical Center was evacuated. We also provided food and medical supplies to the volunteers.
- Conducted more than 15 media interviews resulting in more than 30 media placements on various storm-related issues, including storm surge forecasts to technologies to mitigate the impact of future events.
- Entertained ourselves with everything from trick-or-treating on campus to “open mic night” to game show night.

In addition, we’ve continued to work on proposals in order to meet deadlines, communicated with prospective students and guidance counselors to reschedule appointments and extend deadlines, ensured end-of-the-month payroll and issued electronic payments to critical vendors, and played competitively to win a number of important athletic events.

Despite the significant interruption Hurricane Sandy had on our athletic teams, they all performed extremely well in post-season competition last weekend. The men’s soccer team won its sixth consecutive Empire 8 Conference Championship and has advanced to the NCAA Tournament for the tenth straight year. The women’s volleyball and field hockey teams both reached the conference finals and the women’s soccer team finished as a semi-finalist in the Empire 8 Conference.

I cannot express how proud I am of our students and our staff who have lived up to one of my favorite Winston Churchill quotes: “It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we must do what is required.” All students and staff have been positive, upbeat, selfless, and creative in meeting the challenges we have faced.

For more information and details about the Hurricane Sandy event and her impact on our campus, please visit <http://www.stevens.edu/sandy>.

Per Aspera Ad Astra,



Nariman Farvardin
President