



STEVENS
INSTITUTE of TECHNOLOGY
THE INNOVATION UNIVERSITY

President Nariman Farvardin
Orientation Remarks 2015
August 26, 2015

Members of the Class of 2019: At the beginning of each Fall semester, I have the privilege of standing before you, our newest students, as you embark on one of the most exciting journeys of your lifetime. I am delighted to join Vice President Murphy in welcoming you to Stevens Institute of Technology. I look forward to getting to know you in the next four years as our students, and for decades thereafter as our alumni. Today marks the beginning of a life-long relationship.

Four years ago, I, too, was in your shoes when I joined this university as its seventh president. I will never forget the striking qualities of this community that so compelled me to become a part of it: the palpable energy and excitement of students and faculty; the incredibly rich and storied history of Stevens' founding family -- America's First Family of Inventors; the impressive work of our researchers on extending the frontiers of technology; and still, the vast potential for what this university could grow to become in the future. When I became president of Stevens, I set out with a challenge to myself and to the entire university community to propel Stevens forward to even higher levels of distinction and prominence.

Although four years have passed since then, I still find that each day I am impressed and inspired by the accomplishments, contributions, and ingenuity of our students, faculty, and alumni, both locally and around the world. It is with pride that we can look back at the momentum we've built at Stevens over the last few years, and with promise that we can look forward to what's to come in the future. You see, Stevens is known as the Innovation University. As innovators, we must open ourselves up to new perspectives and ideas, celebrate differences, invite change and encourage creativity, all while constantly asking ourselves how we can improve.

As you officially join Stevens Institute of Technology as freshman, I pass this challenge on to you. You are the future of this university. You have the power to shape it, just as your experiences here will shape you. So I ask you: What will you do during your time at Stevens? How will you grow into the person you will be 4 years from now? How will you improve?

This is a big challenge, so a bit of advice: There are no right or wrong answers to that question. What you will come to learn at Stevens—whether you study engineering, science, business or the humanities—and as you mature into adults, is that rarely is there ever a right or wrong answer. What will guide you instead, and what is critical in shaping the person you become, are the choices you will make: which classes you take; how much (or how little) you study; when you decide to say no and when you decide to say yes; which athletic teams or student organizations you join; which nights you spend exploring Hoboken or New York City and which nights you spend at your dorm getting to know your hallmates. I will tell you that so far, the choice you made to come to Stevens was a very, very good one.

Your undergraduate years here will be some of the most formative and memorable years of your life. You will make new friends, pursue new interests, and discover new places and passions. You'll learn how to make mistakes and learn from them, how to think critically, how to exercise good judgement, how to lead, and how to become active and contributing members of society. Indeed, your choices are the compass that will guide your future. They will open a world of doors for you, and lead the way for those who come after you, just as a number of people at Stevens before you have paved the paths that you now follow.

Let me say a few words about the founders and alumni of this university. Colonel John Stevens III, the patriarch of the Stevens family, our university's founding family and America's First Family of Inventors, made numerous significant technological advancements which led to successful commercial enterprises of the era, including operation of steam-powered ferryboat service between Hoboken and Manhattan; the design and construction of ironclad vessels for the U.S. Navy; the first steamboat to sail ocean waters; invention of the T-rail, on which all modern trains still run; and operation of the United States' first commercially successful railroad.

It was his son, Edwin A. Stevens whose 1868 bequest provided the resources to establish Stevens Institute of Technology in 1870 as America's first college of mechanical engineering. Today, of course, Stevens offers much more than mechanical engineering—with noteworthy programs in Quantitative Finance, Music and Technology, Cybersecurity, and other disciplines that did not exist in Edwin Stevens' time.

Stevens alumni through the years have advanced this legacy, demonstrating through their achievements how a passion for discovery, invention and entrepreneurship can drive innovations that meaningfully impact our lives:

Who has not opened a package to find sheets of Bubble Wrap, and enjoyed bursting those bubbles of sealed air? It was alumnus Alfred Fielding, Class of 1939 who co-invented Bubble Wrap in the late 1950s.

If you have ever watched online episodes of HBO shows like True Blood or Boardwalk Empire, it is because of Class of 2000 alumna Julia Musailova's innovations. She spearheaded the development of HBO GO, the streaming website and app that provides access to all television and movies shown on the network.

Organizations as diverse as Fandango, Overstock.com, GameFly and the U.S. Department of Education have benefited from a customer relationship management technology developed by Class of 1983 alumnus Greg Gianforte.

Among our famous alumni, we also count Alexander Calder, Class of 1919, creator of the art form known as the mobile, whose work hangs in many famous galleries including the Whitney and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well galleries in Washington DC, Paris, and Madrid. Other distinguished alumni include Aaron Cohen, MS '58, the director of NASA from 1986 to

1993; Leon Febres Cordero, ME '53, former president of Ecuador; John McLean, Class of 1960, developer of the corneal transplant and founder of the Eye Bank for Sight Restoration; Larry Babbio '66 retired vice chairman and president of Verizon Communications, and Virginia Ruesterholz, '86, until recently executive vice president of Verizon Telecom.

As you can see, Stevens alumni have made an impact on the world in fields as diverse as medicine, telecommunications, international politics, art, and, of course engineering and technology.

Today, you inherit of this 145 year-old legacy of innovation and forward-thinking, of challenging convention, and of changing the world as we know it. Your responsibility over these next four years is to carry this legacy forward as you make your mark on the world, so keep this in mind: Question what you think you know. Step out of your comfort zone. Pursue the unconventional and engage with the unexpected. As you will hear increasingly over the next few years, the future is yours to create. This is your opportunity to explore the endless possibilities that await you.

As my concluding words, let me leave you with this: In your years at Stevens, work diligently, think deeply, act ethically, fight fairly, forgive quickly, laugh loudly, love deeply, and always plant more flowers than you pick.

Get ready for the ride of your life.