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To Stevens Faculty and Staff Members:

Many of you were on site at last week's Commencement exercises and witnessed the chaotic events that took place at the Schaefer School of Engineering and Science and School of Systems and Enterprises name-reading ceremonies at Newark Symphony Hall. Since Wednesday evening, we have received complaints from graduates and their families and have sent a number of communications beginning on the evening of Commencement to graduates and parents to apologize for the failures that led to such poor execution; to explain what we know so far; and to notify them of a \$250 Commencement refund to all Class of 2023 graduates.

I would like to take this opportunity to share an update and next steps with Stevens colleagues.

As you may know, the morning university-wide ceremony at the Prudential Center encountered a number of delays which extended the program, leaving graduates and families confused about the timeline for afternoon ceremonies and resulting in graduates and families leaving the morning ceremony before its conclusion. While the name reading ceremonies of the School of Business and the College of Arts and Letters were slightly delayed, they occurred largely as planned. However, the ceremonies for the School of Engineering and Science and the School of Systems and Enterprises at Newark Symphony Hall were disrupted in numerous ways, largely due to crowd size and related issues. There were a number of circumstances that contributed to this failure:

1. The ticket scanning system malfunctioned, and electronic ticket scanners were rendered useless; volunteers checking tickets were not equipped to discern valid tickets and many guests were allowed entry who were supposed to attend the later ceremony.
2. Approximately 800 more tickets were secured for Newark Symphony Hall beyond the number authorized by Stevens. At this time, we are unsure how this happened and are investigating this matter with the vendor.
3. Some guests assigned to the 3:30 pm ceremony joined the 1:00 pm ceremony.

The combination of these failures required many on-the-spot logistical, crowd control and fire safety decisions. I applaud the work of the Deans and on-site staff who tried to manage these



issues in the moment; however, they were unable to overcome the cascade of problems. A decision was made to move the graduates outside until they walked across the stage to allow families to sit and watch the ceremonies. However, graduates felt disrespected, and many families were still unable to enter the building to see their graduates receive their diplomas, causing frustration and disappointment.

These problems clearly demonstrate a failure of planning on the part of our events staff, and a review of Commencement is already underway. Furthermore, we will conduct a full, formal investigation of the events that occurred, share our findings and seek community engagement in a new Commencement committee comprised of key stakeholder groups to plan Commencement 2024. We will take all appropriate measures to make sure that future Commencement ceremonies are conducted in a manner consistent with Stevens' standards of excellence and the expectations of our graduates and their families. In the short term, as you have seen from the university-wide email from Vice President Sara Klein, the Executive Director of University Events is no longer with Stevens as of Friday, May 26.

While we cannot make up for the irreplaceable moments that our graduates and their families missed, we hope that they will accept our acknowledgement of our mistakes and our promise to do better. I, personally, have been extremely disheartened that this community-wide celebration of our graduates—with so many faculty and staff in attendance—turned out so badly. I know we will do better in the future, and I will rely on each of you to help rebuild our relationships with our newest alumni and their families.

Should you wish to offer suggestions or have additional questions, please email graduation@stevens.edu.

I wish everyone a restful Memorial Day.

Nariman Farvardin
President