



June 11, 2020

To the Stevens Community:

As our university community transitions from a spring semester marked by extreme disruption due to the coronavirus pandemic and, in recent weeks, by widespread social unrest and protests in the wake of George Floyd's tragic death, I write to convey a measure of confidence about the Fall 2020 semester. This has been among the most difficult and challenging periods in recent memory, and I am hopeful that our university community will continue to pull together as we plan to return for the 2020-21 academic year. Our plans include many complementary and layered efforts to support the goal of a healthy and flexible campus; each member of our community must work individually and together for us to be successful.

As you have likely seen in the news, earlier this week Governor Murphy lifted the stay-at-home order and has recently loosened restrictions for a variety of sectors and for additional in-person gatherings. In anticipation of guidance from the State of New Jersey for institutions of higher education, expected soon, our leadership team has been preparing for an *in-person, reduced density university environment this fall*, including classroom-based teaching and learning combined with hybrid/online learning options; residential living and student activities; and a return to most campus-based business operations.

It is clear from our new and returning students and other stakeholders that there is a strong desire to return to campus in the fall. Our plans have been developed with the dual goals of: (i) supporting a safe and healthy campus environment for our community and, (ii) seeking to provide the best education and living experience possible for our students under these most challenging circumstances. In the coming days, feedback sessions with the Faculty Senate, the Academic Council, and senior administrative leadership are scheduled in advance of several town hall sessions starting July 8th for all faculty, staff, and students. Campus announcements and invitations will be sent separately for these meetings.

Underlying our plans is a science-based approach to mitigation of infection that utilizes available medical and epidemiological evidence and best practices, along with a commitment to actively promote a culture of personal and shared responsibility to safeguard the health of our community. While we plan to return to the business of our university in a more traditional sense this fall, next semester will not be "business as usual." We are putting in place many new measures aimed at protecting the health and safety of our community, and these efforts will require the conscientious and diligent cooperation of each and every one among us. Although not every aspect of our planning has been completed, the framework of our return-to-campus plan is in place and is outlined below:

“Soft Opening” and Limited Return of Employees Starting This Summer

To prepare for the return of our students this fall, we are planning a “soft opening” this summer starting in a few weeks, subject to guidance from the State of New Jersey, and we will gradually increase the number of employees on campus by the fall semester. The Provost and each Vice President will consult with colleagues in their respective divisions to formulate these phased plans with the goal of continuing to meet our critical commitments to our students and to our research programs, while allowing some amount of flexibility to faculty and staff. In accordance with guidance from the State of New Jersey and health officials, we are planning for a small percentage of employees to be on campus in the early stages, with additional employees returning in the following weeks. Our plan is to continue to conduct the business of the university while reducing the overall density of our population in the fall. As described in my [message of May 6th](#), this plan will provide at least two weeks for colleagues to make appropriate transition plans before being called back to campus-based work.

The key elements of our Fall 2020 *in-person, reduced density campus environment* are described below. These measures have been developed with the goal of reducing transmission of the coronavirus in our community. With evolving guidance and continued input from our university community, we will refine these plans to be ready to welcome students and colleagues back to campus in the fall and to make appropriate adjustments as health conditions warrant.

Self-Monitoring, Testing, Contact Tracing, and Isolation

As members of the Stevens community, each of us has a responsibility to regularly and diligently self-monitor to minimize opportunities to expose others to infection. Beyond self-monitoring, Stevens expects to implement testing and contact tracing protocols as part of our COVID-19 mitigation efforts, with specific testing regimens that follow relevant guidance and which are developed in consultation with health experts. We are exploring options for partnering with an external organization to make COVID-19 testing available on or near our campus and also are in contact with the City of Hoboken, which is offering COVID-19 and antibody testing for employees of Hoboken-based businesses. Additionally, we are exploring a partnership with Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, our health care partner, to expand choices for faculty and staff to obtain healthcare, testing, and mental health services in Hoboken.

Provision and Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Use of face masks and frequent hand-washing are among the most effective mitigation measures to reduce transmission of the coronavirus. As a reminder to continue healthy practices while on campus and to supplement individuals’ personal protective equipment, all faculty, staff, and students will receive a “Welcome Back” bag containing a digital thermometer, two reusable cloth face masks, two disposable face masks, two pairs of disposable gloves, an ID lanyard, hand sanitizer, and a reminder card outlining safe practices.

Reduced Density/Physical Barriers/Directional Signage

In addition to the phased plan for employees’ return to campus and a reduced-density environment in the fall, we plan to follow any new guidance from the State of New Jersey and limit occupancy to allow for social distancing and use of face masks in classrooms and other gathering spaces. We will also require that all organized formal meetings and gatherings held on behalf of Stevens have options for virtual participation. Over the summer, we will install

directional signage in high traffic areas and stairways, floor markers, and acrylic barriers throughout campus to guide social distancing.

Increased Sanitation and Hygiene

We have instructed cleaning crews to use an FDA-approved, hospital-grade disinfectant to clean all common areas, laboratories, classrooms, and lecture spaces at least twice per day and overnight, including in residence halls and restrooms. In addition, sanitizing wipes will be provided in high-touch areas for general use.

Transportation/Parking

New Jersey Transit and other forms of public transportation are ramping up sanitation and social distancing protocols in anticipation of employees returning to work. As an additional option during the fall semester, Stevens will offer increased flexibility for on campus parking and will provide a daily parking option for employees and students who are on campus only part-time.

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We recognize that our new and returning students are intensely interested in the learning and living environment they will experience in the fall. Preliminary plans for instruction, residence halls, and additional health and mental health services, are described below:

In-Class Instruction with Online Options; Technology Enhancements

Our current plans anticipate that most regular undergraduate and graduate courses can be offered as hybrid classes, that is, with instructors and students in a socially-distanced classroom and with flexibility for students to participate synchronously online. Classes will also be recorded for viewing later. *StevensOnline* courses will continue to be offered online only. We have been making additional investments in classroom technology—both hardware and software—that will provide the ability to enhance instructional activities regardless of modality. Provost Pierre will provide additional details as plans are refined.

Residence Halls

Stevens is also preparing for students' return to campus residence halls. First-year students are currently in the process of selecting housing and roommates, and we expect to receive guidance from the State of New Jersey regarding on-campus housing, including multiple occupancy rooms, for students who wish to live in campus or leased housing. We are preparing to implement augmented cleaning and sanitation regimens in residence halls, shared hall bathrooms, and common areas to support the health and safety of our community.

Health Services and Mental Health Services for Students

We will substantially augment health care for students by providing access to health professionals 24x7 via extended hours and overnight telemedicine services, and we will also increase mental health support for students during these next phases of the pandemic.

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While this memorandum is not an exhaustive description of our planning efforts, I am hopeful that it provides all members of our community with assurance that Stevens is aggressively pursuing a comprehensive, consultative, and inclusive approach to re-opening our campus. This plan offers flexibility and, in turn, asks for the cooperation of our faculty and staff to return to campus, to serve our students, to fulfill the university's mission, and continue to maintain core business operations. It is guided by recommendations from respected national organizations such as the [American College Health Association](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and the [New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education](#), among others. Going forward, our actions will be subject to guidance from New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and coordinated, where appropriate, with the City of Hoboken.

Also, on July 8th a new website, *Stronger. Safer. Stevens.*, will be launched and will serve as a repository for our return-to-campus plans. We will also launch a communications campaign with the same theme to remind all members of our community of our shared responsibility to promote a healthy campus environment.

In closing, I want to emphasize to the entire Stevens community that this period of the coronavirus pandemic has been and remains both a challenge and an opportunity for Stevens. I have every confidence that Stevens will meet the significant near-term challenges and emerge a stronger university that continues to deliver outstanding outcomes for our students, that creates the talent pool that will contribute to restarting our State's and nation's economy, and that will develop solutions to our world's most urgent and vexing challenges.

Please continue to stay safe, stay healthy, and stay in touch with me at president@stevens.edu.

Per aspera ad astra,


Nariman Farvardin
President