

Response to The Stute 6.18.21

It is appropriate to look to the Stevens Gift Acceptance Policy as the university addresses this important issue. This Policy covers numerous matters relating to Stevens' philanthropic efforts and its relationships with its donors. As is the case for most non-profit organizations, philanthropy is critically important to Stevens. In fact, the university is close to completing an ambitious \$200 million campaign that supports student scholarships, faculty excellence, and world-class academic and student life facilities, among other university priorities. Organizations that accept philanthropic support are obligated to effectively steward donor gifts, honor donors' intent specifically related to their gift, and ensure respectful and consistent treatment of each donor.

An important part of the Stevens Gift Acceptance Policy is the "Donor Bill of Rights" which provides donors with the right "to be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given" and "to receive appropriate acknowledgment and recognition." The Donor Bill of Rights is a set of practices created by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, and the Giving Institute to ensure trust in philanthropy and confidence in nonprofit organizations among the public. It has been adopted by hundreds of organizations nationwide.

Legal agreements with donors frequently have associated naming requirements. This is the case with the Gianforte gift.

More information about the Stevens Gift Acceptance Policy is delineated below.

This Policy gives special attention to naming gifts given the significance of affixing a person's or company's name to a university facility or program. The Policy also contemplates that a named facility or program may be renamed under certain carefully delineated circumstances. The Policy states that a threshold issue must be met before renaming will be considered:

In the event that a significant negative change in circumstances relating to the donor or the name affixed to a Stevens building, facility, program, or asset occurs, Stevens reserves the right to consider whether removal of the name would be in the best interests of Stevens.

In 2017, the Stevens Board of Trustees considered the possible renaming of the complex now known as the Gateway Academic Center and the northern building known as Gianforte Family Hall. At that time, Stevens commissioned a [committee](#) consisting of students, faculty, alumni, and staff, as well as a retired Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, who served as an independent arbitrator, to consider the issue of renaming. This committee met over the course of three months, collected a great deal of input from the university community and other sources, and issued a [unanimous recommendation](#). The committee took the charges against Mr. Gianforte very seriously. After much deliberation, the committee recommended that the

university consider the entirety of Mr. Gianforte’s and his family’ impact on Stevens as an institution. In articulating its position, the committee focused on the family’s role as engineers, technologists, and successful entrepreneurs and as generous and involved alumni and friends of Stevens. Accordingly, the committee recommended the name be modified to Gianforte Family Hall to recognize Mr. Gianforte, his wife (an engineer and partner in their business activities), and his father (an engineer and a Stevens alumnus). The linked documents provide background of the committee’s work and the decision ultimately made by the Board.

The Stevens Gift Acceptance Policy specifies that a further review of the naming of the building would be supported only if a “significant negative change” had occurred in the “circumstances related to the Donor or the name affixed to [the] building.” Since the renaming of the building occurred in 2017, Mr. Gianforte has gone on to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, serve in Congress, and successfully run for and be elected Governor of the State of Montana. His actions as an elected official have occurred within the United States’ democratic process: this process encompasses voters who elect legislators who, in turn, formulate and pass legislation that may ultimately be signed into law by an elected member of the executive branch. The outcome of the recent democratic, legislative process in Montana—with which some members of our community disagree—is not considered to be a “significant negative change” *that is linked to the Gianforte gift to the Gateway Academic Center.*

The Stevens Policy makes clear that no gift can involve Stevens in or cause Stevens to engage in discrimination in violation of Stevens’ policies or applicable law. The [university’s nondiscrimination policy](#) reflects this core value of Stevens. There is nothing related to the Gianforte gift that requires or even suggests that Stevens take any discriminatory action. It is important to state that Stevens would never agree to such a requirement.

It is evident that some members of the Stevens community disagree with Mr. Gianforte’s views and the laws recently enacted in Montana. The extended Stevens community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends is large and diverse and includes those who hold a range of views, including those who are LGBTQ and allies, those who hold conservative beliefs, and many others.

As a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization designated by the IRS, Stevens is prohibited from subscribing to or endorsing any partisan political position at the federal, local, or state level, whether in New Jersey or another state. The university’s obligation is to pursue its mission, which is focused on education and research, and to promote values of academic freedom.

Stevens unequivocally supports all members of its community in expressing themselves and seeking greater equality and inclusion within our community and more broadly throughout our country.

The gift in the name of the Gianforte Family has contributed to the creation of world-class academic and research facilities that will significantly benefit Stevens students and faculty in the years and decades ahead. The name of the north building of the Gateway Academic Center

received extensive attention and discussion in 2017. Therefore, and for the reasons delineated above, there is no indication that it will be revisited.