

# Dartmouth



# Stanford

October 28, 2014

## An open letter to the voters and citizens of Montana

On behalf of Stanford and Dartmouth universities, we sincerely apologize for the confusion and concern caused by an election mailer recently sent as part of an academic research study. It should have been much more clearly presented as the research tool it was intended to be, leaving no ambiguity about its purpose or origin. We recognize that the purpose of elections is to enable our democratic systems to operate, and that no research study should risk disrupting an election. **We genuinely regret that it was sent and we ask Montana voters to ignore the mailer.**

The informational mailer was part of an independent study by political science professors to determine whether voters who are given more information are more likely to vote. The mailer was not affiliated with any political party, candidate or organization, and was not intended to influence any race. The mailer was in no way affiliated with or approved by the State of Montana, and we are very sorry that it created the impression that it was.

The mailer included a graph that ranked judicial candidates in a nonpartisan race on a scale from liberal to conservative. That ranking was not based on the candidates' decisions or public positions, instead it relied upon public information about who had donated to each of the campaigns. Unfortunately, even though the mailer contained a statement that it "is non-partisan and does not endorse any candidate or party," many people felt that the graph appeared to create a partisan alignment of the candidates. That was certainly not the intent.

Both of our campuses are investigating all aspects of the matter, including whether Stanford and Dartmouth research rules and standards have been appropriately followed. We are also fully cooperating with the inquiry being undertaken by election officials in the State of Montana. We do know that the research proposal was not submitted to Stanford's Institutional Review Board for approval, which is a clear violation of university policy.

We are sorry that this mailer has been disconcerting and disruptive to many Montanans. We take very seriously our responsibility to conduct research and provide education that contributes to, but does not hinder, an informed citizenry.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Philip Hanlon in cursive.

Philip Hanlon  
President  
Dartmouth College

Handwritten signature of John Hennessy in cursive.

John Hennessy  
President  
Stanford University

cc: Linda McCulloch, Montana Secretary of State  
Jonathan Motl, Montana Commissioner of Political Practices