

Donald P. Gaver, Jr. Early Career Award for Excellence in Operations Research

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the committee for this recognition, and to the Gaver family for their generous gift. Professor Gaver’s career is a testament to the power of operations research—in all its breadth and diversity—to address societal challenges. It is a privilege to receive an award that honors his lifelong dedication to the field and to his students.

I remember getting into graduate school with no idea of how to make a difference. One of the most momentous days of my life is when Amedeo Odoni opened his door. I soon found myself working at the intersection of optimization, queuing and transportation, three themes dear to Professor Gaver. Together with Cindy Barnhart, Amedeo taught me to pursue rigorous scholarship, but also to make a difference through good scholarship. Most importantly, they taught me—by example—how to be kind, supportive and principled. I owe them a debt of gratitude beyond words.

Ever since, I have developed a passion for problem-driven research, which has fueled explorations across diverse application domains and diverse methodological areas to find the “right hammer” for each nail. At a time when our field is being transformed by data, computing, and artificial intelligence, I am more excited than ever about opportunities to develop new optimization methodologies to address pressing real-world problems toward social good.

I want to thank my many mentors at Carnegie Mellon, MIT, and across INFORMS. I am particularly grateful to my nominators Rob Freund and Dimitris Bertsimas. Rob, thanks for your leadership and guidance. Dimitris, thank you for your mentorship through the years; I have learned so much from you on the methodological side, the practical side, the leadership side and the human side.

None of this work would have been possible without my collaborators, and especially my graduate students and postdocs whose energy, intellectual curiosity and drive for impact make every day rewarding. You know how much I owe to you.

Finally, I thank my dad for his support and my mom for creating opportunities. Above all, I want to thank my wife, Claire. Research and education are demanding, both in and outside the office, and I am blessed with your love and support. This prize is yours as much as mine.