University Council  
September 20, 2006  

Botswana initiatives

2006-2007 promises to be a landmark year for Penn’s many global initiatives. Let me just highlight a couple.

I have recently returned from Botswana as part of a Penn delegation and am excited to report to you the promising initiatives that have emerged from that trip.

The School of Medicine has been on the ground in Botswana for the past five years, through a partnership with Merck. Harvey Friedman and Steven Gluckman have led this initiative. Over the past five years, we have sent several faculty members and over 60 medical students. Through our work there, Penn has made real contributions not only to the delivery of patient care but also to the culture of the hospital. We are now entering into an agreement with the University of Botswana to participate in the creation of their medical school, and our SOM will be providing graduate training to the medical doctors educated at the University of Botswana.

A second initiative which developed from this trip is a major Interdisciplinary Center on HIV/AIDS. Approximately 30% of Botswana’s population is infected. With an average life expectancy of 38 years, the impact on society is quite simply devastating. Through the work of Jim Hoxie at Penn’s Center for AIDS Research and John Jemmott at the Annenberg School, we are developing an NIH grant with the University of Botswana to establish this new center. Our goal is to enhance our faculty research through this project, engage a number of schools, and involve Penn undergraduate students in internships related to this initiative.

Global Forum

The Provost’s Global Forum, another international initiative, also has an exciting year ahead. On October 16, we will host Wangari Maathai, recipient of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions to environmental conservation, democracy, and peace. Maathai’s Green Belt Movement has helped Kenyan women plant more than 30 million trees in an effort to reclaim farmland and combat deforestation. She was the first East African woman to earn a Ph.D., the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, and the first conservationist to
be recognized by the Swedish Academy. As an academic who has envisioned and advanced real-world change, Maathai is an inspiration to our community. Amy will present her with University Medal for Distinguished Achievement at her keynote lecture.

We are currently scheduling a number of other global leaders for this academic year including: Kishore Mahbubhani, a diplomat for Singapore for 33 years and the current Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore; Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; Louise Arbour, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Stephen Lewis, UN Special Advisor on HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Awards

I am also delighted to announce that Emeritus Psychiatry Professor Aaron Beck has won the 2006 Albert Lasker Clinical Medical Research Award. Winning the Lasker, often known as “America’s Nobel,” is a simply phenomenal achievement for Professor Beck, who continues to serve as the Director of the Center for the Treatment and Prevention of Suicide at Penn as well as President of the Beck Institute for Cognitive Therapy and Research. The founder of cognitive therapy, Professor Beck has served as Principle Investigator on numerous research efforts including Community-Based Cognitive Therapy for Suicide Attempters, Cognitive Therapy for Schizophrenia, and Cognitive Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder. We extend our heartiest congratulations to Professor Beck on receiving this terrific, and well-earned, award.