President’s Status Report to University Council (November, 2007)

We all can take great pride that Penn is among the colleges and universities with the highest number of Fulbright fellowships for 2007/08. 17 Penn students have won these prestigious grants, which support Americans in studying, teaching, and conducting research in more than 150 countries.

Three path-breaking Penn centers have received endowment gifts that will boost Penn’s impact on community education and health. A $10 million dollar naming gift from Edward (C’53) and Barbara Netter will enable our Edward and Barbara Netter Center for Community Partnerships to expand our academically based service-learning programs and support for community schools in West Philadelphia while creating new knowledge that can benefit communities everywhere. A $5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health has established a new interdisciplinary Center for the Integration of Genetic Healthcare Technology to study the certainty or uncertainty of results from genetic testing. NewCourtland Elder Services has made a $5 million endowment gift to the School of Nursing’s Center for Transitions and Health in support of the Center’s work in the emerging field of transitional health. The first center of its kind in the nation, the NewCourtland Center for Transitions and Health will serve as a hub for research, education and policy making related to the needs of those with chronic illnesses such as heart failure, diabetes or depression.

Penn Law professor Stephen Morse and several Penn colleagues are advancing the emerging field of neuroethics by participating in the MacArthur Foundation’s Law and Neuroscience Project. This 3-year initiative is considering how courts should deal with new brain-scanning techniques. Professor Morse, who specializes in criminal and mental health law, is co-leading a group on addiction and antisocial behavior. He is joined by Martha Farah, director of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, PIK professor Adrian Raine, who holds appointments in criminology and psychiatry, Charles O’Brien (psychiatry) and Amy Wax (law.)
Governor Ed Rendell has named Penn Nursing Professor and Assistant Provost Loretta Sweet Jemmott one of seven Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania for 2007. The honor recognizes distinguished leadership and service contributions made by Commonwealth women. Dr. Sweet Jemmott’s research on HIV/AIDS prevention among African American adolescents and her evidence-based, risk-reduction intervention curricula have been disseminated nationwide by the Centers for Disease Control and to countries throughout the world where HIV has reached pandemic levels.

Penn is at the forefront in making robotic technology. “Little Ben,” a fully autonomous car, took 4th place in the 2007 Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Urban Challenge last week. Little Ben is a "souped-up" Toyota Prius that has been engineered to “drive itself” by a team of entrepreneurial faculty and students from Penn and Lehigh. DARPA holds this annual national competition to encourage the development of autonomous robotic ground vehicle technology.

Stacey Lopez will become Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Analysis beginning in December. Stacey is currently the director of IR at Carnegie Mellon University, where she has forged strong partnerships with the schools and administrative divisions with an aim toward presenting clear and accessible data that is useful for analysis and decision-making.