We begin our fourth year under the Penn Compact with great momentum as we welcome a standout cohort of new students, faculty, and academic leaders, mark dramatic progress in campus development, and prepare to launch the largest fundraising campaign in Penn’s history.

Our Class of 2011 is the most selective and diverse class ever, and our faculty keeps growing ever stronger and larger. Our first five Penn Integrates Knowledge professors are having an energizing and integrating impact on teaching and research at Penn, while the overall quality and quantity of faculty ranks continues to rise with the arrival of 100 new distinguished faculty members this fall.

We also are welcoming two fabulous new deans to Penn: We previously announced the appointment of Andrew Porter as the new dean of our Graduate School of Education. Now, the Wharton School begins a new era of global leadership and collaboration with the arrival of Thomas S. Robertson as Dean. I also want to thank Thomas Sollecito for ably stepping in as interim dean of Penn Dental Medicine while Dean Jeffcoat recovers from illness.

Meanwhile, Penn’s community of learning also is expanding globally. Last month, I visited Botswana, where Penn is helping the government and local communities battle the societal consequences of the world’s second highest incidence of HIV/AIDS. Our Botswana-Penn Partnership is improving outcomes while developing training and exchange programs with the University of Botswana. We also are furnishing Penn faculty and students with transformative opportunities for integrated, cross-cultural learning.

Back home in Philadelphia, we opened a new integrated health care and health education clinic at the Sayre School earlier this month. The clinic will enhance our students’ educational experience while making quality health services and education from Penn Medicine, Nursing, and Dental Medicine more readily available to Sayre School children and families in West Philadelphia.

This fall, we launched PennAlert, a new emergency notification system that enables us to provide our students, staff and faculty with an additional layer of
emergency communications security and protection. We also launched a more user-friendly and better integrated website to enhance access to our rich and multifaceted Penn experience.

We have developed plans to build a new $370-million, 10-story medical research tower atop the Roberts Proton Therapy and next to the Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine. When these facilities (totaling more than $800 million) open in the next few years, Penn and Philadelphia will be a translational research and cancer and cardiac care powerhouse.

The Annenberg Public Policy Center’s new home is under construction where the old Hillel House used to stand. Thanks to a $20 million gift from SEAS Overseer and alumnus Krishna P. Singh, we are now fast-forwarding plans to build a new nanoscale science research and teaching facility.

Having completed our historic acquisition of the postal lands and properties, we have leased the Truck Terminal Annex on 30th Street to Brandywine Realty Trust, who will develop an office, retail, and parking complex on the site. The complex will be designed by the architectural firm of Pelli Clarke Pelli and will stimulate economic development while also furnishing Penn with 100,000 square feet of administrative office space.

This fall, we also will begin clearing the parking lot south of Walnut Street to make way for an athletic and recreational park east of Franklin Field that will offer stunning views of the Philadelphia skyline.

We are designing a new bi-level athletic and fitness facility under the north side of the Franklin Field arcade. This facility will mark the first step in transforming our sports complex into Palestra Green, a vibrant open space that will encourage more people to venture eastward across the campus toward the river and Center City (and vice versa).

University-wide fundraising completed another blockbuster year at nearly $450 million in new commitments, the third best year in Penn’s history. Annual giving broke all previous records at $53.4 million, with support for The Penn Fund at more than $24 million.
Our University endowment has grown by 65% over the past three years, from $4 billion on July 1, 2004, to $6.6 billion as of June 30, 2007.

Penn’s outstanding research, teaching, clinical practice and civic engagement, our impressive progress in campus development, and our strong financial performance have set the stage for a landmark fundraising campaign that will propel Penn forward. We have invited our students, faculty, and staff to join us on Saturday, October 20 at 6:00 p.m. on College Green as we celebrate the launch of this historic effort that will enhance our Penn experience and assure Penn’s greatness for the future.