MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council

From: Amy Gutmann, President

Date: September 30, 2009

Subject: Report to the University Council

When threatening weather forced us to move Convocation indoors earlier this month, the Class of 2013 and transfers filled the floor and the stands of the historic Palestra. In true Penn fashion, they made the most of the opportunity: cheering and stomping in the same seats where proud Quakers have sat for generations.

They had good reason to cheer: Penn is better than ever before. At the beginning of our sixth year together under the Penn Compact, we are more diverse; we are more engaged, and we are dramatically improving and expanding our campus.

We have fully implemented our no-loan financial aid plan, which opens doors for talented students from all economic backgrounds. Today, all Penn undergraduates eligible for financial aid are receiving loan-free packages. This is an unprecedented achievement for Penn and momentous step toward fully realizing our Penn Compact goal of increasing access.

This fall, we welcomed new faculty members, including two more Penn Integrates Knowledge professors. Karen Glanz, a globally influential public health scholar, is the Penn Integrates Knowledge University Professor with joint appointments in the School of Medicine and the School of Nursing, and director of a new center focused on research and training in health behaviors. Shelley Berger, a world-renowned genetics researcher, is the Daniel S. Och University Professor with joint appointments in the School of Medicine and the School of Arts and Sciences.

Expanded financial aid for students and support for eminent faculty are just two important examples of the impact of our Making History Campaign. We have raised $2.5 billion – or 72 percent – of our $3.5 billion goal. Our gain in July surpassed those of 31 other American universities seeking to raise at least one billion dollars.

Our alumni, parents, and friends continue to show tremendous support for our highest priorities. Despite challenging economic times, our participation numbers soared last year. More than 90,000 individuals made gifts to the Campaign – a testament to the strength and engagement of our proud Penn family.
Penn’s campus improvements continue apace. This year will mark the completion of four major projects. The new Annenberg Public Policy Center has opened its doors, providing a luminous, centrally located forum for public discourse. The Roberts Proton Therapy Center will bring the most advanced cancer care to Philadelphia and the region. In the spring, we will celebrate the openings of the Weiss Pavilion at Franklin Field and the newly renovated and expanded Music Building. These improvements will provide our campus community with much-needed space for fitness and the arts.

We have begun work on Penn Park, the most visible and transformational campus improvement since Locust Walk. When the project is completed in the spring of 2011, surface parking lots running along the Schuylkill River will be merely a memory. In their place will be 24 beautiful acres of verdant community space featuring four athletics fields, elevated walkways, and bike paths.

Penn Park will increase our campus green space by 20 percent and is just one of the ways in which we are working to improve sustainability at Penn. Two weeks ago, I unveiled Penn’s Climate Action Plan at a very well-attended celebration in Houston Hall. Using the plan as a guide, we will continue to build greener buildings, conserve energy, and minimize waste, while maintaining our standing as a world-class leader in environmentally-minded research and teaching.

When I spoke at the Climate Action Plan celebration, I was excited to see a large and diverse group of Penn staff, faculty, and undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who are doing their part to help protect our precious planet. Ensuring Penn’s sustainability requires from each of us a renewed commitment to stewardship. From drinking out of reusable containers to recycling in the College Houses, we can all take steps every day to make Penn greener.

Last year, our University community focused intently on Penn’s strategic goals to ensure continued progress in the most challenging of times. I am tremendously proud of all that we have accomplished. This year, we will continue to focus intently to make Penn ever-stronger as we pursue eminence together guided by our Penn Compact.