Provost’s report to Council
March 1, 2006

Family Friendly Policies

Earlier this week, Deputy Provost Janice Bellace and I were pleased to announce revisions to Penn policies relating to faculty members’ career-life balance. Thanks to a strong partnership with GAPSA, we also announced a uniform policy regarding dependent care leave for Ph.D. students. These policies have been developed to allow Penn scholars to nurture both their careers and their families.

Last spring the Provost’s office convened the Task Force on Career-Family balance. After evaluating existing policies, and in consultation with key University stakeholders, several revisions have been made regarding faculty members’ work-life balance. New adoptive and biological parents who are the primary caregiver for a new child in the home are now entitled to a 50% reduction in teaching responsibilities over the course of one academic year without a reduction in compensation. In addition, faculty members wishing to reduce their duties for a longer period can do so with a reduction in compensation. Under the new policies, junior faculty members are no longer required to request an extension of the probationary period to take into account their family-care responsibilities. Rather, junior faculty members who will be primary caregivers will notify the Provost’s Office of their eligibility for this extension and will be granted an additional year on the tenure clock.

I know that Lela Jacobsohn will be reporting on the new dependent care leave policy for Ph.D. students in her report.

Wharton

The Wharton School is celebrating its 125th anniversary, beginning in January 2006 and culminating in April 2007. The event not only commemorates an important milestone for Penn, but also marks the anniversary of the origins of collegiate business education throughout the world. A major anniversary event, the Wharton Economic Summit, was held in New York City, February 1. Additional events are planned in more than 20 cities across the globe.

Knowledge@Wharton, the online business analysis and research journal of the Wharton School, will soon make available a version focused on India. The Indian version joins foreign language and special content versions China Knowledge@Wharton and Universia Knowledge@Wharton, as well as the original English language Knowledge@Wharton. Knowledge@Wharton has than a half million subscribers in 189 countries.

The Wharton School has added a secondary concentration in retailing, which will provide students with a deeper foundation for successful careers in retail. The new curriculum will be administered by the School's Jay H.
Baker Retailing Initiative, which was established in 2003 through a $10-million gift from Patty and Jay H. Baker.

Second Symposium
Building on last semester’s National Symposium on Risk and Disaster in Washington, D.C, the Penn Institute for Urban Research hosted another conference earlier this month, Rebuilding Urban Places After Disaster. We were fortunate to have several remarkable speakers, including Marc Morial, former mayor of New Orleans and President of the National Urban League, and Nick Spitzer of public radio’s program “American Routes,” as well as many prominent thinkers from around the University and around the country.

As was the case with last semester’s conference, Rebuilding Urban Places After Disaster will be followed with the quick publication of the proceedings to be distributed to all members of Congress, among other national decision makers, as a resource to be used when deliberating how our nation should go about preparing for and rebuilding after the national disasters that are sure to face us in the near future.

Courses InTouch

We have recently launched a new online application, Courses InTouch (CIT), for faculty and teaching assistants. Through Courses InTouch, faculty can access their class lists and a new feature, the Course Problem Notice (CPN), which replaces the paper and mid-semester warning notices currently in use. Instructors can select a student’s name and indicate the problem, perhaps missed classes or a low grade. An email notification will be sent to the student, as well as his or her School. This way, an advisor from the School can follow up with students in danger of failing. This system is designed to encourage instructors to notify students about academic problems as soon as they occur, so that students can take immediate steps to correct them and receive the appropriate assistance in dealing with them.