At the start of this academic year, we are extraordinarily excited about the continued growth and success of our many programs and initiatives that provide our students and faculty with incredible resources for learning and research, both in the classroom and in the community at large.

Combining community service, leadership and research, is our Civic Scholars initiative, which welcomed 15 students into its inaugural year this semester. Over the course of four years, these undergraduate students will be able to incorporate their academic interests with research and service to the community, with a focus on local issues, such as urban healthcare education, and poverty and housing. The Civic Scholars program exemplifies Penn’s commitment not only to training students to be leaders in their academic fields, but to encouraging our students to become engaged citizens and productive members of their communities.

In a joint initiative between the University and the School District of Philadelphia, we have sponsored over 60 high school students from traditionally underrepresented groups for the past two summers at Penn, giving them exposure to programs in dental medicine, education, engineering/internet technology, law, medicine and nursing. We are especially proud of this program, as it brings Penn’s greatest strengths, its educational and faculty resources, directly to the Philadelphia community, to benefit the next generation.

Our undergraduate research mentorship program paired 18 undergraduates with faculty mentors on research projects spanning the nation and globe, from Maine to Colombia to Angola, this past summer. Our student/faculty teams worked side-by-side bringing fresh perspectives to diverse research projects, from studying the role of genetic mutations in stem cell function, to ethnographic fieldwork with immigrant congregations here in Philadelphia. This program gives our students and faculty the opportunity to engage locally and globally through experiential learning, coupled with strong collaboration within the University. We look forward to building more outstanding research teams next summer.

Globally, we are dedicated to increasing access to a Penn education for our international student body. Through the Penn World Scholars program, the University is making great strides to bring deserving international students, from developing nations across the globe, to Penn. We are delighted to welcome eight diverse and incredibly talented freshmen, recruited from around the world, who have already demonstrated in their early careers a strong desire to be a part of tomorrow’s global leaders.

This past year, we have also welcomed several new and esteemed members into important roles in University administration. Vincent Price, the Steven H. Chaffee Professor or Communication and Political Science at the Annenberg School for Communication, was named Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, with a portfolio that includes the overall management of the academic personnel process and the enhancement of faculty diversity. We are extraordinarily pleased that Dr. Price will help to create a climate that is conducive to our faculty’s professional growth and advancement.

After an extensive international search, Dr. Richard Hodges, a world-leading classical and early medieval archaeologist, who has been Director of both The Prince of Wales’ Institute of Architecture in London and The British School of Rome, will assume the position of The Williams Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. As an experienced leader and an intellectual innovator, Dr. Hodges has all the right qualities to help us chart the future of the Penn Museum.

This past year, we were also able to name Susan Herron, as the new Director of the Office of Student Conduct. As a former social worker, family court administrator, college instructor, and assistant district attorney in Philadelphia, she brings a wealth of experience to this critical and multifaceted University office, and will strive to provide the highest level of professionalism and service to the Penn community.

We are also very pleased to announce that Dr. Brian Strom, George S. Pepper Professor of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Chair of the Department of Biostatistics & Epidemiology, and Director of the Center for Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics, has been additionally appointed to the newly created positions of Vice Dean for Institutional Affairs in the School of Medicine and Senior Advisor to the Provost for Global Health Initiatives. Dr. Strom will work closely with the Office of the Provost and the Deans in maintaining, developing and implementing the University’s global health initiatives and health services research. His leadership, skill and experience give us an opportunity to advance our collaborative work in these vital areas.
We are continually impressed by the depth and breadth of Penn’s faculty and research achievements. Not only does the University maintain the second largest research and development enterprise in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but the School of Medicine, as one of the nation’s preeminent biomedical research institutions, ranks second nationally in total NIH funding. We are also extraordinarily pleased that Dr. Arthur H. Rubenstein, Executive Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania Health System and Dean of the School of Medicine, received The New York Academy of Medicine’s Medal for Distinguished Contributions in Biomedical Science for his groundbreaking research in diabetes, one of only four distinguished scientists and health leaders honored in May of this year.

Penn’s faculty members, as nationally recognized experts in their fields, are frequently elected to leadership positions on boards, societies and academic associations, and during this past academic year, the results were indeed outstanding. Three faculty were elected to the American Philosophical Society; three faculty were elected to the Institute of Medicine; and two prominent faculty were named Fellows of, and four more were newly-elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

We have offered here only a brief review of our important academic, research and service-based programs, as well as our faculty achievements over the course of the past year. We extend our congratulations to all of the students, faculty and staff, who have worked diligently to turn the ideals of the Penn Compact into a tangible reality for our community at home and abroad, and look forward to a successful and rewarding upcoming year.