We are seeing another year of historic demand for Penn’s distinctive education. A record-breaking 22,794 students applied for the Class of 2012 (as of February 8) compared to 22,645 last year. The ethnic composition of the group tracks last year’s pool, which saw a 20% increase in African American applications and 18% increase in Hispanic applications. International applications this year rose 7%.

Penn’s recently expanded financial aid policy opens the door for more talented students to fulfill their potential at Penn. Yet many potential applicants remain unaware that Penn is within their financial reach. We are launching a national initiative to spread the news of Penn’s accessibility and affordability to more high-achieving high school students from low and middle income families. Guidance counselors throughout the country and promising students from lower-income families will receive a new video and brochure describing financial aid at Penn. We also have signed on to participate in a pilot search program for low-income students sponsored by the College Board. These activities, and our existing partnerships with agencies working to expand the low-income pipeline of applicants, will pay off with a more socio-economically diverse and student body and a more vibrant Penn experience for all.

Penn’s Center for Africana Studies (CFAS) and Annenberg School for Communication are marking the 40th anniversary of the landmark National Advisory (“Kerner”) Commission on Civil Disorders report on race relations in America by co-presenting a week-long symposium with North Carolina A&T State University’s Institute for Advanced Journalism Studies. The symposium will begin February 25-26 in North Carolina A&T campus in Greensboro, NC, with a look at the Kerner Commission report’s impact on the media, moving to Penn on February 27-28 to examine the nation’s response to the Commission’s findings. We look forward to this important event, which will include an opening address on February 28 by former President Bill Clinton. CFAS director Dr. Tukufu Zuberi and DeWayne Wickham of
the Institute will lead a question and answer session following President Clinton’s remarks.

Penn has received the Presidential Award for General Community Service from the Corporation for National and Community Service. Penn was one of three higher education institutions nationwide recognized for its range of community service programs including the School of Nursing’s Living Independently for Elders (LIFE Program); Fox Leadership Program’s Big Brothers/Big Sisters; Penn in the Gulf (Social Policy and Practice and Nursing); Penn in Botswana (Medicine, Nursing, Wharton and Annenberg); the Summer Mentorship Program for High School Youth; Civic House’s West Philadelphia Tutoring Project; and the Netter Center’s Community Schools, Moelis Access Science, Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative, and College and Career Pathways programs. The other awardees were Otterbein College in Ohio and the University of Colorado at Boulder.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Michael R. Bloomberg has agreed to be our Commencement speaker. As mayor of New York City, Mr. Bloomberg has reduced crime, created jobs, and has launched a series of ambitious environmental and public-health initiatives. Michael Bloomberg took up public service after achieving phenomenal entrepreneurial success with his financial news and information company Bloomberg L.P. A noted philanthropist, he is a modern-day Benjamin Franklin who will have much to offer Penn students.

We also have a stellar lineup of honorary degree recipients. The other honorees are: Paquito D’Rivera, award-winning Latin jazz composer, clarinetist and saxophonist; Drew Gilpin Faust, acclaimed historian, author, former Penn professor, and Harvard’s first woman president; Lila R. Gleitman, a giant in linguistics and psychology, co-founder of Penn’s Institute for Research in Cognitive Science, and Penn professor emerita; Bert W. O’Malley, an eminent biologist whose research has magnified our understanding of hormones and has had a major impact on the fields of endocrinology, reproduction, genetic disease and endocrine cancers; Cyril Ramaphosa, a leader in South Africa’s transition from apartheid as a secretary general of the African National Congress, member of Parliament and Constitutional Assembly chairperson; and Neil deGrasse Tyson, NASA advisor, director of the
Hayden Planetarium, science columnist, television host, and an astrophysicist who has made science accessible.

We have appointed Lynn Marsden-Atlass director of the Arthur Ross Gallery, effective March 3, 2008. She is a nationally known curator and educator who most recently was senior curator of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA), where she curated the landmark exhibitions *In Private Hands: 200 Years of American Painting* and *Thomas Eakins and His Legacy*. She also has worked closely with hundreds of undergraduates, taught courses in art history from the 18th century and led a wide range of public lectures and hands-on museum classes.

We have chosen architects for six major projects in our transformational campus development plan, *Penn Connects*: Crawford Architects will design a new 22,500-square-foot athletic performance center to be constructed in the northern facade and concourse of Franklin Field. The center is slated to open in late 2009.

Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates (of Cambridge, Mass.) will design Penn Park, for completion by 2010. SmithGroup (of Detroit and Washington, D.C.) will design our new Neural and Behavioral Sciences building, which will be linked to our recently completed Carolyn Lynch Laboratory, completing Penn’s Life Sciences precinct along University Avenue.

The Singh Center Nanoscale Research Building will be designed by Weiss/Manfredi (of New York City) with M + W Zander (of Marlborough, Mass.); Philadelphia’s own Dagit-Saylor Architects will restore The Arch; and our new College House at Hill Square will be designed by Patkau Architects (of Vancouver, British Columbia). We expect to have completed schematic design studies on all of these projects this fall.

Finally, our *Making History* campaign has raised $1.81 billion to date – 52% of our $3.5 billion goal. Penn Trustee and College alumnus Christopher H. Browne (C’69) has given the School of Arts and Sciences $15 million to establish five endowed professorships across the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences. We are naming the School of Arts and Sciences’ Center for Advanced Judaic Studies in memory of Herb Katz, who died last fall and whose family has
made a very significant gift in his memory. Herb served as the first chair of the Center's Board of Overseers.