MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: December 10, 2008
Subject: Report to the University Council

We conclude the first semester and the year 2008 on the heels of significant national and international events. This fall, we witnessed an historic Presidential election. On campus, the number of undergraduates registered to vote increased by more than 20 percent. All told, more than 90 percent of Penn undergraduates registered to vote participated on Election Day.

At the same time, the United States and world wrestled with the severest economic turbulence and market conditions in three generations. Last week, I updated the campus community on the University’s response to this protracted and deep downturn in the economy. Our mission of eminence in teaching, research and service will continue without interruption, and we will continue to plan for the future just as we always have, by implementing sound budgets, by managing our costs, and by maintaining focus on our highest school and institutional priorities. Several University-wide actions were outlined in the letter and will be in place for the next 18 months. I encourage all members of the community to become familiar with these actions as we take measures to control costs in a strategic and disciplined way.

In these challenging times, we can be all the more thankful and proud that our trustees, alumni, parents, and close friends show such great confidence in Penn through their support of Making History: The Campaign for Penn. As of today, we have raised $2.21 billion, 63% of our goal of $3.5 billion.

Penn students and faculty members continue to receive prestigious awards and honors. Recently, College senior Abigail Seldin received a Rhodes Scholarship. One of only 32 students selected from across the nation, Abigail plans to study anthropology at Oxford’s Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology.

President-elect Barack Obama recently selected several Penn faculty to serve as members of his transition team:

- John Gearhart, the James W. Effron University Professor and director of the Institute for Regenerative Medicine, will serve on the preliminary science advisory board.

- Jonathan Moreno, the David and Lyn Silfen University Professor and Professor of Medical Ethics and the History and Sociology of Science, will serve as the co-leader of the Department of Health and Human Services Agency Review Team.
• Laurie O. Robinson, director of the Criminology Department’s Master of Science Program, will serve on the Department of Justice Agency Review Team.

• Kevin Werbach, Legal Studies and Business Ethics professor, will serve as co-leader of the Federal Communications Commission Agency Review Team.

Penn faculty bring their expertise to bear on issues both domestic and foreign. Last month, I traveled to Dubai with other Penn faculty members to take part in the World Economic Forum’s Summit on the Global Agenda. The meeting was a gathering of 700 thought leaders from more than 60 countries who are dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary solutions to the most critical challenges facing humanity. The councils covered a range of issues, from energy security and migration to entrepreneurship and human equality. One theme of the entire global summit turned out to be the integration of knowledge!

Conversations at the summit provide a framework for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. In late January, I will join Wharton Dean Tom Robertson and other Penn faculty members at the meeting, which will be focused on strategies to address the current economic crisis and the post-crisis agenda. In addition to my role with the Global University Leaders Forum, I will lead or participate on several panels.

In other news, Ron Daniels will be leaving his post as Provost to pursue a new opportunity as President of Johns Hopkins University, effective March 1, 2009. As Provost for more than three years, Ron has played a prominent role in advancing our most important institutional priorities, including increasing access to Penn for students from low- and middle-income families, building our interdisciplinary programs, and expanding our local and global engagements. We are very proud of Ron, grateful for his service to Penn, and we wish him the best at Johns Hopkins.

Vincent Price, the Steven H. Chaffee Professor of Communication and Political Science in the Annenberg School for Communication, has graciously and generously agreed to serve as Interim Provost, effective March 1, 2009. Vince is currently our Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, responsible for the overall management of the academic personnel process, including recruitment, retention, and retirement; appointments and promotions; and enhancement of faculty diversity.

Finally, the University Board of Trustees will undergo a change in leadership in November 2009 when James S. Riepe will step down as chairman of the board. David L. Cohen has been nominated to become chairman of the Board of Trustees, effective November 7, 2009, following the conclusion of the trustees’ fall meetings. Cohen, who graduated from Penn’s Law School in 1981, has been a trustee since 2001. Jim has been everything one could hope for in a chairman and he will stay involved on our Board of Trustees. David also bleeds red and blue – and we are all looking forward to his carrying on the well-established Penn tradition of active and dedicated Board chairs.