MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: Nov. 30, 2011
Subject: Report to the University Council

There is nothing quite like shorter days, cooler nights, and blazing autumn colors to remind me that the last few laps of the fall semester have arrived. After our Thanksgiving break recharge and as the holiday season takes hold at Penn, we can dive into the final weeks of this term with renewed energy and brilliance.

I am pleased to report that another vital part of Penn Connects, the University’s campus development plan, is one step closer to being realized. We will start the design development phase for the proposed Neural-Behavioral Sciences Building, which will be located next to the Carolyn Lynch Laboratory in the heart of our life-sciences research complex. As an exciting new home for the study of Biology and Psychology at Penn, this facility will be filled with research laboratories and rooms for instruction, as well as spaces designed to maximize cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration.

The eastern region of our campus continues to be a hot spot for vibrant change. As you know, we increased the University’ green space by 20 percent and its recreational facilities by leaps and bounds with the opening of Penn Park in October, and, with construction of the new Shoemaker Green in front of the Palestra, we will do even more. Shoemaker Green will provide another 3.75 acres of inviting lawn and trees while further reducing paved surfaces and water runoff. Overlooking the Green will be the spectacular new Information Commons at Franklin Field. Once the Commons open early next year, Penn students will have an additional 7,000 square feet of new study rooms, group tables, with plenty of comfy seating throughout. The new Information Commons at Franklin Field will be a defining addition to the Weiss Pavilion as the perfect study retreat, just steps away from the greatest athletic and recreational resources around.

We remain dedicated to pursuing the goals of our Climate Action Plan, and I am proud to report that Penn still holds the top spot among colleges and universities on the most recent EPA Green Power Partnership list. Updated quarterly, this list showcases the most significant purchasers of renewable and certified green power resources, like solar and wind. With usage at 200,194,600 kilowatts annually, Penn also ranks No. 22 across all industries nationally.
Though a surprise Northeaster blanketed large parts of New England in snow and ice before the end of October, Penn’s Early Decision application season ended on a high note. The number of Early Decision applicants was essentially flat after a 25% increase over the past two years. We once again received the largest number of Early Decision applications of any school in the country. Beyond quantity, the overall quality of the ED pool continues to increase. That quality is precisely what we require as we pursue our mission of increasing access for the most accomplished and diverse classes to be found at any university anywhere.

When the Class of 2016 arrives, those students will have yet another sterling opportunity for integrating knowledge, made possible by generous alumnus and former University trustee, Roy Vagelos, and his wife, Diana. By endowing VIPER, the Vagelos Integrated Program in Energy Research, Roy and Diana have created a new dual-degree program between SAS and SEAS. The first VIPER students will come from the Class of 2016, and they will have an unparalleled opportunity to receive innovative instruction, cutting edge research experience, and momentum for outstanding careers in alternative energy sources and systems. Faculty members Andrew M. Rappe, Professor of Chemistry, and John M. Vohs, Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, are the directors for VIPER, and their expertise will go a long way toward giving this new program an out-of-this-world kickoff.

Speaking of out-of-this-world, Penn is proud home to another generation of Marshall Scholarship recipients: Corey Metzman, W’12, and Michael Poll, C’09. The winning partnership between these gifted Marshall Scholars and the extraordinary support provided by CURF gives us wonderful cause for celebration. Corey, who is committed to promoting global engagement and understanding among diverse groups, plans to use the Marshall scholarship to study at the London School of Economics as well as Oxford University. Michael, a Fulbright scholar who has studied, lectured, and performed internationally, plans to further perfect his world-class classical guitar talents at the Royal Academy of Music. The entire Penn community joins me in congratulating our Marshall Scholars, and I wish Corey and Michael the very best for their continued success.

As we embrace the holiday season, these are just a small number of the myriad ways that our great Penn family continues to inspire. Thank you for your service to the University Council and for all the parts you play in lifting Penn from excellence to eminence. I wish you all the very best as we finish the fall semester and look forward to a bright new year brimming with extraordinary possibility.