MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: Feb. 22, 2012
Subject: Report to the University Council

We celebrated the successful conclusion of our 2012 Penn’s Way Campaign this February. Penn commits wholeheartedly to strengthening our greater community, and Penn people have once again demonstrated that commitment in a big way. With invaluable leadership from executive co-chairs Susan Phillips, UPHS Senior Vice President for Public Affairs, and Maureen Rush, Vice President of the Division of Public Safety, Penn’s Way volunteers and the Penn community surpassed our ambitious $1.35 million goal by raising a total of $1,478,622. That dollar amount represents significant benefit and resources for a wonderful array of charitable causes in our region, from food banks to adult literacy programs. Congratulations to all our volunteers on this outstanding accomplishment.

This has also been a month of accomplishment for Penn faculty and students. We are all deeply proud that Dennis E. Discher, the Robert D. Bent Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, has been elected to the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) for his exploration of the effects of mechanical forces on cell physiology and stem cell development. Election to the Academy is an honor reserved for a select few, and it is among the highest professional distinctions an engineer can hope to achieve. Dennis is an eminent voice in the field of soft matter and physicochemical approaches to cell and molecular biology.

Dr. Steven Hahn, the Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor of History, has been elected to the Pulitzer Prize Board, which oversees the 21 Pulitzer Prizes that are awarded annually. Dr. Hahn won a Pulitzer Prize for history in 2004 for *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*.

Four faculty members have been named Fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS) for their scientifically or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications:

- David Boettiger, emeritus professor of microbiology in the Perelman School of Medicine, for distinguished contributions to tumor virology and to integrin-mediated cell adhesion, particularly for the identification of adhesion signaling and its regulation by mechanical forces.
- Nancy Bonini, professor of biology in the School of Arts and Sciences, Investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, for distinguished contributions in the fields of basic and translational neuroscience, particularly as applied to understanding neurodegenerative disorders.
• Nigel Fraser, professor of microbiology in the Perelman School of Medicine, for outstanding discoveries about the mechanisms of herpes virus biology, particularly in the areas of herpes simplex virus latency and reactivation.
• David Weiner, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine, for pioneering and enabling discoveries in the area of DNA vaccines: bench to bedside, and promoting the field and scientists interested in DNA vaccines.

I am also proud to report that eight Penn students have received Thouron Awards – the largest group in more than a decade. These incredibly talented young people will have the opportunity to pursue graduate studies in the UK tuition-free.

• Besan Abu-Joudeh, C’12, W’12 (Huntsman), is applying to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for an MSc in political economy of development.
• Ava Childers, C’10, is applying to the University of Cambridge for an MPhil in archeological heritage and museums.
• David Dunning, C’12, is applying to the University of Cambridge for an MPhil in history, philosophy and sociology of science, technology, and medicine.
• Alison Feder, C’12, is applying to the University of Oxford for a DPhil in statistics.
• Myles Karp, C’12, is applying to the University of Oxford for an MSc in cognitive and evolutionary anthropology.
• Michael Masciandaro, C’12, is applying to the University of Cambridge for an MPhil in political thought and intellectual history.
• Eliana Ritts, C’12, W’12 (Huntsman), is applying to the University of Oxford for an MSc/MPhil in visual, material, and museum anthropology.
• Katie Wynbrandt, C’12, is applying to the University of Oxford for an MSc in criminology and criminal justice.

Penn’s Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships plays a pivotal role in helping our students secure this and other prestigious research opportunities. On behalf of the Penn community, hats off to our Thouron scholars and CURF!

After nearly a year of planning and construction, I am pleased to report that our spectacular new Education Commons at Franklin Field will soon be complete. The brilliantly lit Commons showcases 7,000 square feet of new study rooms, group meeting areas, and plenty of comfy seating throughout. This architecturally distinctive space in the Weiss Pavilion is sure to become a hugely popular study destination for Penn students. We will soon announce the grand opening of the Education Commons, and I encourage everyone to visit and see for themselves.

In closing, I am pleased to announce that our next David and Lyn Silfen University Forum, “Is America Broken? A Conversation on the 2012 Elections and Beyond,” will be on March 19th at 4:30 PM in Irvine Auditorium. A distinguished panel of guests – including former Pennsylvania Governor and Penn alum Ed Rendell; Charles Blow of the New York Times; Penn Associate Professor of Political Science John Lapinski; columnist and former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan; and former U.S. Senator Alan Simpson – will discuss the state of U.S. politics, the upcoming election, and beyond. We anticipate a big crowd in Irvine Auditorium for this exciting and important event. I invite you all to attend.