MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: March 28, 2012
Subject: Report to the University Council

Spring has sprung at Penn, with beautiful blooms gracing College Green and Locust Walk. To further invigorate us as we shake off winter, we have exciting news of faculty honors, student and alumni accomplishments, community engagement, and beautiful new facilities.

I am proud to congratulate four Penn faculty members on being awarded Sloan Fellowships this year. In making these awards, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation looks for early-career scientists and scholars who demonstrate great potential for becoming scientific leaders. These extraordinarily promising Penn faculty will receive two-year stipends to further their research:

- Christopher Fang-Yen is assistant professor of bioengineering in SEAS and assistant professor of neuroscience in the Perelman School of Medicine. His scrutiny of a particularly tiny worm, *C. elegans*, is producing exciting knowledge of how neural circuitry creates behavior.
- E. James Petersson is assistant professor of chemistry in SAS. His lab utilizes a multidisciplinary approach to explore how proteins changing shape play a part in neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.
- Joseph Subotnik is also assistant professor of chemistry in SAS. He examines the chemistry of energy transfer at the level of molecules and electrons to understand how best to control that energy.
- Benjamin F. Voight is assistant professor of pharmacology in the Perelman School of Medicine. He applies statistical methods across thousands of human genomes to discover how genetic variation is at play in recent human evolution, and how that contributes to present-day diseases. He has thus far identified risk-related alleles for type-2 diabetes and heart attack, among other conditions.

Penn students and alums are also being recognized for their incredible work. Eileen Moison, a senior in the Vagelos Program in Life Science and Management, has been selected as a Gates Cambridge Scholarship recipient. One of only 40 U.S. students awarded the honor this year, Eileen will have the opportunity to spend at least one year at Cambridge University after graduation. In the past four years, she has undertaken lab-based protein research with Sloan Fellow E. James Petersson. This is yet another fantastic example of how collaborative research undertaken by Penn students and faculty both enriches the teaching experience and primes students for future academic success.

Two outstanding Penn alumnae are enjoying similar success after being named 2012 Luce Scholars. Penn is the only university this year to have two representatives selected for the award. Aimee Bailey, SEAS’06, and Rhodes Scholar Abigail Seldin, C’09, are two of 18 Scholars nationwide recognized by the Henry Luce Foundation and will receive stipends, language training, and individualized professional placement in Asia. We can once again thank Dr. Harriet Joseph and her great team at the
Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships for helping guide our Gates and Luce Scholars in their pursuits of these prestigious awards.

Equally inspiring, two Penn students, Jacob Blumenfeld-Gantz and Truman and Marshall Scholar Corey Metzman, have been named Davis Projects for Peace winners. Jacob and Corey will receive an award from the Davis Projects for Peace Foundation to fund Dorm Room Diplomacy, a program they are building to encourage intercultural dialogue and understanding among American and Middle Eastern university students. Dorm Room Diplomacy was also recognized last year by the Clinton Global Initiative University.

While our students garner awards for their international engagement, Penn has been nationally honored for partnering with our local neighbors. Led by the Netter Center for Community Partnerships and Civic House, Penn recently earned one of just five Presidential Awards in the 2012 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. The Presidential Award went to Penn for investing in West Philadelphia through programs that offer safe educational summer opportunities for community youth; invite local underrepresented minorities and female students to participate in a free science, technology, and engineering summer camp; and place Penn students with West Philadelphia high school students to provide math and literacy programming as well as project-based learning through the arts and field trips. As a university, we should take great pride in this honor and in the deep impact such engagement has on our neighbors and on us.

Typical of the commitment that earned Penn presidential recognition, many of our students ventured across the country through this year’s Alternate Spring Break. In outstanding examples of community engagement, ASB participants traveled to eight sites in several states, from Texas to Florida to West Virginia, and undertook valuable service projects. Penn ASB students helped construct homes with Habitat for Humanity and pursued activities that ranged in theme from social justice to environmental sustainability. The popular growth of this program since its start in 1990 has resulted in the addition of Alternate Winter Break service trips. I salute the ASB participants, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, Civic House, and all our passionately engaged Penn students, faculty, and staff who so dedicate themselves to improving all our communities, locally and globally.

We continue to improve our campus as well. The outstanding new Education Commons at Franklin Field is now open. This new space further enlivens the eastern entrance to campus and adds a unique academic flavor to the drawing power of Franklin Field, the Palestra, and Penn Park. The Commons will encourage even more of our students to head to the Weiss Pavilion, not only to train on the treadmills, but to break out their laptops in this beautifully designed, sleek study space.

Next week, we will celebrate the grand opening of Penn Law’s Golkin Hall. The new facility adds 40,000 square feet of stunning educational space – including a cutting-edge courtroom, a 350-seat auditorium, and a rooftop garden – to the Law School’s four-building quadrangle. With the completion of Golkin Hall, all four buildings are now fully linked to one another, and Law students will once again be able to enjoy the newly rebuilt courtyard. We are especially excited to welcome U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor to campus for the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Imasogie Gateway on April 5th at 5 pm. Directly after, the entire Penn community is invited to the Open House celebration, featuring live entertainment, food, and drinks. For more details, please visit Penn Law’s website. (http://www.law.upenn.edu/about/newbuilding/openingcelebration/index.html).