MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: April 18, 2012
Subject: Report to the University Council

With less than one month until Commencement, and Hey Day and Alumni Weekend just around the corner, we will soon enjoy all the great spring traditions of Penn. In classrooms, offices, laboratories, museums, and playing fields across the campus, Penn’s longstanding tradition of excellence continues as well, with faculty capturing headlines, student athletes coming out on top, and an exciting new academic partnership about to begin.

Our Action Plan for Faculty Diversity and Excellence hit an important milestone this year with Dr. Benjamin Garcia joining Penn this summer as our first Presidential Term Professor. Dr. Garcia will serve in the Perelman School of Medicine as Presidential Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics; he will also hold secondary appointments in bioengineering in SEAS and in chemistry in SAS. He has earned several awards with his pioneering interdisciplinary research in cell biology and proteomics, including a Presidential Early Career Award, the highest U.S. government honor for young scientists and engineers. Dr. Garcia’s appointment truly represents what we aim to achieve with the Presidential Term Professorships – bringing diverse, brilliant young scholars to Penn who add to our illustrious faculty.

In other faculty news, David and Lyn Silfen University Professor Jonathan Moreno was appointed to the UNESCO’s International Bioethics Committee, where he will bring vast expertise and insight to help ensure the socially and ethically responsible advancement of science, healthcare, and technology around the world. Faculty from SEAS, including Drs. Rajeev Alur, Milo Martin, George Pappas, Boon Thau Loo, and Steve Zdancewic, have won a $10 million grant from the National Science Foundation to support ExCAPE (“Expeditions in Computer Augmented Program Engineering”). The NSF grant will allow Penn to partner with eight universities across the country to revolutionize the ways in which computer programmers construct software code and to bring new methods of programming to diverse applications like robotics, networking, and education.

For demonstrating academic distinction and maintaining the highest athletic performance, 10 Penn student athletes have been named Winter Academic All-Ivy Honorees. The Ivy League recognized All-Ivy varsity athletes from across Penn’s sports spectrum: from Men and Women’s basketball and squash, to fencing, swimming, wrestling, and more. I applaud these talented young women and men who successfully integrate their academic pursuits with their love of the game:

- Amrit Bhinder, Women’s Fencing
- Rachael Goh, Women’s Squash
- Zane Grodman, Men’s Fencing
- Jess Knapp, Women’s Basketball
- Thomas Mattsson, Men’s Squash
• Brendan McHugh, Men’s Swimming
• Catherine Okoukoni, Women’s Track and Field
• Zack Rosen, Men’s Basketball
• Erich Smith, Wrestling
• Kirsten Strausbaugh, Gymnastics

Congratulations are also in order for all the hard-working people in the Annenberg School, Penn Libraries, and Information Systems and Computing who have made Penn’s historic new partnership with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute possible. Together, we are opening Shoah’s Visual History Archive – the world’s largest digital collection of personal testimonies from Holocaust survivors, witnesses, and others affected by the horrors of genocide – to the entire Penn community. The Visual History Archive is an invaluable resource for research and remembrance, and it offers Penn scholars, students, and staff access to over 52,000 powerfully moving personal testimonies. Steven Spielberg founded the Shoah Foundation Institute in 1994 to collect and preserve these unique stories. To learn more about this incredibly exciting partnership and resource, I encourage you to attend a special Shoah Foundation reception on Monday, April 23 at 5 p.m. in the lobby of the Annenberg Center. You can also find more information about this project on the Penn Libraries Shoah webpage: http://guides.library.upenn.edu/content.php?pid=292757&sid=2403527

Finally, on the heels of its stunningly successful Secrets of the Silk Road exhibition, Penn Museum will soon open the long-anticipated MAYA.2012 – Lords of Time. This immersive and extensive new exhibit aims to tell the true story of the ancient Maya, their much-talked about calendars, and the progress of the Mayan people to the present day. Visitors can expect to view a rich collection of artifacts, including those recently excavated by Penn archaeologists from the site of Copan, Honduras, and explore interactive features and full-sized replicas of major monuments. The grand opening for MAYA.2012 – Lords of Time will coincide with Penn Museum’s 30th annual Maya Weekend on May 5th.