MEMORANDUM

To:        Members of University Council
From:      Amy Gutmann, President
Date:      January 29, 2014
Subject:   Report to the University Council

Happy New Year and welcome back to University Council. Penn closed twice this month due to heavy snowfall and frigid temperatures brought on by winter storms Hercules and Janus. Though normal University operations were suspended, essential staff—including personnel at HUP, the Department of Public Safety, and Facilities and Real Estate Services—braved the weather to ensure that necessary Penn functions continued, for which we are all tremendously grateful.

As classes resumed for the semester, we were pleased to announce that applications for the Class of 2018 broke all previous records with a 14.6 percent increase over last year. In all, Penn received 35,840 applications, and the quality and competitiveness among these applicants is extremely high. Thanks to the superb efforts of Dean Eric Furda and the Admissions team, Penn is well on its way to welcoming an extraordinary Class of 2018.

I join Provost Vince Price in encouraging you to visit Penn’s splendidly renovated Arts, Research, and Culture House on February 6th from 3 pm to 7 pm for a grand reopening celebration. The ARCH holds a special place on campus as one of the central homes for undergraduate cultural and research life. Just as important, it is a hub for all students, faculty, and staff to enjoy. On February 6th, come see all that the new ARCH has to offer.

We recently released an update report for Penn’s Action Plan for Faculty Diversity and Excellence. With the support and engagement of Penn’s deans, the major initiatives proposed in the Action Plan have been launched. Provost Price and I are especially pleased that each of the Schools has a plan in place for moving forward. Penn’s early successes include the appointment of four Presidential Term Professors and our most recent Penn Integrates Knowledge professors. Between fall 2010 and fall 2013, more than 35 percent of newly recruited faculty were racial/ethnic minorities, nearly 13 percent were underrepresented minorities, and more than 40 percent were women. Though we are seeing progress, we still have much to accomplish. The Provost and I look forward to continuing this important work in close collaboration with the deans and Penn’s faculty.

Five Penn professors were recently elected to the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science. The new Penn AAAS members represent SAS and the Perelman School across several critically important areas of research:

- Dr. Frederic Bushman, professor of microbiology at the Perelman School.
- Dr. Andrew Dancis, associate professor of medicine at the Perelman School.
- Dr. Robert W. Doms, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the Perelman School and chair of pathology and laboratory medicine at CHOP.
- Dr. J. Kevin Foskett, Isaac Ott Professor and chair of physiology at the Perelman School.
- Dr. Philip Rea, professor of biology in SAS and Rebecka and Arie Beldegrun Distinguished Director of the Vagelos Program in Life Sciences and Management.
Finally, I am proud to report that Penn earned its third consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, a premier charity evaluator that assesses non-profits nationwide. This is an exceptional designation awarded for Penn’s excellent governance and ethical use of donors’ charitable gifts—both vitally important in supporting our University’s mission and ensuring the continued confidence and enthusiasm of Penn’s donors.

We have a productive and rewarding semester ahead of us, and I look forward to working with you. Thank you for your service to University Council.