PROVOST’S STATUS REPORT FOR UNIVERSITY COUNCIL, FEBRUARY 2008

As the calendar year begins, I am excited to report on Penn’s advances in such critical areas as diversity, access, globalization, and faculty research.

The appointment of Will Gipson as the new – and first – Associate Vice Provost for Access and Equity is a major step forward toward our communal goals of diversity and equal access, not only for our current students but also for those students whom we aim to attract in the future.

He will be working closely with a new Faculty Advisory Council for Access and Academic Support Initiatives, under the leadership of Associate Provost Andy Binns, which will help us freshly re-examine access and academic support initiatives from a wide range of perspectives across the University.

This critical rethinking of access and equity issues goes hand-in-hand with the dramatic initiatives we have announced to improve financial aid for both undergraduate and graduate students. The elimination of loans for undergraduates and the raising of minimum stipends for funded PhD students will go a long way toward expanding the diversity of both our current community and our future graduates.

This diversity must also include a vital international emphasis, as Penn both reaches out to the rest of the world and brings that world to our students. I am proud to note that, in November’s Open Doors Report from the Institute of International Education, Penn ranked 10th among all US universities for foreign student enrollment (rising from 14th), while continuing to rank first in the Ivy League in students awarded credit for study abroad.

Our foreign student enrollment increased 21% in the 2006-07 academic year, compared to an average 3% increase at other US schools. And we just admitted a record number of international students Early Decision, further indication that Penn is becoming a first choice for many international students, bolstered by our Penn World Scholars program and our continuing commitment to improve financial aid for international students.

The Provost’s Office sponsors several vibrant initiatives to bring to campus leading global figures and issues. The Distinguished International Scholars program hosts scholars from around the world, in a wide range of fields, for visits of at least 2 weeks, during which they participate in undergraduate classes, advise students, and lead public events.

In fall 2007, we welcomed German philosopher of science Gernot Bohme and Australian economist Peter Drysdale. In spring 2008, we will host Dutch ecologist L.A. Bruijnzeel, South African music historian David Coplan, and British filmmaker and film theorist Laura Mulvey.
Our Global Forum this semester will feature Helene Gayle, President of CARE, one of the world’s largest international humanitarian organizations. Last semester, we hosted Laurie Garrett, a prize-winning expert on global health epidemics; and in the fall, we will be proud to host The Hon. Paul Martin, the former Prime Minister of Canada.

We are excited to launch Writers Without Borders, the Provost’s International Writers Series at Kelly Writers House. The first artist in this series will be Cecilia Vicuna, a leading Mexican poet and performance artist, who will visit Penn in April, followed next fall by Breyten Breytenbach, a leading South African activist writer, and Slovenian writer Tomaz Salamun.

I am also privileged to host this semester’s inaugural International Development Workshops. These seminars bring leading scholars of international development to campus to discuss their recent work and exchange ideas with graduate students and faculty.

At the same time, Penn faculty continue to lead the world in cutting-edge research. We announced this fall two major research institutes that will keep Penn at the forefront of new medical solutions. The Penn Center for the Integration of Genetic Healthcare Technology, funded by a $5.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, brings together five Penn schools (Annenberg, Nursing, SAS, SOM, and Wharton) to study the ethical implications of new genetic technologies (for example, prenatal testing).

The Institute for Regenerative Medicine, under the leadership of Jonathan A. Epstein from SOM and Ralph L. Brinster from the School of Veterinary Medicine, will work across disciplines to investigate the therapeutic potential of stem cells. The Institute will create partnerships and collaborations not only across Penn but also throughout the region, including programs for children in inner-city schools.

Our faculty continue to earn significant awards and honors across a wide range of disciplines. Just in the past four months, we have had four new inductees into the Institute of Medicine (David Asch, Joel Cooper, Lee Fleisher, and Katherine High), three new fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Morris Birnbaum, Yale Goldman, and Mark Liberman), three winners of American Chemical Society National Awards (Jeffrey Bode, William F. DeGrado and Michael L. Klein), the winner of the Caroline Shaw Bell Award from the American Economics Association (Olivia Mitchell), the winner of the Episteme Award from the Honor Society of Nursing for a major breakthrough in nursing knowledge (Loretta Sweet Jemmott), the winner of one of the first New Innovator Awards from the National Institutes of Health (James Shorter), and the winner of the Goodwin Award from the American Philological Association for the best book in classical studies published in the last three years (Peter Struck).

I am delighted to congratulate Penn students, faculty, and staff for their remarkable accomplishments, and I look forward to experiencing what our communal energy, passion, and ideas will generate in the year ahead.