PROVOST’S STATUS REPORT
University Council
December 2010

It is a great pleasure, in this season of celebration, to congratulate the Penn community on an outstanding semester of activities and achievements. We cheer our wonderful student athletes – their vibrant spirit exemplified by the Ivy League championships of our men’s football, women’s soccer, and women’s volleyball teams – and our dynamic student scholars, including this year’s seven Rhodes Scholarship finalists and two Marshall Scholars, Kristin Hall and GJ Melendez-Torres. It is especially gratifying that Kristin and GJ, who will both study next year at Oxford University, embody Penn’s distinctive tradition of integrating knowledge: Kristin in the Huntsman Program, with a joint Wharton/SAS degree, and GJ in the Nursing and Health Care Program, with a joint Wharton/Nursing degree.

I encourage all of you to read the Progress Report on Minority Equity published in the December 7 Almanac. This is an important update, which occurs every three years, on the status of minority faculty at Penn. This year’s Report indicates that the proportion of standing faculty who are members of minority groups rose to 17.5% from 16.1% in the three years since the most recent update, and that Penn’s percentage of minority faculty has steadily increased over the past decade. Nevertheless, despite concerted efforts, we are not making the progress that we would like to see in advancing faculty diversity at Penn, and the Report helps us identify critical areas for improvement, which have already begun to generate productive discussions across the Penn community. Vice Provost Lynn Lees and I welcome your ideas as this dialogue moves forward.

I would like to thank those students and faculty members who have submitted nominations for University-wide teaching awards, and I remind deans, department chairs, and heads of graduate groups that they still have until December 17 to submit their own nominations. You can find all the information and forms on the Provost’s website at: http://www.upenn.edu/provost/teaching_awards.

As we near the second half of the Year of Water, the extraordinary show of photographs from Mali at the Arthur Ross Gallery continues until January 9, focusing on the vital and diverse roles of water in a desert landscape. We look forward to the Year of Water Global Forum on January 25, featuring Rose George, the Penn alumna whose book The Big Necessity began the year as the Penn Reading Project. And, as we continue to plan for next year’s academic theme of Games: Body and Mind, I invite you to contact David Fox (dfox@upenn.edu) with suggestions for initiatives, programs, and symposia on this topic.

I wish everyone a joyous holiday season, and I look forward to working together next year.

Vincent Price
Provost