I am pleased to join President Gutmann and Dean Rebecca Bushnell of the School of Arts & Sciences in announcing the launch of the Center for the Study of Contemporary China. Housed in SAS and serving the entire University, the Center will bring together important work on China across Penn’s Schools, while providing a resource on campus for programs and partnerships in China. Under the leadership of Avery Goldstein, David M. Knott Professor of Global Politics and International Relations in the Department of Political Science, the Center will facilitate cross-School collaborations, provide support for faculty and graduate student research, and sponsor major conferences and visits from global scholars and world leaders. It will expand not only Penn’s academic leadership in this increasingly significant part of the world, but also the integration of knowledge that is one of Penn’s most distinctive intellectual attributes.

The Year of Proof, which we recently announced as the campus-wide academic theme for next year, will offer a stimulating, interdisciplinary exploration – perfectly timed for a national election year – of the importance of evidence, experimentation, and knowledge in a broad scope of disciplines. From legal and scientific evidence to medical diagnoses and mathematical proofs, this year will provide a showcase for Penn’s diversity of intellectual inquiry. Beginning these discussions in New Student Orientation will be Doubt, the Pulitzer Prize-winning play that dramatizes the uncertainty of evidence in the context of religious faith. I look forward to the lively debates that this text will surely inspire next August. My office also offers grants for programs and research connected to each theme year. Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis, starting in April, and you can find more details at: http://www.themeyearsgrants.org.

Along these lines, I encourage all of you to take advantage of the wide variety of funding opportunities now available for next academic year – in particular, three funds under the aegis of my office, which together suggest the exciting range of activities on our campus. The Diversity Fund (http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v58/n17/diversity.html) advances research on diversity in higher education and activities that diversify the Penn campus, including School-based strategic plans. The Global Engagement Fund (http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v58/n19/globalproposals.html) sponsors faculty initiatives that enhance Penn’s global activities, especially collaborations that cross disciplines and involve multiple faculty members. And the Interdisciplinary Arts Fund (http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v58/n22/arts.html) supports arts & culture initiatives that are collaborative and directly engage students, particularly those that bring together arts & culture organizations with academic departments or centers.

I look forward to working together as we anticipate the coming of Spring.

Vincent Price
Provost