PROVOST’S STATUS REPORT
University Council, February 2013

I am very pleased this month to join President Gutmann and Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli in welcoming Thomas Murphy to Penn as the University’s new Chief Information Officer and Vice President for Information Technology. He brings an exciting track record of innovation across a range of industries, recently as Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer of AmerisourceBergen, an $80 billion provider of pharmaceuticals and health care services at which his accomplishments included a $500 million Business Transformation Program and Innovation and Collaboration Lab. In 2010, he was elected to the CIO Hall of Fame and named one of the Best CIOs in America, among many other honors throughout his career. I am sure that you will join me in welcoming him to Penn and in thanking Robin Beck for her outstanding service to the University over the past 23 years.

Penn’s historic leadership in information technology is well-represented at the moment by our founding partnership in Coursera, the online course platform that has grown exponentially in just its first year. Last month, the course on Single Variable Calculus designed by Prof. Robert Ghrist, one of our distinguished Penn Integrates Knowledge Professors, became one of the first Coursera classes recommended for college credit by the American Council on Education. This impartial recommendation provides a new way, similar to advanced placement, for institutions to award credits to their students for completing the course. It is a great tribute to the extraordinary level of creativity and intellectual rigor that Prof. Ghrist has brought to this course, which has the potential to revolutionize how people learn calculus. In so doing, it helps us pursue our two most significant goals in open learning: increasing access to education around the world, and innovating new forms of instruction that in turn advance teaching and learning on our own campus.

I encourage you to take a few moments, at this busy time of year, to visit one of the striking new shows at our arts and culture institutions. The Arthur Ross Gallery has just begun an inspiring exhibit of artisanal quilts from the Lakota tribe in South Dakota. This is the first time that many of these artworks have been seen in public; and the exhibit, which offers free tours every Saturday and Sunday at 1 PM, also includes important Lakota artifacts from the collection of the Penn Museum. The Museum, at the same time, is hosting the Lod Mosaic – nearly 2000 years old, it is one of the largest, most complete, and best-preserved Roman mosaics ever found. This is the last opportunity to see the Mosaic in the US before it travels to the Louvre in Paris and then to its ultimate home in Israel. And at the Institute of Contemporary Art, you will find one of their most imaginative and interdisciplinary shows, “White Petals Surround Your Yellow Heart,” which focuses on the vital intersections among art, fashion, and clothing in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Vincent Price
Provost