Penn’s engagement with online open learning has been one of the highlights of our activities in the past year. We recently hosted leaders and educators from 98 universities around the world at the inaugural Partners’ Conference of Coursera, the online open learning platform of which Penn was one of the founding partners in April 2012. These discussions were designed to assess our collective progress and chart directions for the future of both online and on-campus higher education. On the opening day, President Gutmann moderated a highly stimulating Silfen Forum on “Open Learning and the Future of Higher Education,” which set the substantive and reflective tone that characterized the conference sessions. Penn now has thirty courses offered or under development with Coursera, and we invite interested faculty members to submit proposals by May 31 for courses to be taught in the 2013-14 academic year. In tandem with this call, the Center for Teaching and Learning will offer workshops for faculty interested in submitting proposals; the first one will take place on May 1 from 10-11:30 am, and interested faculty members can register at ctl-help@sas.upenn.edu. The Call for Proposals will be in the Almanac issue of April 23, and you can also find information at any time on the Open Learning website at: http://provost.upenn.edu/initiatives/openlearning/faculty-resources.

Our work in online education aims above all to advance teaching and learning on our own campus. Each spring, the university-wide teaching awards remind us of this invaluable power of great teaching at the heart of academic life. This year, the Lindback Awards for Distinguished Teaching were awarded to Profs. Jed Esty (SAS), Jay Kikkawa (SAS), and Stanton Wortham (GSE) in the Non-Health Schools, and Profs. Dennis Dlugos (PSOM), Katherine Margo (PSOM), Eric Stoopler (SDM), and Barbra Mann Wall (Nursing) in the Health Schools. The Provost’s Awards for Distinguished PhD Teaching and Mentoring were awarded to Profs. Haim Bau (SEAS) and Rita Copeland (SAS), and the Provost’s Awards for Teaching Excellence by Non-Standing Faculty were awarded to Jonathan Fiene (SEAS) and Wendy Grube (Nursing). Please join me in congratulating these outstanding teachers, who were honored at an awards ceremony on April 17.

As the Year of Proof nears its conclusion, we have just announced next year’s campus-wide exploration of the Year of Sound. This exciting topic promises to bring together such vital interdisciplinary areas as music, biology, linguistics, medicine, and engineering. The year will begin, as always, with the Penn Reading Project in New Student Orientation, which will read and then discuss Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop by Adam Bradley. We invite faculty members to serve as discussion leaders for the Reading Project; you can sign up or find more information at: http://www.rescomp.upenn.edu/prpleaders. We also encourage the entire Penn community to submit proposals for Year of Sound initiatives, for which we offer grants up to $750; you will find more information at www.themeyeargrants.org.

I wish everyone a productive end to the semester, and I look forward to joining you at Commencement and other end-of-year celebrations.

Vincent Price
Provost