The Provost’s State of the University Report this year focuses on the vibrant state of arts and culture at Penn. With an extraordinary array of outstanding academic departments across several Schools and an unmatched collection of vibrant arts and culture centers, Penn is ideally positioned to advance, through the arts, our core University goals of increasing access, integrating knowledge, and engaging locally and globally. In the five years since the Arts and the City Year, our programs, performances, and arts organizations have become an ever-more central part of campus and city life. Moreover, they have become valuable partners in launching new teaching and research programs, while also advancing our essential goals of engaging our global and local communities.

At Council, we will learn more about initiatives at the Penn Museum, especially the new Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials, and about the Art and Culture Initiative co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost and the School of Arts and Sciences. These two presentations will stand in for the outstanding work done all year by our great arts and culture organizations. The Institute of Contemporary Art has been celebrating its fiftieth anniversary with an extraordinary range of publications and public programs, including an important mid-career retrospective of American painter Nicole Eisenman and the annual Free for All, which this year drew more than 400 students for an evening of punk rock and interactive art. The Kelly Writers House, in addition to its hundreds of invaluable programs on campus, has become a key part of our open learning initiatives. The yearly Modern Poetry course taught by Al Filreis has attracted a wide new audience in all corners of the country and the world.

The Arthur Ross Gallery has become a major venue for bringing together perspectives across cultures and disciplines. This year alone, it showcases the sculpture of Brazilian installation artist Henrique Oliveira, the photographs of Mexico in the 1930s by legendary modernist photographer Paul Strand, and modern Japanese prints linked to a curatorial seminar in Art History. And the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts continues to bring to the campus and city some of the most exciting performers from around the world, including dancers and musicians from Israel, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, South Africa, and Spain and, most recently, the acclaimed production of King Lear from the Shakespeare’s Old Globe Theatre Company.

On Friday, October 31, as part of Homecoming Weekend, I hope that you will join me, President Gutmann, and Board of Trustees Chair David Cohen for an afternoon of “Celebrating Innovation at Penn,” at the new South Bank at 34th Street and Grays Ferry Avenue. The event will include the Silfen Forum, hosted by President Gutmann on the topic From Idea to Innovation; talks by leading Penn faculty; and tours of this exciting new addition to campus. You will find more information at: http://www.upenn.edu/innovation. I look forward to seeing you there.

Vincent Price
Provost