Undergraduate Assembly
Constituency Update

New UA Constitution - Referendum in Progress
Currently the UA Executive Board consists of a Chairperson, Vice-Chair for Internal Affairs, Vice-Chair for External Affairs, Treasurer, and Secretary. These five officials are all elected from within the UA at a Transition Meeting held after the general election in Spring.

It is proposed that the Executive Board be changed to a President, Vice-President, Speaker, Treasurer, Secretary, and other officials provided by the UA Bylaws. The entire student body would directly elect the President and Vice-President simultaneously with all other student government elections in the Spring, with the Vice-President in this model taking on most of the responsibilities of the Vice-Chair for External Affairs in the old model.

The Speaker, Treasurer, Secretary, and other officers would be elected, as before, by the UA internally, with the Speaker taking most of the responsibilities of the current Vice-Chair for Internal Affairs. Both the President and Vice-President would have a number of powers enumerated in the Constitution.

If this is approved it would be put in place for the 2010-2011 cycle; the term and positions of the current Executive Board would continue as per the old Constitution with the proposed Board elected this coming Spring to serve next academic year.

Approval of the proposition requires an absolute majority of those voting and 20% of the undergraduate population to vote (2048 students). Should the referendum pass, minor alternations to the UC Bylaws – in the form of replacing the words “chairperson of the Undergraduate Assembly” with “president of the Undergraduate Assembly” – would be required.

Student Representation Resolution
This Sunday, the UA approved a Student Representation Resolution that recommended a number of changes to the structure of student representation on University committees.
Selected portions of the resolution follow:

The Undergraduate Assembly:

1. Instructs the UA Chair and Vice-Chair External to develop an amendment to the University Council Bylaws, in consultation with the Secretary’s Office, the UC Steering Committee, and the Undergraduate and Graduate Caucuses, which would:
   
   a. permit UC members representing organizations to have alternates who may take that organization’s seat if and only if the normal representative is through illness or academic commitment unable to attend a meeting of Council,
   
   b. allow the replacement of representatives of organizations with their successors, if that organization’s leadership turns over with the calendar and not the academic year,
   
   c. clarify that the UA’s delegation of UC seats to the NEC to appoint to under/ misrepresented groups (and similar decisions which could be undertaken by any of the Assemblies or the Senate) does not constitute a violation of Bylaw II.1(e), mandating that all UA seats be UA members and II.2., mandating a “democratic election” for all seatholders.

2. Encourages the NEC, the UA Executive, and the University Secretary’s Office to hold an Education Session for all undergraduate representatives on University and Trustee Committees.

3. Requests that a schedule of committee meetings of all kinds for all university committees on which non-administrators sit be communicated to the University Council Steering Committee, and for minutes for those meetings to be likewise communicated to the Steering Committee when they are drafted.

4. Mandates that all UA members on University Committees write a brief report on each meeting they attend and submit it to UA Steering a reasonable time after each meeting.

5. Proposes, as a matter of principle to be proposed and enacted formally if Question 2 is approved, that:
   
   a. all NEC-appointed university committees (specifically the University Council committees and the Academic Planning and Budget Committee) and the with two undergraduate representatives consist of one undergraduate appointed by the UA and one undergraduate appointed by the NEC,
b. all committees on which UA members sit with more than one seat have at least one seat appointed by the NEC,

c. all other committees with three seats or more have one seat delegated to the UA, save those committees with a predominantly academic focus in which one seat will be delegated to SCUE,

d. all University Council seats not occupied by top vote-getters, the UA President/Chairperson, VC External/Vice-President, or VC Internal/Speaker, be delegated to the NEC to allocate to under misrepresented groups.

Progress on many UA initiatives
Through strong partnerships with the administration and other constituencies, a number of changes on campus are in progress:

- Mark’s Café is now open until 2am on a pilot basis, and serving a number of delicious high-carbohydrate snacks,
- Penn has moved to discontinuing the use of Social Security Numbers to enter the College Houses, protecting student privacy,
- Housing Services has worked with the Assembly of International Students to provide a forum for international students to meet students with residences open over Winter Break,
- The Green Fund has approved funding for an UA-backed urban garden that will complement Penn sustainability initiatives and interdisciplinary education,
- An Open Letter on Syllabi and Textbooks will be sent to all undergraduate chairs in the next week, marking the beginning of a grassroots campaign to encourage faculty to post syllabi online and be conscious of textbook costs when planning courses.

Happy holidays for everyone! I include, in the holiday spirit, the following charming cartoon about Christmas in Australia.

Respectfully submitted,

Alec Webley