This is the twenty-ninth annual report of the Steering Committee of the University Council, prepared in accordance with a requirement in the Council Bylaws that the Steering Committee publish an annual report to the University community that reviews the previous year’s Council deliberations and highlights “both significant discussions and the formal votes taken on matters of substance.”

SEPTEMBER MEETING

In accordance with the bylaws, Council called for the selection and ranking of focus issues for the 2006-2007 academic year. Council Steering Committee Chair Vincent Price reported that the Steering Committee had recommended four focus issues to be undertaken by University Council:

- Interdisciplinary Education
- Campus Development Plan
- Issues and Policies Regarding International Students
- Student Health Services

Professor Price noted that Steering’s selection of these issues left time for consideration of issues that might develop over the course of the academic year. No additional issues were presented at this meeting.

Professor Price reminded Council members that Council had approved the revised structure of Council committees the previous May. He noted that the major changes concerned two committees: the new Committee on Academic and Related Affairs, which assumed charges formerly undertaken by the Committees on Admissions and Financial Aid, Bookstore, International Programs, Libraries, Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics, and Research; and the Committee on Campus and Community Life, which assumed charges formerly undertaken by the Committees on Communications, Community Relations, Quality of Student Life and Safety and Security.

Professor Price explained that for the 2006-2007 academic year, the Steering Committee would serve also as the Committee on Committees. In addition, he reported that Steering had met and recommended a set of specific charges for each of the standing committees which were drawn from a review of the previous year’s committee reports. Each committee also was asked to discuss its general charges and to make recommendations for specific focus areas for the following year.

OCTOBER MEETING

In accordance with the bylaws, the President, Provost and other administrators presented extended reports covering the State of the University.
President Amy Gutmann’s presentation focused on the University’s award-winning eastern campus development plan, *Penn Connects*, the University’s major fundraising campaign currently in the “quiet phase”, and the University’s partnerships with Philadelphia schools. She asked Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations John Zeller, and Associate Dean for Graduate and Professional Education Nancy Streim to comment respectively on those topics. Provost Ron Daniels then reported to Council on the topic of internationalization and education.

At the Open Forum, Green Campus Partnership Director Bonnie Waring and Associate Director Michael Poll discussed the different groups promoting environmentally friendly programs on campus. Ms. Waring charged that while Penn has made significant progress in this area, we were still “leagues behind” our Ivy peers. Mr. Carnaroli thanked the students for acknowledging what had been done to date. He noted that the University already had initiatives dedicated to conservation and recycling, but agreed that more could be done. President Gutmann added that she looked forward to further discussions with Mr. Carnaroli and the new Vice President for Facilities and Real Estate Services, Anne Papageorge, on this topic.

**NOVEMBER MEETING**

Associate Provost Andrew Binns reported on the status of interdisciplinary education at Penn. He noted that it has always been one of Penn’s greatest strengths and examples can be seen in Penn’s interdisciplinary centers and institutes, interdisciplinary undergraduate educational programs, such as dual/joint-degree programs; and interdisciplinary graduate education programs including interdisciplinary graduate groups, and joint-degree programs. Dr. Binns discussed how impediments to interdisciplinary education can obscure opportunities; most notably that Penn’s responsibility centered management creates financial incentives that appear to discourage crossing school boundaries. However, he did note that current University initiatives, including the *Penn Compact*, the Penn Integrates Knowledge professorships, the initiatives in response to the recommendations of the Task Force on Global Engagement recommendations, and the Provost’s Interdisciplinary Seminar are helping to break down some of those barriers.

Council held a discussion of Student Health Services led by Vice Provost for University Life Valarie Swain-Cade McCoullum. The Vice Provost indicated that Penn is one of approximately 27 institutions across the country that operate health centers which are accredited by the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

Vice Provost Swain-Cade McCoullum then introduced Dr. Evelyn Wiener, Director of Student Health, to discuss Penn’s services. Dr. Wiener stated that the University had an institutional obligation to guarantee access to the best quality care for all students. She then outlined how Penn’s Student Health Service accomplishes this through a combination of the University’s insurance requirement and the availability of both
clinical and non clinical programs. She concluded with a basic overview of Student Health Services including hours of operation, the number of students seen, the number of student visits, and patient satisfaction. Council members’ concerns included the privacy of patient information, the availability and protocol for emergency care for students in the Biomedical Graduate Studies in regards to laboratory issues, the availability of confidential HIV testing, preventative care options, and support for a new and expanded Student Health facility.

During the Open Forum session, Brittany Binler, KeAndra Dodds, and Yana Sigal, members of the Penn Athletes and Allies Tackling Homophobia and Terosexism (PATH), presented on PATH’s mission to educate, increase awareness, and create a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender athletes and their allies at Penn. The presenters noted that there is a “history of intolerance” which is inconsistent with Penn’s institutional identity and recommended that the University join a new regional NCAA advanced cultural diversity training consortium. Maryanne DiStansilao, Director of Athletics, stressed that the Department of Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics does not tolerate or encourage a culture of intolerance and discussed the department’s current initiatives with regards to diversity training, support, and awareness. Undergraduate Assembly Chair Brett Thalmann noted that the UA passed a proposal endorsing PATH’s recommendation on instituting a cultural diversity training program. DiStansilao stated that the Department of Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics had already applied to participate in the NCAA cultural diversity training. President Gutmann stressed that diversity issues are important throughout the University and are not exclusive to Athletics.

JANUARY MEETING

President Gutmann gave a report on international issues at Penn, noting that Penn has attracted an increasing number of international students and scholars each year, including having the highest percentage of international undergraduate students in the Ivy League, with 12% (1,397) of its 11,922 students coming from more than 100 countries.

President Gutmann noted that there are many obstacles affecting international student enrollment, the two most obvious obstacles being: post 9/11 increases in security regulations that make it more difficult for international students to obtain visas to enroll in universities in the United States; and the difficulty or total inability of international students to receive any sort of financial aid to attend universities in the United States.

President Gutmann reported that there were, however, some encouraging developments. First, the National Security Higher Education Advisory Board presented a compelling case on behalf of international students before the Department of Commerce which eventually rejected a proposal that would have made it far more difficult for universities to conduct research involving international students and faculty. In addition, the National Security Higher Education Board recommended the creation of an advisory committee to recommend measures that would safeguard national security while keeping the United States at the leading edge of technological innovation.
President Gutmann reported that Penn has already created two new endowed funds to aid students with financial need from China, India, Israel and Central America. She was very hopeful that the Penn World Scholars initiative would generate more funds to aid international students, but said that much remains to be done to make Penn truly accessible to the most talented people across the globe.

Provost Ron Daniels went on to discuss how the University could create a “climate” of international activity and ideas in West Philadelphia. He noted that Penn has the 14th largest number of international students of all American universities and is ranked second in the Ivy League. The Provost further noted that Penn not only draws world citizens to Philadelphia, but Penn community members also go out into the world in remarkable numbers. He also discussed the recruitment of faculty who study questions of global concern and who provide innovative courses that address international challenges. While acknowledging that study abroad is the mainstay of Penn’s international education, Provost Daniels noted that there was considerable enthusiasm for different kinds of experiences that complement the traditional, classroom-based programs. He announced the creation of a new fund for Innovation in International Education which would challenge deans and faculty to generate proposals that will expand Penn’s current international offerings for students.

Council then held a discussion on other international issues. Some concerns included the increasing trend of international students to return to their countries of origin following graduation and the concern that international students at Penn tend to be an elite/upper class, homogeneous group.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Judy Shea, the Interim Chair of the Committee on Pluralism, explained a proposed amendment to the University Council Bylaws which would create a new committee called the University Council Committee on Diversity and Equity. This new committee would represent a merger of two standing committees – the President’s Affirmative Action Council and the University Council Committee on Pluralism – which had significant overlap in practice and personnel involvement. Dr. Shea read the new proposed charge, commenting that the Committee believed that the merger would increase effectiveness of actions taken toward meeting the University’s goals in regard to diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity. University Council Moderator Paul Guyer called for Council to vote on the proposal to change the Council bylaws. The motion was seconded, a vote was taken, and the proposal passed with no dissensions or abstentions.

Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli gave an update on the plans for developing the campus, focusing primarily on the athletics facilities. He stressed that the current plan is consistent with the need for flexibility as the campus evolves. Some highlights of the current plan include a seasonal air structure, glassing in the northern arcade of Franklin Field and converting it into a fitness and weight facility, replacing the Lott Tennis Courts with Palestra Green, creating 12 new tennis courts and five fields in the new Urban Park.
and Field Area, and replacing Levy Tennis Pavilion with a combination of squash and tennis courts. He stressed that sustainability concerns were a guiding force for the plan. President Gutmann also emphasized that the new facilities would not decrease the amount of open green space at Penn.

Vice President of Facilities and Real Estate Services Anne Papageorge reported on Penn’s current sustainability practices. Some highlights of the plan’s practices include SEPTA pass discounts, implementation of energy conservation at the centralized chilled water and steam distribution plant, supplying 30% of campus electricity through wind power, working with the School of Design to benchmark utility usage, renovating existing buildings rather than building new ones, creating an energy conservation competition between residents of different College Houses, and moving toward LEED certification for a number of new buildings. In addition, Ms. Papageorge reported that Penn’s current design guidelines include a commitment to responsible use of energy and other natural resources. She also noted that President Gutmann had recently signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment and that the Sustainable Endowments Institute recently named Penn a Campus Sustainability Leader.

MARCH MEETING

At the March meeting President Gutmann reported on a number of recent successes and new developments at Penn, including the Penn Basketball team’s winning season; the campaign kickoff event, scheduled for October 20, 2007 during Homecoming weekend; the new dean for the Graduate School of Education, Andrew Porter; the Penn Connects campus development plan, which recently garnered awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Boston Society of Landscape Architects; the new Penn television advertisements which feature prominent Penn alumni John Heisman, Andrea Mitchell, and John Legend.

Dr. Gutmann then turned the meeting over to Bonnie Gibson, Vice President for Budget and Management Analysis, who reported on the current year’s operating budget.

On behalf of Provost Daniels, Dr. Gutmann then introduced Robin Beck, Vice President for Information Systems and Computing. Ms. Beck reported on the challenges to keeping the University’s IT systems and services up to date while demand and expectations for IT systems and services are rising and becoming more complex. Ms. Beck noted that the challenge at Penn is to ensure the consistent, secure, and reliable operation of current systems and services while planning for and developing the next generation of core student systems.

At the Open Forum portion of the meeting, Kevin Rurak, chair of the Lambda Alliance, raised the issue of whether the self-deferral policy of the Red Cross is consistent with the University’s non-discrimination policy. Dr. Stephen Gluckman, Professor of Medicine, and Chief of Penn’s Infections Disease Clinical services, and Clinical Director of the Botswana Penn Partnership responded to the concerns raised by Mr. Rurak. He advised that the Red Cross must “err on the side of caution” when asking people to self-defer and
that people were asked to self-defer based on certain high-risk behaviors rather than social or racial factors. No action was taken by Council.

APRIL MEETING

President Gutmann began by making a statement regarding the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. She reaffirmed Penn’s solidarity with Virginia Tech and noted that the school was coping impressively. She urged the Penn community to learn from that example and also urged individuals to make use of appropriate campus resources if needed.

Larry Gladney, Chair-Elect of the Faculty Senate, summarized a report that the University Council Committee on Committees (CoC) generated on behalf of Steering in order to determine how the new Council committee structure was functioning. The Committee’s final determinations include: that all committees were meeting regularly and engaging appropriate University personnel in charge-related discussions; all charges were considered clear and consistent with the missions of the respective committees; committees with broader arrays of charges found them somewhat daunting, but the CoC believes that more effective use of subcommittees and a clearer understanding of how to use related University personnel would alleviate some of these problems; the CoC recommended that there be an examination of the new Diversity and Equity Committee and the role of administrators on that committee.

Chair of the Personnel Benefits Committee David Friedman reported on that Committee’s work for the year. Dr. Friedman advised that the Committee’s focus this year was on health, wellness, and behavioral health issues. Highlights of the report include: that Penn is on the leading edge in regard to mental health benefits made available; human resources has a new plan to allow employees to buy supplemental long-term disability insurance, for which 10% of employees have signed up; Penn’s prescription drug coverage has had success in lowering costs by asking employees to adopt such strategies as using generic drugs and ordering drugs by mail; and, in comparison with other local companies and institutions, Penn uses its health benefit funds very efficiently.

Brett Thalmann, chair of the Undergraduate Assembly (UA) discussed the UA End of Year Report which described the many projects undertaken by the UA that year, and the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) posters that were distributed, which were part of a campaign spearheaded by the Mental Health Coalition to destigmatize the use of mental health facilities.

Lambda Alliance Chair, Kevin Rurak recommended that Council should continue to discuss the need for a campus-wide assessment of student satisfaction, particularly in relation to the experiences of the diverse members of the University community. In addition, Jun Li, Chair of the Asian Pacific Student coalition recommended that that Council work with the Mental Health Coalition and CAPS in regard to the underutilization of services and issues of access.
Vice President for Public Safety Maureen Rush presented on emergency preparedness at Penn. Under the current plan, a response to a situation similar to that at Virginia Tech would include: University-wide email distribution lists, phone banks, web notification on the homepages of both Penn and Public Safety, the emergency MELT phone line, PA systems, and person to person communication via evacuation drills involving loudspeakers from Penn police patrol cars, electronic access control, lockdown procedures, and fire alarms. In addition, public safety is working with city officials in researching new possibilities for mass communication during a crisis situation, including the use of text messages, voice mail, and email. Ms. Rush also reported on Penn’s capacity to respond to students who are having mental health problems. She advised that Penn has a very well coordinated, interdisciplinary response to students experiencing these problems, which includes VPUL’s campus student emergency procedure protocol and addresses a variety of different kinds of situations.

Sitting in for Provost Ron Daniels, Associate Provost Andrew Binns updated Council on the proposed relocation of Student Health Services to a larger, more centrally-located space at 3535 Market Street. Dr. Ted Emmett, Professor of Emergency Medicine, University of Pennsylvania Hospital, gave an overview of health issues facing college communities. Marilyn Kraut, Human Resources Director, Quality of Worklife Programs, and Dr. Mike Diorka, Director of Recreation, discussed major trends and Penn initiatives for faculty and staff. Dr. Evelyn Wiener, Director, Student Health Services, and Susan Villari, Director, Office of Health Education described major trends and Penn initiatives for students.