This is the thirty-third 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

With the advice of Steering and consent of Council, President Amy Gutmann appointed Dr. Reed Pyeritz as moderator and parliamentarian Marjorie Hassen for the 2010-2011 academic year.

Professor Bob Hornik, Chair of the Faculty Senate and Steering Committee of University Council advised that Steering had drawn on discussions held at the April 2010 Steering and Council meetings to create the following list of four focus issues for the 2010-2011 academic year:

- Discussion of faith-based initiatives and groups on campus, highlighting how students of different backgrounds work together to make Penn a more welcoming environment for students from all walks of life; also discussion of where there may be concerns or unresolved issues in this area.
- Review of how Penn works to support both students and parents, and discussion of both positive initiatives and limits in how the University works with students to avoid crises whether on campus or while traveling abroad.
- Reexamination of Penn’s relationship with West Philadelphia. The University has invested heavily in its immediate community. What are the current initiatives in place; what has gone well and what remains of concern?
- Review of diversity pipeline initiatives throughout the various levels of the University: recruitment of undergraduates; support of undergraduates while they are here; recruitment of graduate students; recruitment of faculty. Discussion of goals/criteria for success under these initiatives, current achievements and possible issues.

Council reviewed the 2010-2011 committee charges. Professor Hornik outlined new committee procedures to support committee efforts to identify and resolve issues by working directly with their administrative liaisons and other administrators on campus and to put forward to Steering a small number of recommendations to be submitted at year’s end.

Provost Price, with Andy Binns, Vice Provost for Education, and David Fox, Associate Director, College Houses and Academic Services, led discussion of the 2010-2011 Academic Theme Year: The Year of Water, which serves to foster University-wide analysis and conversation and offers a variety of intellectual and cultural opportunities for students, faculty and staff. The theme for the 2011-2012 academic year will be The Year of Games: Mind and Body.
OCTOBER MEETING

In accordance with the Bylaws, the President, Provost and other administrators presented extended reports covering the State of the University.

Provost Price highlighted the collaborative work being undertaken across Penn’s campus, noting that academic theme years provided opportunity for interdisciplinary research and cross-school partnerships around a central theme. He noted that $200 million in federal “stimulus funding” received by Penn faculty will finance research that brings together multiple schools and disciplines. A panel of representatives from Penn’s arts and culture institutions and academic units discussed current initiatives, including projects with Kelly Writers House, the Museum and the Arthur Ross Gallery.

President Gutmann asked Anne Papageorge, Vice President for Facilities and Real Estate Services, and John Zeller, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, to update Council on progress on Penn’s campus development plan and the Making History campaign. Ms. Papageorge reported on several projects both completed and underway, as well as those in the design phase, and discussed briefly the acquisition of the DuPont Marshall Research Lab facility. Mr. Zeller indicated that $2.85 billion has been raised in the campaign thus far against the goal of $3.5 billion with two years remaining in the campaign. A top priority for this campaign is financial aid, keeping Penn’s promise of access as outlined in the Penn Compact.

University Chaplain Reverend Charles Howard presented the first focus issue of the year: faith-based initiatives and groups on campus. Chaplain Howard provided an overview of the Office of the Chaplain and its ceremonial, advisory, counseling and crisis response roles. The office works with more than 40 student religious organizations and one in three undergraduates at Penn are connected to a campus religious community.

DECEMBER MEETING

President Gutmann led discussion on the second focus issue of the year: Penn’s relationship with the West Philadelphia community. She commended efforts in education, public health, neighborhood improvement and the economic growth of the West Philadelphia community, noting that Penn faculty and staff donate over 50,000 hours each year to the Philadelphia School District and that Penn has supported local businesses by purchasing more than $100 million in products and services from local vendors. Dr. Eugenie Birch, Lawrence C. Nussdorf Professor of Urban Research and Education and Co-Director of Penn’s Institute for Urban Research, led students in discussion of their work in West Philadelphia through the Netter Center, Fox Leadership and Civic Scholars programs, and the schools of Law and Medicine.

Council held its first Open Forum and discussed the following issues:

- Recommendation to end the tradition of the tossing of toast at home Penn football games
- Recommendation to centralize alumni development for graduate and professional students
FEBRUARY MEETING

Dr. Ajay Nair, Associate Vice Provost for Student Affairs, led discussion on the year’s third focus issue: “Parents as Partners at Penn”, highlighting the role of the office of Vice Provost of University Life (VPUL) engaging and collaborating with students and parents to address challenges, provide support. He described how the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Clery Act (reporting crime on or near campus) impact how the University communicates directly with parents.

MARCH 2 MEETING

Vice Provost for Faculty Dr. Lynn Hollen Lees led a panel discussion on the focus issue: Penn’s pipeline initiatives, programs and strategies to recruit, retain and mentor diverse groups across the University through undergraduate and graduate admissions and faculty recruitment and retention.

Dr. Gutmann noted she and the Provost will make public in the spring an analysis of current efforts and a concrete plan of action relating to issues of faculty diversity, reiterating that it is among Penn’s top priorities.

Council then held its second Open Forum of the year. Issues discussed included:

- Questions on transparency in reporting admissions data for diversity purposes and on the communication of goals and support for improving faculty diversity
- Sustainable toast tossing tradition alternatives
- A proposal for Penn as a conflict-mineral free campus (as an institutional investor and purchaser of technology products)
- Questions on coverage and costs for transgender health benefits
- Question on how Penn might address federal taxation differences on health insurance benefits for same-sex domestic partners (as compared to spousal coverage)
- Questions on the role of University Council committees in policy discussions, and possibilities for most effective communication between committees and administration
- Options of financial support for those who may wish to participate in Greek life on campus but cannot afford to do so

MARCH 30 MEETING

As called for in Council bylaws, Vice President for Budget and Management Analysis Bonnie Gibson discussed the current and upcoming fiscal year operating budgets and student charges and financial aid. She noted that Penn has weathered recent economic downturns well as it is not highly dependent on endowment income.

Ms. Gibson stated that the 3.9% FY’12 undergraduate tuition increase was the second lowest tuition increase in 43 years and low relative to our peer institutions. She noted that graduate and professional schools planned increases ranging from zero to 6%. The FY’12 financial aid budget will increase nearly $11 million, or 7.7%, with 57% of undergraduate students to receive some form of financial aid. Since 2002, the average freshman grant has increased by 85%, and loans have been eliminated from financial aid packages.
Vice Provost for Research Andrew Binns led a panel presentation on undergraduate research programs at Penn and how the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CURF) assisted students seeking research opportunities. Discussion participants Professor Peter Struck, Director of the Benjamin Franklin Scholars Program (BFS), CURF Director Harriet Joseph and Wallace Genser, Associate Director for Undergraduate Research at CURF, led a student panel on undergraduate research and how Penn could make research opportunities more attractive and accessible to students.

APRIL MEETING

Council held a moment of silence to acknowledge the passing of Professor Henry Teune, a devoted past member of Council and an active member of Penn’s community for the past 50 years.

Acting moderator Charles Mooney introduced the chairs of the five standing committees who provided brief overviews of their final reports:

- Professor Michael Topp, Chair of the Committee on Academic and Related Affairs
- Professor Phil Nichols, Chair of the Committee on Campus and Community Life
- Professor Nancy Tkacs, Chair of the Committee on Diversity and Equity
- Professor Michael McGarvey, Chair of the Committee on Facilities
- Professor David Pope, Chair of the Committee on Personnel Benefits

Provost Price and Dr. Gutmann thanked the chairs and the committee members for their dedication in exploring the charges and making recommendations.

Committee on Committees Chair Professor Camille Charles reported on the work of the Council committees in 2010-2011, and indicated that the committees overall operated very well in this first year under new procedures intended to streamline the committee’s charges, provide opportunity to resolve issues directly and focus formal recommendations toward larger issues.

Student attendance at the meetings, possibly due to conflicting class schedules, remains an issue. Professor Charles hoped Council would work with the UA and GAPSA to resolve this issue and encourage increased student participation in the work of the committees.

Faculty Senate Chair Robert Hornik led a discussion of potential focus issues for Council for the 2011-2012 academic year. Topics suggested by Steering, Council and constituencies included:

- Financial aid and support services for international students
- Rising costs and implications for faculty and staff benefits
- How Penn works with government on local, state and federal levels
- Research and innovation at Penn’s professional schools and global impact
- Alumni relations across the University
- Penn Park and its accessibility to the University City community
- CAPS and mental health programs available at Penn
- Title IX issues, sexual assault prevention and gender disparities
- Update on the Faculty Diversity Action Plan to be released summer of 2011
• The resolution and closure of committee recommendations submitted before Council
• Lactation centers on campus for nursing mothers

The meeting ended with Dr. Gutmann acknowledging the contributions of outgoing participants of Council, thanking them for their participation.