

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: February 19, 2020
Subject: Report to the University Council

We proudly announced that Penn's 2020 Commencement Speaker will be Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, acclaimed Nigerian author, MacArthur Foundation Fellow, member of both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and recipient of numerous other honors and accolades. Her compelling narratives and absolutely fascinating commentary on complex cultural issues elevate the power of the individual voice.

She will be joined by an eminent array of fellow honorary degree recipients: U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy; American historian and author Jill Lepore; Penn emeritus professor and developer of the rubella vaccine Stanley Plotkin; leading advocate for the homeless and mentally ill as well as co-founder of Project HOME Sister Mary Scullion of Philadelphia; winner of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine and Penn alumnus Gregg Semenza; and renowned pioneer of jazz composition and Guggenheim Fellow Henry Threadgill.

As we look forward to a fantastic 2020 Commencement, we also celebrate the achievements of our preeminent faculty. At the end of January, we learned that Kathleen Hall Jamieson, renowned director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center and co-founder of FactCheck.org, will be awarded the 2020 Public Welfare Medal from the National Academy of Sciences. It is the Academy's most prestigious award.

For decades, Kathleen has shaped political and science communication and changed how we access and think about facts, what it means to have meaningful discourse, and how this affects all manner of politics, from local elections to presidential campaigns. In today's political climate, this work couldn't be more crucial.

We also celebrate Penn's latest recipients of the coveted Sloan Research Fellowship. The award recognizes the most promising early-career researchers and scholars in the U.S. and Canada. Out of 126 total recipients this year, Penn can proudly claim three: Liang Feng in SEAS; Erica Korb in the Perelman School; and Wijie Su in Wharton. These promising Penn scholars were selected on the basis of their research accomplishments, creativity, and trajectory of leadership in their respective fields.

Earlier this month, CrossTalk, the official blog of Cell Press, which is a leading publisher of biomedical and physical science research, posted a list of the Top 100 Inspiring Black Scientists in America. We were thrilled to see no fewer than six Penn scientists on that list: Drs. Ishmail Abdus-Saboor, Donita Brady, Rotonya Carr, Chantell Evans, Erle Robertson, and Brittany Taylor

These honors are just a small selection of the countless many our faculty, students, and staff regularly earn. Please join me in congratulating them and all our people who bring such pride and distinction to our University.

PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council

February 2020

We are honoring this month two of our most distinguished Penn leaders, as they mark meaningful transitions in the University. Dr. Valarie Swain-Cade McCoullum has been at Penn for more than four decades and served since 1995 as Vice Provost for University Life. She has mentored generations of students, faculty, and staff and influenced every corner of our campus. A graduate of the Philadelphia High School for Girls and the Masterman School, Dr. Cade has sustained a special commitment to our vital pipeline and college preparatory programs, and she has now agreed to assume a new role as Provost's Distinguished Senior Fellow of Student Engagement at the Graduate School of Education and Vice Provost for Student Engagement. In this new position, she will develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for these pipeline and college preparatory programs, while teaching two courses a year at GSE and collaborating with GSE faculty members to pilot innovative new approaches and assess existing pipeline programs. I know that you will join me in celebrating Val's extraordinary Penn career later this semester, and I will have more information soon about the search for her successor as Vice Provost for University Life.

Prof. Walter Licht, who also arrived at Penn in 1977, is one of the most eminent American labor and economic historians. Now Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History, he founded our landmark Civic Scholars Program in 2006, after becoming the second faculty director of Civic House four years earlier. [Civic House](#), as many of you know, is the University's hub for engagement with our Philadelphia community, and the [Civic Scholars](#) Program at Civic House offers undergraduates a four-year experience devoted to civic engagement and scholarship, including proseminars, summer internships, and a capstone senior research project. Prof. Licht's visionary leadership of these initiatives has been invaluable to our University and our community. He has decided to step down as faculty director this summer, and I am inviting nominations and expressions of interest from standing faculty members to be the next Faculty Director of Civic House and the Civic Scholars Program. They can be directed to Associate Provost Lynne Hunter at lynneh@upenn.edu by March 5, 2020.

Finally, I want to respond to the matter raised in New Business at the most recent University Council meeting. My office, along with the Offices of Facilities and Real Estate Services and of the Vice Provost for University Life, continue to have substantive conversations with student leaders about the ARCH and Locust Walk. We welcome all perspectives in these discussions and are committed to seeking the best solutions for all members of our community.

Wendell Pritchett
Provost