

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: March 24, 2021
Subject: Report to the University Council

On March 16, we announced that Penn is planning to return to an in-person teaching, research, and residential environment for the fall of 2021. With the widespread distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine now underway, with projections of more ample supply in the next several months, and with the many safeguards we have established on campus, we look forward to the fall with anticipation and hope. Specific details regarding the fall semester are still being developed, and it will be necessary to remain vigilant and flexible in our planning, as the pandemic could take unpredictable turns. But we are thrilled by the possibility of bringing our Penn community back together to continue our critically important missions of research, teaching, learning, and patient care.

We were also pleased to announce that we will be able to hold a limited in-person undergraduate Commencement ceremony at Franklin Field on the morning of May 17th. We regret that we will not be able to welcome the entire Penn community to this year's celebration, and we will continue to look for an opportunity to appropriately recognize our 2020 graduates, along with 2021 graduates who will not be able to attend this year's event, once pandemic restrictions and the requisite planning permit. We want to ensure that all our students have the opportunity for their academic accomplishments to be publicly recognized.

In a University-wide message, we reaffirmed our enormous pride in the large, vibrant, and diverse Asian community at Penn. We condemned in the strongest possible terms anti-Asian hate incidents. We shared our grief and anger over the alarming and deeply troubling surge of violence, hatred, and discrimination directed at Asians and Asian Americans during the pandemic. Sadly, we know that such discrimination is not a recent development. We stand resolutely and unequivocally with the Penn Asian community, a vital and cherished part of our University family, and with all those of Asian descent across the nation.

As Penn continues to navigate these challenging times with united resolve, we could not be prouder of our faculty, students, and staff. To mention only a few of many recent high honors:

We proudly announced that Penn's 27th Penn Integrates Knowledge University Professor is distinguished physician-scientist Kevin Johnson. He will hold appointments in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences in the School of Engineering and Applied Science and in the Department of Biostatistics, Epidemiology, and Informatics in the Perelman School.

Penn Professor Emeritus James Corner, renowned landscape architect and urban designer, has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Professors Howard Stevens and Nancy Hornberger of GSE have been elected to the National Academy of Education.

And we all celebrate this year's winners of coveted Thouron and Churchill Scholarships. For the Thouron, congratulations to Emily Davis, Carson Eckhard, Ben Friedman, Lauren Kleidermacher, and Beau Staso. For the Churchill, congratulations to Adam Konkol and Abigail Timmel. Well done!

PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council

March 2021

I am grateful to every member of the Penn community whose patience, resilience, and sense of community responsibility have helped us get through the past year. As you know, we [just announced](#) that we are planning to return to an on-campus, in-person experience for the fall semester. We will provide more details in the coming weeks, when we also hope to have more ability to offer vaccines to members of the Penn community.

As we look ahead in these ways, we are more indebted than ever to the flexibility and creativity across our campus in sustaining our shared mission this year. At this meeting of University Council, we will learn more about how two of our most essential offices navigated this shift: the [Office of Career Services](#) and the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#). Yet these are only two examples of the extraordinary efforts across our campus and in the Provost's Center. Our research enterprise – which itself produced the mRNA technology in COVID-19 vaccines – has continued to be robust, especially in initiatives related to the pandemic such as the [Penn Center for Research on Coronavirus](#) and Other Emerging Pathogens. We look forward this summer to welcoming an expanded cohort of students in the [Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring Program](#), where they will work directly with faculty, postdoctoral, and graduate student mentors on vital hands-on research projects.

The tremendous campus ambassadors of [Penn Admissions](#) have done such a good job of sustaining good will and interest in Penn around the world that they are now reading a record 56,000 applications, about 35% more applications than last year. The [Division of Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics](#) has been tireless in continuing to make opportunities available to our students, staff, and faculty, reopening the [Pottruck Health and Fitness Center](#) and now looking ahead to restarting limited local athletic competition. And, as we slowly return to the things that make our lives meaningful, I encourage you to visit our great arts organizations, whether virtually or in person. The [Annenberg Center](#) for the Performing Arts has done remarkably creative work in becoming a “[live venue in a virtual world](#),” while our [Penn Museum](#), [Institute of Contemporary Art](#), and [Arthur Ross Gallery](#) have all now reopened with limited hours and attendance, while also continuing to offer innovative and exciting virtual programs.

We will continue to keep you informed as events move forward and we continue to resume our shared life on campus.

Wendell Pritchett
Provost



**Status Report – Penn Professional Staff Assembly
March 24, 2021**

*Each year, PPSA selects a theme. We have chosen a continuing theme that embodies the mission of PPSA:
Connect @ Penn.*

- The PPSA Book Club, which has over 140 members and meets monthly, discussed The Authenticity Project by Clare Pooley in February. In March, we are reading Richard Grant's The Deepest South of All: True Stores from Natchez, Mississippi.
- On February 23, PPSA hosted a session for supervisors on “Managing Remotely,” on how to navigate managing others while working from home, and how to improve engagement and productivity of remote employees. More than 100 staff participated, and we received very positive feedback on the event.
- PPSA hosted an asynchronous Virtual Volunteering Fair on March 10-11, geared towards Penn employees to promote civic engagement opportunities with the goal of featuring a variety of non-profit organizations who are interested in recruiting Penn employees as volunteers.
- PPSA partnered with Human Resources on two March events they are hosting: Managing Caregiving in the Era of COVID-19 (March 16), and How to Help the Pandemic Generation Thrive (March 17).

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Forrest
Chair

Nadir Sharif
Past Chair

Patrick Walsh
Chair-Elect