

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: September 21, 2021
Subject: Report to the University Council

Welcome to the 282nd year of the University of Pennsylvania and a very warm welcome back to University Council.

The Penn community has reunited on campus in glorious fashion, exemplified by Convocation. We officially welcomed our most accomplished and diverse class of new students and transfers ever on College Green with College Hall beautifully lit behind us. Second-year students are settling in happily at Penn's stunning new College House. And in-person teaching and research are once again at full force.

Penn continues to lead in navigating the pandemic while pursuing our mission. Thanks to decisive planning and united community action—especially on vaccination and testing—the new academic year at Penn is off to a smooth start with nothing but hope for the future. I am grateful to all our faculty, students, staff, and leadership for working so hard, together, to make this fall possible. We will remain proactive and vigilant to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Penn's people and neighbors.

We're also together again thanks in large part to Drew Weissman's and Kati Karikó's messenger RNA technology breakthroughs, which are foundational to the Moderna and Pfizer COVID vaccines. For their work, these incredible Penn scientists have recently won some of the world's most coveted awards, including: the Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research; the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences (continuing Penn's winning streak); and the John Scott Award.

Finally, I call on all seniors to consider competing for this year's President's Engagement Prize and President's Innovation Prize. Unmatched in size and scope anywhere in higher education, these Prizes provide a graduating Penn senior or team of graduating seniors with \$100,000 for project costs and a generous living stipend to undertake transformative projects that make a real difference in the world. You can visit the Prizes' websites to learn more.

Reunited in person, the Penn community and campus are buzzing with activity and life once more. Welcome to another year of University Council and another extraordinary academic year at Penn.

PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council

September 2021

I join President Gutmann in welcoming everyone back to campus and thanking all of you for your extraordinary collective work in sustaining our educational mission in these challenging semesters. We have prepared extensive FAQs for both [instructors](#) and [students](#) for this term and continually update University-wide information on [vaccines](#), [cases and testing](#), and [public health guidance](#). Vaccines and testing are [available at all times](#) at no cost. For instructors, the Center for Teaching and Learning offers a wide range of [strategies and resources for teaching this semester](#), including detailed [strategies for teaching with masks](#). We are especially sensitive to the needs of those who are experiencing caregiving challenges as a result of the pandemic. We are holding a special Zoom session on September 23 on [resources for caregiving](#), in partnership with Human Resources and the Penn Forum for Women Faculty, and we also encourage caregivers to talk directly with their dean, department chair, or supervisor and to learn more about Penn's resources for [backup care](#), [child care](#), and [senior care](#).

Please join me in welcoming three outstanding new leaders in the Provost's Center who began their work over the summer. [Karen Detlefsen](#), Professor of Philosophy and Education, is our new Vice Provost for Education, overseeing graduate and undergraduate education across the University. One of our most distinguished teachers, scholars, and mentors, Karen has taught at Penn for twenty years and been awarded the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching, the highest university-wide teaching honor. [Alanna Shanahan](#) returns to Penn as the T. Gibbs Kane, Jr. W'69 Director of Athletics and Recreation. Most recently Vice Provost for Student Affairs at Johns Hopkins University, Alanna was Deputy Director of Athletics at Penn from 2012 to 2016, capping a two-decade career in Penn Athletics that she began as one of our great women's lacrosse players and team captains.

[Whitney Soule](#) joined us in July as Vice Provost and Dean of Admissions. Whitney served most recently as Senior Vice President and Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at Bowdoin College, where her leadership advanced both diversity and selectivity, especially in supporting first-generation and other students from historically underrepresented and under-resourced backgrounds. We also welcome our new [Predoctoral Fellows](#) for Excellence Through Diversity and [Postdoctoral Fellows](#) for Academic Diversity. These two invaluable programs support some of the most promising young scholars and researchers from around the country, both just before and just after they have completed their dissertations.

I look forward to working together this semester and continue to be grateful for the amazing resilience and flexibility of every member of our Penn community.

Beth A. Winkelstein
Interim Provost



PPSA – Penn Professional Staff Assembly

WEBSITE: <https://ppsa.upenn.edu>

CONTACT US: ppsa@lists.upenn.edu

Status Report for University Council – September 21, 2021

- We invite you to reach out to us at *any* time about matters of Penn staff interest. The email listserv, ppsa@lists.upenn.edu, will reach the PPSA Tri-Chairs collectively.
- A selection of PPSA programming for the coming year includes:
 - **Virtual Employee Resource Fair** (October 14-15, 2021)
 - **Voter Registration and Empowerment** (Fall 2021)
 - **Anti-Blackness: Moving from Ally to Accomplice** (Fall 2021)
 - **Advancing Your Career at Penn** (Spring 2022)
 - **PPSA Book Club**, re-starting in late September with *All We Can Save*, in partnership with Penn Climate Week 2021. [Click here to join the Book Club](#). (Monthly except Jul., Aug., Dec.)
 - **PPSA Connection**, a campus networking tool for Penn staff. Each month, you will be randomly “matched” with another Penn staff member and encouraged to meet up for coffee, lunch, or a simple virtual conversation. [Get Connected with other PPSA members by registering here](#). (Powered by Spark Collaboration software)
- PPSA’s Executive Board for 2021-2022 are listed here: <https://ppsa.upenn.edu/board-members/>.
 - We welcome our new Board members:
 - Tonya Bennett, Director of Educational Technology, School of Veterinary Medicine
 - Matthew MacDonald, Clinical Research Regulatory Compliance Specialist Senior, Perelman School of Medicine
 - And we extend our gratitude to the Board members continuing for another term:
 - Natalie Dury Green, Associate Director, Master in Law Program, Graduate and Professional Programs
 - Kathy Tang, Sr. Clinical Research Operations Specialist, Perelman School of Medicine
 - We also welcome to our new Secretary to the Board:
 - Dee Patel, Senior Writer/Editor, University Communications
- PPSA was grateful to Dean Erika James for joining our annual election meeting during May 2021. [Penn Today summarized the event](#), and an [archived recording](#) is available on the PPSA website.
- On June 24, 2021, Penn Food and Wellness Collaborative Coordinator Lila Bhide offered PPSA members a virtual tour of the [Penn Farm](#). We look forward to another gathering at the Farm during the coming year.
- PPSA and the Penn Libraries convened the 5th annual *Lightning Talks* on July 22, 2021, which provided an overview of the many services and benefits offered by Penn Libraries. An archived recording is available on the PPSA website.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Patrick Walsh, Chair

Kris Forrest, Past Chair

Anne Corcoran-Petela, Chair-Elect

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