

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Members of University Council  
**From:** Amy Gutmann, President  
**Date:** February 2, 2022  
**Subject:** Report to the University Council

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It is a special pleasure to welcome the Penn community back from winter break to the start of a new semester. As we enter the second year of the global pandemic there is cause for cautious optimism as vaccination rates continue to increase and as new treatments and drug modalities effective in preventing COVID mortality become widely available. Here on the Penn campus, we have seen a decrease in the positivity rate each week for the past several weeks. This is for all groups: undergraduates, graduate and professional students, faculty and staff. It's an encouraging trend that mirrors what we have seen in the community and in our health system. Masking remains one of the most effective mitigation strategies in our efforts to minimize transmission during this virulent phase of the virus, so we are asking all students, staff, and faculty to update your masks to meet the new masking guidelines.

On January 13 Board of Trustees Chair Scott Bok and the Executive Committee announced the nomination of UVA Provost M. Elizabeth Magill to serve as the ninth President of the University. The nomination will be presented to the full Board of Trustees, which will vote on Magill's nomination at its Stated Meeting on March 4, with the new president to assume her duties July 1.

Penn was honored to welcome Senator Bob Casey's virtual presence at this year's annual Martin Luther King Day of Service kickoff, which was held online on January 17 in response to the COVID pandemic. Despite this challenge, the university community was able to participate in pre-recorded and virtual service activities ranging from an arts materials donation effort to a literacy project to college admissions mentoring. Since becoming a national holiday in 1986, Martin Luther King Day has focused the University's energies and attention on community service while inspiring all of us to explore ways to realize Dr. King's vision of a "beloved community" and we salute the many ways in which Penn students, staff, and faculty have continued to contribute, even in the midst of the pandemic.

## PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council

February 2, 2022

I join President Gutmann in thanking every member of Council for your invaluable leadership and partnership in this challenging year. The most recent campus positivity rate has dropped to 4.11%, and we are seeing encouraging signs that the Omicron surge may have peaked in our region. We continue to have numerous safety guidelines still in place, as well as resources for every member of our community. You can find all of our public health guidance, data, announcements, and FAQs on the university's [comprehensive COVID website](#). The Provost's Office has extensive FAQs on academic issues for both [instructors](#) and [students](#). We have tried to anticipate and respond to any questions that people may have; please let us know if you have additional questions to suggest, especially as the semester moves forward. The Center for Teaching and Learning has detailed guidance on [returning to in-person teaching](#), including [strategies for teaching with masks](#) and [helping students](#) who are experiencing stress and trauma. And the University Life website has all the current [guidelines for student events](#), including the reservation process for [approved club and organization events](#), which will continue to be updated in the months ahead.

This is the time of year when we provide numerous opportunities for the year ahead for both students and faculty. Undergraduate students can now apply for [Undergraduate Research Mentoring](#) projects for this summer. Applications are due on February 20. Eligible graduate students are encouraged to apply for the Provost's [Graduate Academic Engagement Fellowship](#) at the Netter Center for Community Partnerships. This two-year fellowship supports doctoral students at Penn, in any School or academic field, whose scholarship involves [Academically Based Community Service](#) or related activities, including locally-based community problem-solving, service learning, or teaching in public schools. Applications are due on February 12. And we invite eligible faculty members to apply for our [Penn Fellows and Mellon Fellows](#) programs, which offer leadership training to mid-career Penn faculty members (newly tenured to early full professors). Both programs provide opportunities to develop leadership skills, build networks across schools and disciplines, and meet with senior leaders. The Mellon Fellows program, with financial support from the Mellon Foundation, supports leadership training specifically for mid-career faculty members in core humanities and arts disciplines, from departments that are strongly inflected by the humanities, and/or whose work is strongly based on cultural/historical analysis. Applications for both programs are due on February 15 and must include a letter of support from the candidate's dean or department chair.

I look forward to working together as we continue our return to in-person education and campus life in the weeks ahead.

Beth A. Winkelstein  
Interim Provost



## ***PPSA – Penn Professional Staff Assembly***

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

CONTACT US: [ppsa@lists.upenn.edu](mailto:ppsa@lists.upenn.edu)

### **Status Report for University Council – February 2, 2022**

- We welcomed Alanna Shanahan, T. Gibbs Kane, Jr. W'69, Director of Athletics and Recreation, as the featured guest at our **annual membership meeting** held on January 14. We are grateful to Dr. Shanahan for sharing her career story and her insights on the future of Penn Athletics and Recreation.
- The **PPSA Book Club** will next discuss Disgruntled: A Novel by Asali Solomon via Zoom on February 23 from 12-1pm. [Click here to join the Book Club](#). (*Monthly except Jul., Aug., Dec. Open to monthly-paid University staff.*)
- Other Spring 2022 events and activities for Professional Staff will be announced as they are confirmed, as part of our weekly newsletter (see below).
- We invite you to reach out to us at *any* time about matters of Penn staff interest.
  - The email listserv, [ppsa@lists.upenn.edu](mailto:ppsa@lists.upenn.edu), reaches the PPSA Tri-Chairs collectively.
  - PPSA's Executive Board meets on the second Monday each month from 12:30-1:30pm. All monthly paid staff are invited to attend and observe. Meetings are held via Zoom until further notice.
  - PPSA publishes a **weekly newsletter** on Tuesday mornings. [Click here to join the mailing list](#).

Respectfully submitted,

J. Patrick Walsh, Chair

Kris Forrest, Past Chair

Anne Corcoran-Petela, Chair-Elect

[walshjam@upenn.edu](mailto:walshjam@upenn.edu)

[krisf@upenn.edu](mailto:krisf@upenn.edu)

[corcoran@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:corcoran@wharton.upenn.edu)

Executive Assistant to the Faculty Senate

Director of Finance, Penn Museum

Associate Director, Aresty Institute of  
Executive Education, Wharton School



## Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly Status Report

- WPPSA hosted our Holiday Kick-Off “grab-n-go breakfast” on December 8, 2021 with 141 RSVP’s. Raffle prizes, WPPSA literature and more were handed out to build awareness, community and membership.
- Voices with Jack: We launched our first Fall conversation with Vice President of Human Resources, Jack Hauer. The purpose is to develop a reciprocal partnership and dialogue with HR.
  - Staff were selected to participate and given the opportunity to share experiences and ask career, policy and university-related questions.
- **Job openings:** We are still looking to fill two new positions including: Outreach Specialist and Digital Platform Specialist. Both positions will work in tandem with the Communications Deputy and oversight by the WPPSA Chair. If interested, staff should fill out the [contact us form](#).
- WPPSA Success Stories are now live here: <https://wppsa.upenn.edu/faq/>.
- Our next general meeting will be in late Feb early March. Find information, agenda and past minutes on our [website](#).

Website: <https://wppsa.upenn.edu>

Contact Us: [https://upenn.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_abgOq0SqM9YpRL8](https://upenn.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_abgOq0SqM9YpRL8)



Best,

Amber Banayat, Chair of WPPSA

Cynthia Di Loretto, Co-Chair of WPPSA



## ***University of Pennsylvania Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA)***

### **Constituency Status Report for University Council – February 2, 2022**

- Policy/Advocacy:
  - The International Student Affairs (ISA) Committee published a [letter](#)—signed by GAPSA, UA, ISAB, and AIS—on January 14, 2022 detailing pressing international student issues along with proposed solutions and next steps. We believe the actions will benefit many Penn community groups beyond the international student population.
  - Our Transportation Accessibility subcommittee continues to collaborate with the University to promote use of public transportation as part of our long-term commitment towards climate change mitigation.
  - Our newly formed COVID Policy and Support subcommittee will work to help support the University in adapting to the ever-changing COVID climate and provide support to our constituents that are continuing to be affected by COVID.

We seek partnership, collaboration, guidance, and support from the University and your groups on these topics to help improve the Penn experience for our community members.

- Our Programming division remains strong and adaptable with plans for COVID policy-compliant and safe activities such as virtual mixology class series, hiberknitting, online chai brewing class, speed friending, professional headshots, and so much more! Details will be publicized on our channels ([website](#), facebook, instagram, and newsletter) as they are finalized.
- Our Finance team and Councils continue to diligently roll out different grants and funding opportunities to support individual student endeavors, group/organization activities, and new ideas. The wide array of such opportunities can be found in the [Funding](#) section of our website.
- We invite you to reach out, collaborate, and engage with us – our council, committee, and general assembly meetings are open to all:
  - Councils and general assembly meetings take place on a biweekly basis on Wednesday evenings
    - Meeting details, agendas, and approved minutes can be found [here](#)
  - Committees are scheduled separately – please contact the [director in charge of the committee of interest](#) for more details

Thank you very much for reading! Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions/comments.  
Respectfully submitted,

Paradorn (Joe) Rummaneethorn, *President*  
[gapsa.president@gapsa.upenn.edu](mailto:gapsa.president@gapsa.upenn.edu)

**Website:** <https://www.gapsa.upenn.edu/>

**Contact us:** <https://www.gapsa.upenn.edu/contact-us>