

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: January 29, 2020
Subject: Report to the University Council

Welcome to a new year at Penn and welcome back to University Council. Just before the winter break, Provost Pritchett and I announced the launch of the Environmental Innovations Initiative. The EII is a critical part of Penn's new Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 3.0. It is led by two of our most distinguished faculty members in this area: Joseph S. Francisco, President's Distinguished Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Kathleen D. Morrison, Sally and Alvin V. Shoemaker Professor and Chair of Anthropology. Professors Francisco and Morrison will work closely with many partners across the University and they will lead an international search for the EII's inaugural executive director.

Global sustainability, in the face of the current climate crisis, is an essential challenge for our world and our future. Penn is committed to doing our part in helping to improve that future. Over the past eighteen months, we have engaged in extensive consultations across the University to consider how best to advance this mission. The EII will play an essential role in enlisting Penn's core strengths in research and education to support the sustainability of our planet.

The EII will maximize Penn's distinctive interdisciplinary strengths, building collaborations and creating a catalyst to spur new areas of inquiry. In so doing, the EII will complement our ongoing initiatives, including most recently the Vagelos Institute for Energy Science and Technology, founded in 2016; the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy, founded in 2014; and the Penn Program in Environmental Humanities, also founded in 2014. We will continue to support this robust engagement on our campus with sustainability and climate change, which along with the new EII will help all of us to make a tangible difference in our world.

Penn's progress on building inclusion continues apace. We were thrilled to announce last month a \$10 million gift in support of undergraduate financial aid and the Penn First Plus Program from exemplary Penn leaders Mindy and Jon Gray. The Grays' transformative philanthropy is dramatically accelerating BRCA1 and 2 cancer research, advancing patient care, and rallying thousands of others to the cause. Now, they are propelling Penn's undergraduate aid program forward. Their generosity will empower even more talented Penn students who are low income and/or the first in their families to attend college to achieve their dreams of a world-class education.

Just one measure of the power of a Penn education is the sheer range of prestigious recognition our students and alumni earn. At the end of last semester, we celebrated two new Penn Rhodes Scholars, Ezzaty Binti Hasbullah and Stephen Damianos; three Schwarzman Scholars, Zinan Chen, Andrew Howard, and Malik Abdul Majeed; and two Marshall Scholars, Erin Hartman and Christina Steele. Congratulations to all! In addition to these, we can look forward to another incredible cohort of President's Engagement and Innovation Prize winners later this semester as well as a staggering array of other highly coveted fellowships and awards.

We have a wonderful semester ahead, and I look forward to working with you. Thank you for your service to University Council.

PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council

January 2020

I hope that all of you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to an exciting semester ahead. We begin this year by congratulating Christopher Gruits, Executive and Artistic Director of the [Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts](#), for his recent selection as one of only 10 national Eisenhower Fellows. As part of this program, he will travel to South Africa and Singapore to develop a new Global Arts Project, which will bring major international artists to work at Penn and engage with the wider Philadelphia community. This project is a great example of how the arts at Penn advance our wider global mission, as well as our strong ongoing commitment to our city and our neighborhood. It also goes hand-in-hand with the Annenberg Center's wide-ranging programming, including, just this semester, the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, the renowned African singer Angélique Kidjo, the Trinity Irish Dance Company, and the 11-piece Mexican Afro-Amerindian band Jarana Beat, among others.

It is an especially exciting moment for all our arts organizations at Penn, and I encourage everyone to take time this semester to explore this vibrant part of our campus life. In particular, I hope that everyone will experience the spectacular transformation of the [Penn Museum](#). The world-famous Sphinx now greets visitors at the main entrance, the most visible emblem of a detailed renovation of every gallery on the main floor, along with hundreds of new objects on display across the Africa, Mexico/Central America, Middle East, and Native American galleries. These changes are designed to make the Museum more contemporary and accessible, truly cementing its place as one of the greatest and most comprehensive museums in the world.

We just celebrated the opening of a landmark show at the [Arthur Ross Gallery](#) (continuing through the end of March), which collects works on paper by Helen Frankenthaler, one of the leading Abstract Expressionist artists of the 20th century. This exhibit, organized in partnership with the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, brings together rarely seen works that illuminate the artist's process and her influential experiments with color, line, and space, more familiar from her large-scale paintings. Our [Institute for Contemporary Art](#) continues its essential role of spotlighting the most exciting new artists from around the world. This semester's exhibits focus on the work of two Philadelphia-based sculptors: Michelle Lopez, who leads our own sculpture program in the Weitzman School of Design, and Trinidadian artist Karyn Olivier. ICA is currently engaged in an international search for a new Director, which we expect to announce before the end of this semester.

I look forward to working with all of you in the semester ahead.

Wendell Pritchett
Provost