

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: October 21, 2020
Subject: Report to the University Council

The Penn community continues to engage powerfully despite the challenges posed by this pandemic. Just one representative example was our annual Silfen Forum, which I hope you had an opportunity to watch last Tuesday. An all-star bipartisan panel, including Donna Brazile, Governor Jeb Bush, Julián Castro, Peggy Noonan, and Penn Class of 2005 alumna Ashley Parker, joined together virtually to talk about civility, civic engagement, and the future of our country.

Our phenomenal moderator was Michael Delli Carpini, former dean of the Annenberg School and now the inaugural director of Penn's Paideia Program. It was a fascinating and enormously timely conversation that leveraged the virtual format to maximum effect—and gave Penn students invaluable access to a blue-ribbon group of experts and leaders as we near the end of this election season.

The week before our Silfen Forum, Perry World House hosted its annual Global Order Colloquium. The theme, "The U.N. at 75: Coronavirus and Competition," drew nearly 1,000 viewers who had the unparalleled opportunity to learn from global leaders about the present and future of international cooperation. Among those leaders was Samantha Power, Penn honorary degree recipient, Class of 2015 Commencement Speaker, and former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.

The Colloquium also featured Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norway's first woman prime minister and former director-general of the World Health Organization; Mark Suzman, CEO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Lady Catherine Ashton, former European Union high representative for foreign affairs and security policy; Irina Bokova, former director-general of UNESCO; and Arun K. Singh, former Indian Ambassador to the U.S.

As Penn brings leading national and international voices to bear on the greatest issues of our time, we also strive for an ever more resilient and welcoming campus community. Penn has taken several recent steps on this critical priority, including appointing our beloved University Chaplain, Dr. Chaz Howard, as the inaugural Vice President for Social Equity and Community. Chaz has long been a highly visible and effective champion on campus and beyond for wellness and inclusive excellence. For all his years here, during times of joy and sorrow, at moments of celebration and reflection, the Penn family has listened gratefully to the soothing voice and wisdom Chaz shares so graciously and with such heart.

On every front, Penn's essential work proceeds in spite of the setbacks we face. I am, as always, so proud of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends who are giving their all to see our University community through these times. And all of us are working hard to safely convene the Penn community on campus once more. Our eventual decisions about the spring semester and beyond will of course be guided by the best possible science and up-to-date data. But rest assured that with planning and preparation fully underway, we are striving to make in-person living and learning a reality as soon as possible.

PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council - October 2020

I am grateful to all of you – and to every member of the Penn community – for your extraordinary work in sustaining our university life this year. As we enter the second half of the semester, the strong engagement that we are seeing with virtual learning, and the many other new ways in which we are living our lives together online, continue to be inspiring and heartening. The [Penn Clubs](#) platform, designed by undergraduate students in [Penn Labs](#), has enabled students to get and stay involved with clubs, including dedicated Zoom rooms, algorithms to find new groups, and an online Student Activities Fair, which hosted more than 500 events across three days. Penn Clubs now has close to 700 student groups available for students to browse and interact. Along similar lines, the [Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships](#) worked to sustain interest in research with an online Research Fair, which featured more than 300 students presenting their research online and more than 20,000 pageviews in its first week. And our great Class of 2024 was equally engaged in this year's online New Student Orientation and Penn Reading Project, with record-high participation in preceptorials and other events.

We are strongly committed to doing everything we can to sustain the best possible experience of Penn this year. Toward this goal, we are now conducting surveys of all students and faculty to learn more about your experiences in the pandemic. They are completely confidential, and they will only be used to help plan for the future. Both surveys close before the end of the month, so I encourage all of you to complete it, if you have not already done so, and to encourage all of your colleagues to complete it, as we want to include the experiences of as many members of our community as possible. We urge you in particular to complete not only the questions but also the open responses, which help us to learn more about individual experiences in navigating the challenging circumstances of this year.

Finally, I am very pleased to welcome Zoë Ryan, the new Dietrich Director of the [Institute of Contemporary Art](#), who begins her tenure at the start of November. Zoë is a world-renowned expert in architecture and design who comes to Penn from the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was John H. Bryan Chair and Curator of Architecture and Design. Her expertise in the impact of architecture and design on their social contexts will play an especially important role in shaping our conversations in the years ahead. ICA has now reopened with an [online reservation system](#), as have the [Penn Museum](#) and the [Arthur Ross Gallery](#). I encourage you to continue to visit and support these great art venues, which play a critical role in the life of our campus and our city and help us to find new perspectives as we approach a new year.

Please vote, if you have not already done so! We will continue to keep you updated on the University's plans for next semester.

Wendell Pritchett
Provost



**Status Report – Penn Professional Staff Assembly
October 21, 2020**

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

- On September 17, 2020 (National Constitution Day), PPSA held a virtual Voter Registration event. Participants celebrated the U.S. Constitution, learned how to Register to Vote, and were encouraged to Make a Personal Voter Plan. In addition, participants were invited to request a pocket-sized U.S. Constitution to be mailed to their home at no cost to them.
- The PPSA Book Club, which has 123 members, met on September 23, 2020, discussing *Atonement* by Ian McEwan. The next book club meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 21st.
- The Employee Resource Fair, co-hosted by the PPSA and the WPPSA, was held virtually for the first time ever, October 8-9. Forty-eight organizations from Penn and our community shared descriptions of the resources they offer to Penn staff and faculty. In addition, a series of 31 “live” sessions allowed participants to speak directly with representatives from several of these organizations across the two-day period. Many of the materials remain accessible in archival form at www.upenn.edu/erf.
- In November 2020, PPSA will host a virtual event for staff in partnership with HR on how to navigate Penn’s Employee Assistance Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Forrest
Chair

Nadir Sharif
Past Chair

Patrick Walsh
Chair-Elect



Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly

Status Report
October 9, 2020

- WPPSA would like to thank PPSA for inviting us to partner with them for this week's Employee Resource Fair.
- The first meeting of the year was held on September 24. Rebecca Block, Associate Director, Human Resources, Provost Centers, discussed University Resources for Staff, and Rebecca Huxta, Associate Director, Campus Health, discussed next week's Flu Clinic and how to stay healthy during this upcoming flu season.
- During the meeting, we also emphasized registering to vote, completing the census, and signing up as a poll worker for those who are healthy, willing, and comfortable.
- The meeting this month will be held [on October 29, 12pm](#). Mr. Glenn Bryan from the Office of Government and Community Affairs will be our guest. Last month we focused on ourselves as employees and individuals. This month, we want to focus on our role in the community, especially with the upcoming elections. We will also have a representative from the Netter Center discuss the center's role and some of their current programs. Hopefully, the October meeting will help inspire us to look at what we want our role to be in the Penn community and to become more engaged.

Mariel Diana Featherstone
Chair, Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly