

## MEMORANDUM

**To: Members of University Council**  
**From: Amy Gutmann, President**  
**Date: December 2, 2020**  
**Subject: Report to the University Council**

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On November 17, we announced Penn’s historic \$100 million contribution to the School District of Philadelphia, the latest step in our University’s enduring commitment to supporting the city and its public schoolchildren. The largest private contribution in the School District’s history, it will have an immediate and lasting impact. We are proud to partner with our city and School District to significantly improve the learning environment for Philadelphia’s schoolchildren in a way that will benefit generations of students, their teachers, and school staff. This \$100 million commitment joins our years-long investment in the District’s top-performing Penn Alexander School, our deepened commitment to the Henry C. Lea Elementary School, and myriad activities led by Penn’s 12 Schools and our Centers—more than 500 activities in 248 schools in every catchment area throughout the School District.

Education is at the very heart of all we do at Penn, and we will continue to ensure that we are doing all that we can to support the success of public education in Philadelphia. Our schoolchildren and teachers deserve no less.

We also proudly announced two new Penn Integrates Knowledge University professors. Our 25<sup>th</sup> PIK University Professor is Roberto Gonzales, a world-renowned scholar of the lives of immigrants in the U.S. He will hold the Richard Perry University Professorship with joint appointments in SAS and GSE. Especially as the U.S. grapples with its painful history of racism and debates how to advance racial equity, Roberto’s work has never been more timely or important.

Our 26<sup>th</sup> PIK University Professor is Lynn Meskell, an internationally recognized archaeologist and anthropologist. She will hold the Richard D. Green University Professorship with joint appointments in SAS, the Weitzman School of Design, and the Penn Museum. She exemplifies Penn’s commitment to bridging theory and practice and to using multidisciplinary perspectives to improve our understanding of how civilizations and cultures developed. Her preeminent work also strengthens the important efforts of museums in bringing this knowledge to communities around the world.

As we celebrate these new PIKs, we also congratulate Penn Nursing Dean Toni Villarruel on her very well-deserved reappointment. Consistently ranked the top nursing school in the world since 2017, Penn Nursing has nearly doubled its NIH funding; launched pioneering partnerships and new degree programs; and further strengthened its strategic ties with our other Schools and our local community—all of this and so much more is thanks to Toni’s inspired and inspiring work as dean. She has the vision, energy, skills, and broad support needed to thrive and succeed in a second term. Especially during this pandemic, we are grateful for Toni’s leadership, for Penn Nursing, and for all our frontline health care providers, researchers and teachers, students, and staff.

Thank you all for your service to University Council and for your leadership and commitment during these challenging times for our Penn community and for people everywhere. I wish everyone a great end of semester and a happy, healthy, and restful winter break.

## PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT

University Council

December 2020

I am grateful to all of you for your extraordinary work in sustaining our shared mission this semester. As we look forward to welcoming more of you back to campus in 2021, we continue to be profoundly appreciative of the resilience and creativity of our Penn community in these historic circumstances. Last month, we conducted surveys of both students and faculty to learn more about your experiences during the pandemic and to help us plan for these semesters ahead. Response rates for both surveys were high, and the survey reports will be posted in the next few weeks on the website of the [Office of Institutional Research and Analysis](#). This is part of our commitment to keep developing new support programs as we learn more about the needs of our community. Most recently – in addition to the new [President's PhD Initiative](#) and our ongoing [childcare grant](#) program – we launched the [Caregiver Connections](#) platform to help members of our community who are also caregivers with such concerns as babysitting, carpooling, tutoring, eldercare, and care for adults and children with special needs in our local neighborhoods. I also remind eligible faculty members that we are fast approaching the final extended deadline of November 30 to opt into the [Special Incentive Plan](#) for retirement by the end of this academic year.

We are equally proud of the resourceful ways in which our community has continued to offer essential programs in an online environment. One of the most valuable new programs is our year-long preceptorial series on [Racism and Anti-Racism in Contemporary America](#), organized by the [Paideia Program](#) and the Office of the Vice President for Social Equity and Community. These thirteen online conversations bring a wide range of distinguished guests, both Penn professors and outside leaders, to discuss vital contemporary topics such as policing, wealth disparities, workplace diversity, and social activism. I participated in the most recent session on fair housing policies and practices, and I encourage all of you to also take part in this invaluable component of our [Year of Civic Engagement](#).

Finally, I am delighted to join President Gutmann in welcoming two highly distinguished new Penn Integrates Knowledge University Professors. Their pioneering work, in very different areas, exemplifies the broad scope, intellectual innovation, and global eminence of our outstanding Penn faculty. Roberto Gonzales, who will come to Penn next year from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is one of the most important scholars of the lives of immigrants in the United States, including the landmark study *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*. Lynn Meskell, who has come to Penn from Stanford University while continuing her honorary six-year term as an AD White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University, is one of the most renowned global archaeologists, whose award-winning work has profound implications across such issues as world heritage, national sovereignty, and multilateral diplomacy. We are very proud that, even in the challenging circumstances of this year, Penn continues to be a home for the most eminent global scholars who are addressing some of the most critical challenges of our contemporary world.

I hope that all of you enjoy a rewarding end to the semester, and I look forward to working together in the year ahead.

Wendell Pritchett  
Provost



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

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**Status Report – Penn Professional Staff Assembly  
December 2, 2020**

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

- On November 2, 2020, PPSA held a virtual event for staff in partnership with HR called Taking Care of Your Emotional Health, an Overview of Penn Resources. This session was intentionally offered just before Election Day, and was presented in partnership with Health Advocate and Penn Human Resources.
- The PPSA Book Club, which has 123 members, discussed Loving Frank by Nancy Horan in October, and The Water Dancer by Ta-Nehisi Coates in November. The next book club meeting will be held in January.
- On December 9, 2020, PPSA will host a virtual event for staff in partnership with HR on how to navigate the new Be In The Know platform with Virgin Pulse.
- And in January, PPSA will kick off the year by hosting an asynchronous “Virtual Volunteering Fair,” a website 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 a volunteers.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Forrest  
Chair

Nadir Sharif  
Past Chair

Patrick Walsh  
Chair-Elect



## Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly

Status Report  
December 2, 2020

- Glenn Bryan from the Office of Government and Community Affairs and Regina Bynum from the Netter Center were our speakers for last month's meeting. The focus of the meeting was civic engagement and the role Penn plays in the community.
- This month's meeting will be held on November 19, 12pm. Wydia Houston from the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) will be the speaker. She will discuss the Employee Assistance Program and advice for seeking therapy.
- The next meeting will be held on December 17, 12pm. Rev. Charles Howard, PhD, Vice President for Social Equity and Community and University Chaplain, will be the speaker.
- On December 4, 12pm, a small group of WPPSA representatives will be meeting with Dr. Jack Heuer, Vice President for Human Resources, for Voices of Staff.

Mariel Diana Featherstone  
Chair, Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly