

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of University Council
From: Amy Gutmann, President
Date: February 17, 2021
Subject: Report to the University Council

Following a comprehensive search, Provost Pritchett and I announced the appointment of Whitney Soule as Penn's Vice Provost and Dean of Admissions, effective July 1.

It is clear that Whitney's vision, philosophy, and proven track record of inclusive and innovative admissions leadership will position Penn even more strongly for the future. We have every confidence she will thrive in this critical role and quickly become a vital member of the Penn community. For his exemplary work since Eric Furda's departure, we are deeply grateful to Interim Dean of Admissions John McLaughlin and look forward to his continued contributions to our University community for years to come.

I invite everybody to join us in conveying a very warm Penn welcome to Dean Soule.

At the same time, in both academics and athletics, recent Penn graduates have garnered impressive honors. We were very pleased and proud to learn that Joyce Kim, C'15, has been awarded a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. Joyce is one of only 24 Scholars from the U.S. this year. This achievement will make possible her doctoral work at the University of Cambridge in England.

Recent graduate Justin Watson, W'18, earned a Super Bowl win alongside his teammates with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Kevin Stefanski, C'04 and one of the youngest coaches in the NFL, was named NFL Coach of the Year. And we join Penn Athletics this month in kicking off a yearlong celebration of 100 Years of Women in Penn Athletics.

These honors and milestones are only a handful of the many that Penn students, faculty, staff, and alumni have earned in recent months—further proof that despite extraordinarily challenging times, Penn people continue to achieve and do good at the very highest levels.

Finally, I want to strongly reemphasize the important recent message shared by Provost Pritchett, EVP Carnaroli, and Chief Wellness Officer Dubé: We all must observe the health and safety protocols outlined in the Student Campus Compact to stem the rise in positive COVID cases among undergraduates living on and near campus. As University community leaders, University Council members are critical partners in making sure this message is widely heard. Now is the time to double down on vigilance. Stay masked, stay socially distanced, and regularly wash hands. This is essential for the safety of everyone in the Penn community and in our wider Philadelphia community. We thank you for all your help in keeping both Penn and our broader community as safe and healthy as possible.

PROVOST'S STATUS REPORT
University Council - February 2021

I am grateful to every member of the Penn community who has helped to sustain the historic work of our University this semester. The Quiet Period at the start of the term has now ended, and we are beginning the phased resumption of some campus services. Pottruck Health and Fitness Center and the Van-Pelt Dietrich Library Center are [gradually reopening](#) to small groups of students, and Penn Dining is conducting an initial pilot program of 25% seating capacity at the Starbucks in 1920 Commons, with reservations in the [Penn Eats app](#). The Office of the Vice Provost for University Life has begun a process for student groups to [request indoor space](#) for meetings and other activities, and my office has partnered with the Graduate Student Center to open a [temporary study and relaxation space](#) for graduate and professional students on the second floor of Houston Hall, which is available on weekdays by reservation.

We will learn more at this Council meeting about the exciting new [Projects for Progress](#). This fund begins accepting applications this month for team projects – proposed by any members of the Penn community – that advance our campus-wide goals of equity and inclusion. It will, in particular, support new ideas to advance educational equity, reduce systemic racism and health disparities, and otherwise enhance the quality of life for members of our community. Proposals are due March 1, and each successful team will receive up to \$100,000 to implement its initiative.

At this time of year, we also invite faculty members and first- and second-year undergraduates to participate in the invaluable [Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring \(PURM\) Program](#). This program, as many of you know, provides funds to directly engage undergraduates in summer faculty research projects. Since 2007, PURM has provided more than 1000 students with life-changing research experiences and supported more than 800 faculty research projects. This year's student applications are due February 21, and you can all learn more about this year's projects in the PURM [Project Directory](#).

Finally, I encourage everyone to join me on February 19 for the launch of the Penn & Slavery Project's [Augmented Reality Campus Tour](#). This new app uses augmented reality to take visitors on a tour of the legacy of slavery at Penn, drawing on the essential work of the student-led [Penn & Slavery Project](#). The online launch, which requires [advance registration](#), will feature student researchers, the app development team, and other members of our community telling us more about the dynamic features and important background of this new perspective on Penn's history.

We will continue to keep you informed as events move forward this semester and we slowly resume our shared life on campus.

Wendell Pritchett
Provost



**Status Report – Penn Professional Staff Assembly
February 17, 2021**

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

- PPSA’s first event of the calendar year was the Annual Meeting on January 14, where we ratified amendments to our by-laws, and welcomed Professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the Elizabeth Ware Packard Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication of the University of Pennsylvania and Director of the university’s Annenberg Public Policy Center, which operates FactCheck.org. Dr. Jamieson spoke about the resilience of democratic institutions in the face of a pandemic, a divisive presidency, ideological polarization, and disinformation.
- The PPSA Book Club, which has 141 members, discussed Anxious People by Frederik Backman in January, and February’s book club meeting next week will be The Authenticity Project by Clare Pooley.
- On January 27, 2021, PPSA hosted a virtual event for staff in partnership with HR on how to navigate the new Be In The Know wellness campaign platform with Virgin Pulse.
- On February 23, PPSA will host a session on “Managing Remotely” for supervisors, on how to navigate managing others while working from home, and how to improve engagement and productivity of remote employees.
- PPSA will soon announce an asynchronous Virtual Volunteering Fair, 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
February 17, 2021

- In December, a small group of WPPSA representatives met with Dr. Jack Heuer, Vice President for Human Resources, for Voices of Staff.
- For the December meeting, Rev. Charles Howard, PhD, Vice President for Social Equity and Community and University Chaplain, was the speaker and offered words of wisdom as we ended 2020 and looked towards 2021.
- Ms. Chris Hyson, Senior Health and Wellness Specialist, was our guest for the January meeting. The focus was employee wellness and health and more information was given about Be in the Know and Virgin Pulse.
- The February meeting will be held on the 25th at 12pm. Ms. Lynn Marsden-Atlass, Director and University Curator, Arthur Ross Gallery, will be the speaker. She will be discussing Simone Leigh's Brick House and how art impacts the Penn community.
- The March meeting will be held on the 25th at 12pm. Ms. Sherisse Laud-Hammond, Director, Penn Women's Center will be the speaker. The focus of the meeting will be our purpose and goals as we continue to navigate our careers at Penn.

Mariel Diana Featherstone
Chair, Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly