

## Agenda for Excellence

# Six University Academic Priorities

### To the University Community

The following academic priorities are those the deans, the University's Academic Planning and Budget Committee and we have identified as most compelling and strategic for Penn as an institution over the next five years. They are an important product of a lengthy academic planning process, described more fully on the back page of this supplement. In our collective judgment, these are the priorities that will most dramatically move Penn forward. Success in them will have the greatest impact on the University as a whole and provide the greatest leverage for advancement in other areas within and among the schools.

In most cases these University academic priorities build on present strengths in the schools; in others they highlight areas in which we believe we must become strong. These priorities are not exclusive: other vital programs will be encouraged within and among the schools. Moreover, as the schools solidify their strategies and as donors indicate feasible and attainable targets, the landscape pictured here may shift in certain ways and our priorities may evolve. But over the course of the next five years, we expect to make significant investments in each of the University priorities described here. Overall, central and school-based funds raised for these priorities or redirected toward them will total several hundred million dollars.

Each of these academic priorities is multidisciplinary and touches more than one school at Penn. Each responds to the reality that in the 21st century, the acquisition, communication and use of knowledge will be even less contained within the boundaries of a single discipline or school than is true today. More than many of its peers, Penn is well positioned for leadership in this context. Thanks to the wisdom of our forbears and the gifts of geography, all of our twelve schools are located on a single compact campus. Our critical mass of intellectual strength has few competitors—and our University academic priorities take great advantage of that fact.

We believe that premier centers of learning in the century to come will be those that combine excellent colleges for undergraduate education with first-rate capstone graduate and professional programs. Aided by the priorities set forth in this document, Penn will excel in this milieu. In the first place, Penn will have a superb program of undergraduate education, newly invigorated by the 21st Century Project, which will be the subject of another publication in the next few weeks. In the second place, Penn's undergraduate program will be united on our campus with leading centers of graduate and professional excellence—enhanced by the University priorities we announce today. Students at every level will have unsurpassed opportunities to combine educational elements from all of our schools because of strong multidisciplinary links among them.

The physical landscape of the Penn campus—covered with crosswalks between and among the different schools—is a metaphor for the cross-school and multidisciplinary relationships we seek to enhance. Over the past few weeks new stones have been installed in our physical crosswalks, increasing their strength and durability. To serve the future and prosper in it, the University must likewise strengthen and expand our intellectual crosswalks. Through investments in our University priorities we will do that—creating new academic neighborhoods and reinvigorating old ones.

In the process we will advance Penn's historical ability to embrace, teach and excel in both theory and practice. As we have said so many times before, the dynamic, reciprocal interaction of theory and practice has been an essential feature of our academic programs, campus life and intellectual style since the days of Benjamin Franklin. The intellectual lifeblood of our University has always been in constant circulation between theory and practice, with each contributing to the other. Progress in our University priorities will make this circulation even richer, and will make Penn even more the center of excellence in the new millennium.

Only an active, living combination of theory and practice can fully respond to the demands and opportunities of the years to come. Only a university where knowledge travels up and down pathways from one school to another and another can fully engage in and teach the theory and practice that will be required. Penn must be such a university. Unsurpassed excellence in both theory and practice and the unsurpassed connectedness among our separate schools and disciplines will be our signature. Let us write it across the decades of the 21st Century.

*Judith Rodin*  
President

*Stanley Chodorow*  
Provost

**Health Science, Technology and Policy**

Throughout its history the University has nourished and supported basic science research. The most recent large example of this is the Institute for Advanced Science and Technology now under construction on 34th Street, the future home of world-changing basic research in chemistry, engineering and medicine. IAST is a realization of the second goal of *Agenda for Excellence*, which emphasizes that vigorous research and the unimpeded pursuit of knowledge are at the very heart of our mission. Fundamental scientific research is vital for the future of our University and our country: it is a prerequisite for the applied research in which Penn also must continue to excel.

Nowhere at Penn today is scientific research—both basic and applied—more strategically important and promising than in the health sciences. A strategic focus on “Health Science, Technology and Policy” builds on the strengths and plans of Penn’s biomedical schools—Medical, Nursing, Dental and Veterinary—as well as particular strengths and plans of the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering and Applied Science and the Wharton School. Success in this University priority will produce lasting benefits for the entire University—including a variety of opportunities for new undergraduate research programs.

A dramatic field of emphasis in the health sciences will be genetics. Recent breakthroughs in biological and biomedical research have been particularly concentrated in this field, virtually constituting a “genetic revolution.” These breakthroughs have introduced extraordinary new techniques for modifying animal and plant genomes and have advanced our knowledge of detecting, treating, and curing disease. Genetics is a thread that connects efforts in a number of schools: Penn has one of the world’s greatest concentrations of expertise in this field. The School of Medicine has emphasized genetics research and human gene therapy for years, the School of Arts and Sciences is a leader in sequencing plant genomes, the School of Veterinary Medicine is translating new germ cell research for use in animal agriculture, and the School of Dental Medicine maintains very strong programs in molecular biology and genetics.

Other primary emphases in the biological sciences will include simulation and molecular design; mind, brain and behavior; and developmental biology—which rely on extensive collaboration and interactions across the schools. Continuing advances in these and other biomedical sciences will be heavily dependent on simultaneous improvements in the information sciences—also a University priority.

A final research province that deserves special mention—and is a wonderful example of the circulatory flow between theory and practice at Penn—is translational biological and biomedical research. This innovative approach to science and medicine is focused on bringing the advances of the laboratory to the direct benefit of patients—both human and animal. Our goal is to create an ability within the University to facilitate the translation of basic science discoveries to the clinic—to accelerate the availability of these discoveries to industry and, in turn, to the improvement of health.

In addition to scientific research, a key component of this University priority is its emphasis

on health policy, health services, and society. This offers great promise for the future, particularly as we move to a managed care environment which places ever greater emphasis on health economics, communications and information flow, and law.

*Illustrative emphases within this University priority:*

- The Genetic Revolution
  - Gene Structure, Function and Control
  - Gene Therapy
  - Biotechnology
- Biological Sciences and Information Science
  - Simulation and Design of Molecules and Drugs
  - Mind, Brain and Behavior
  - Bioinformatics and Computational Biology
  - Developmental Biology
  - Germ Cell Biology and Transgenesis
  - Health and Disease Management
- Translational Biomedical Research
- Health Policy, Health Services and Society
  - History and Sociology of Health and Medicine
  - Economics of Health Care
  - Animal Health Economics
  - Health Communication
  - Health Law
  - Bioethics

**American and Comparative Democratic and Legal Institutions**

At the close of the 20th Century a democratic wave has surged around the globe following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the growth of the economies of Southeast Asia, the elimination of apartheid in South Africa and the demise of Latin American dictatorships. Ironically, at the same time, participatory democracy in the United States may be at its nadir, as some two-thirds of the voting public decline to cast ballots in general elections.

There is much of interest and importance to the academy in this. Among the questions of the day are the following: What are the abiding lessons of American jurisprudence, politics and history that can be successfully “exported”? How many different faces can a democracy have as it responds to particular national or cultural conditions? What is the intrinsic relationship between free economic markets and democracy? How should the “Americanization” of the globe affect our view of ourselves? What domestic policy issues merit special study because of their power as analogues for the world outside? Can we restore our belief in our own institutions at the same time other societies seem to be benefitting from them?

American democracy was born and first practiced in Philadelphia. The rules and institutions of the American system were formed here. We need to increase our strength in several areas so that Penn—a Philadelphia native—can take advantage of a rare opportunity at the close of this century to use our democracy as a prism through which to view the contemporary world and our place in it.

*Illustrative emphases within this University priority:*

- American and Comparative Analysis of:
  - Politics
  - History
  - Law and Jurisprudence
  - Constitutionalism
  - Governance and Policy
  - Economy and Business
- Media and Democracy
- The Role of Race, Gender and Ethnicity in Democratic Participation

**Management, Leadership and Organizations**

Across the wide range of private and public organizations in existence today, the need for creative and effective management—and the challenges in its path—are profound. The global marketplace has become a reality, with large and small, domestic and multinational firms competing for markets and opportunity. Market-based economies are emerging in countries that were centrally planned in days past, and new generations of leaders are seeking education and training. The issues for management arising in this competitive new world are insistent and absorbing. Simultaneously, in a public sector reeling from federal devolution, there is growing willingness to consider privatization of social welfare services in order to make them more efficient, effective and responsive, and the social servants who have led traditional agencies are experiencing their own management crises.

Amid these seismic shifts, there has never been a greater need for clear vision, for fundamental research into the changing forms of organizations and the management they require, and for leadership. Penn is exceptionally well positioned to meet this need, thanks to the crosswalks connecting the schools of the University.

The Wharton School is leading the way in answering the sophisticated questions being posed to and about private sector management in the 21st Century—questions on topics as various as the intersection of business and new technologies, the increasing diversity of employees and consumer populations, the globalization of financial markets and the effects of burgeoning “virtual offices.” At the same time, synergistic combinations of this expertise with our schools of Law, Education, Social Work, Arts and Sciences and Fine Arts offer an equal opportunity to address hard questions of management in the public sector—questions about the financing and delivery of social services in a free market economy, the application of outcome measures to social service agencies, the growth of “public-private partnerships” and the like. And a working partnership among Wharton, the health science schools, the Law School and the Annenberg School for Communication will provide unparalleled ability to address proliferating questions about the future direction and management of health care delivery systems.

*Illustrative emphases within this University priority:*

- Globalization
  - Impact of Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Culture and Language
  - Conducting Business in Divergent Economic and Legal Environments
  - Ethical Issues and Social Norms
  - Impact of International Financial Markets
- Management and Technology
  - The Effects and Opportunities of Information Technology
  - Organizational “Democratization” Based on Information Access
- New Forms of Organizations and New Models of Management
  - Public Sector Management: Health, Education, Social Welfare Services
  - Public-Private Partnerships
  - Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Organizations
  - The Operation of Incentives

## The Humanities — Meaning in the 21st Century

Penn has a rich and distinguished tradition of excellence in the humanities and, today more than ever, we must preserve and renew this tradition. In recent years, controversy about the humanities has led to consternation inside and outside the academy as scholars have engaged in heated debates over topics such as cultural value and inherited wisdom. In the corridors of power, politicians have used public funding for the humanities as both a carrot and a stick in order to promote a predetermined point of view.

As we approach a new millenium, there are questions about human existence that can only be answered—as has always been the case—by the scholarly interpretations of life, meaning and culture that are the daily work of the humanities. Humanists are the traditional interpreters of all our symbolic acts: artistic, historic, linguistic, sociologic and philosophic. The humanities are the disciplines that build and preserve our creativity in all our intellectual and practical endeavors. They also are the disciplines that make us self-aware and hone our judgment, because their objective is to understand the products and processes of human creativity and the course of human affairs.

Leadership and innovation in the professions demand a combination of knowledge, judgment and maturity that the humanities excel at teaching. But the fundamental importance of the humanities at Penn is not their service as an instrument to the future success of students in the professions. The humanities are vital to us all—to every student Penn has had or ever will have—because they remain basic to our comprehension of life's multiple meanings. They can provide a refuge from the helter-skelter of modern life and a unique platform from which to ponder the events of the past and the possibilities of the future.

*Illustrative emphases within this University priority:*

- Ancient Studies
- Philosophy and Ethics
- Literature/Comparative Literature
- The Arts
- Area Studies and Globalization:
  - Language, History and Culture
- Cross-School Courses on:
  - The Historical Foundations or Development of the Disciplines
  - The Nature of Knowing in the Different Disciplines
- Creation of a Forum or Center for the Humanities that will:
  - Foster Interaction and Cooperative Research among Humanities Disciplines and Coordinate their Future Development
  - Reexamine Traditional Modes of Teaching in an Age of Rapidly Advancing Communications Technology
  - Explore Connections among the Humanities, the Sciences and the Social Sciences
  - Enrich Connections between the Humanities and the Professions

## The Urban Agenda — Penn in Philadelphia

Civilization and culture are the products of cities. So are crime and violence. The best and the worst, the heights and the depths of human life and death may be found in major cities. The urban objects of interest to any major university would seem to be vast. When a university is situated in the middle of one of the nation's largest cities, unavoidably influenced by its progress or its descent, the degree of interest should be that much more extreme.

On the scholarly level, few universities are better placed than Penn to contribute to the rigorous study of urban issues. Given the explosive growth of cities internationally, the accompanying rise in urban poverty and, at least in this country, the devolution of federal involvement, these issues will be major global public policy questions for years to come. Virtually all of our schools have some degree of interest in these issues, and the interest is keen in several: the Graduate School of Fine Arts, the Graduate School of Education, the School of Social Work, the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Nursing and the Wharton School. Mobilizing Penn's broad intellectual resources could lead to new models for urban revival.

Philadelphia is undergoing dramatic social, physical and economic changes. Penn is deeply and daily affected by its urban environment: it affects our sensations, our security, our studies, our thoughts, our ideas. So beyond the objects of scholarly interest offered by cities as cities at the threshold of the 21st Century, Penn should have the interest any organism has in its own environment.

Philadelphia offers multiple opportunities for primary research and for the application of discoveries. On this last note, Goal 5 of *Agenda for Excellence* commits the University to strengthen the relationships between our academic programs and the public service performed by our faculty, students, administrators and staff. This strengthening — which is at the core of "service learning" — takes place most naturally in an academic course focused on an issue with an urban aspect. The theory taught inside the classroom can lead to effective practice outside, and the lessons taught by practice can then reciprocally inform the theory.

*Illustrative emphases within this University priority:*

- Issues in Urban Design, Transformation and Renewal
  - Devolution of Responsibility to Local Level
  - Regionalism
  - Migration, Immigration, Populations and Families
  - Social Interactions of Diverse Cultures
  - Race Relations and Issues of Class
  - Valuation of Urban Assets
- Improvement of Public Services
  - Health and Social Services
  - Education
  - Housing and Community Development
  - The Arts
- Program and Policy Evaluation
  - Welfare Reform
  - Models for Reducing Violence and Crime
  - Urban Poverty and Job Creation
  - Client Outcomes Based Research
  - Public Sector Management Information Systems

## Information Science, Technology and Society

Information science and technology are transforming the world, our lives and our understanding of who we are at a pace that grows faster every day. Penn must lead in fields relating to information science and its impact on society, and be positioned not only to be creative in fundamental information science and technology but also to grapple with issues relating to the societal impact of information technology. Among these are questions about how to harness the power of the computer to understand language and the workings of the mind. Penn should also be a natural leader in exploring how the new information technologies can be used to foster learning and redefine the ways in which universities will serve society in the coming decades. This is the intention behind Goals 4 and 7 in *Agenda for Excellence* which, respectively, call upon Penn to make strategic investments in cutting-edge, technology-based master's programs, in programs of continuing education and in the creative deployment of new technologies.

*Illustrative emphases within this University priority:*

- Information and Society
  - Globalization
  - Information Access and the Structure of Human Communities
  - Communications, Media and Human Behavior in the Information Age
  - Technology, Management and Public Policy
  - History and Sociology of Science and Technology
- Information Science and Technology
  - Natural Languages and Machines that are Almost Human
  - Engineering Informational Systems
  - The Fusion of Computation and Telecommunications
- Learning in the Information Age
  - The Evolution of University Structures
  - Teaching and Learning through Information Technology

*Comment on Agenda for Excellence: Six University University Priorities must be received by October 4, 1996.*

Comment may be sent to the College Hall Offices of President Judith Rodin and Provost Stanley Chodorow or by email to:  
[plan@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:plan@pobox.upenn.edu)

To examine the parent document, *Agenda for Excellence*, on the Penn Web, readers may call up the home pages of the President, [www.upenn.edu/president/](http://www.upenn.edu/president/) the Provost, [www.upenn.edu/provost/](http://www.upenn.edu/provost/) or Almanac, [www.upenn.edu/almanac/](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/)

**Next page: Background and Next Steps**

## Background and Next Steps in Developing Agenda for Excellence: Six University Academic Priorities

### To the University Community

Ten months ago we published in these pages a draft *Agenda for Excellence* prepared in collaboration with the Academic Planning and Budget Committee. That publication opened a new chapter in a vigorous and consequential strategic planning process for the University that has carried us forward to today. The principal events from last November until now have been the following:

- Members of the University community provided many helpful comments on the draft that have informed our work in the interim. The comments recognized, first of all, that the *Agenda* was an outline of institutional goals and strategies, the preeminent goal being our shared aspiration to solidify and advance Penn's position as one of the world's premier teaching and research universities. Various commentators accurately perceived that our realization of this goal would depend, in major part, on plans and actions of the individual schools. At the same time, more than one observed that for Penn to exceed the sum of its parts, the University would need to identify academic areas of exceptional strategic promise, grant them sustained emphasis and seize the resulting opportunities to burnish Penn's institutional reputation.
- Throughout the spring and summer the deans worked with their faculties on their school strategic plans. Ambitious goals, initiatives and implementation plans emerged; they should catapult several of our faculties and schools into greater prominence and nourish the high excellence already achieved by others. Later this fall we will publish a summary of the school plans to inform the University community of their great potential—individually and in synergy with each other.
- Also over the summer, the deans worked with us to identify the academic areas of greatest strategic potential for Penn as a whole. In the preceding pages we have described these vital academic areas—which we call "University priorities." They do not encompass everything significant at the University; far from it. Our twelve schools are full of exceptional academic programs and research endeavors that are of permanent importance, and the school plans emphasize new school-based priorities. Rather, the University priorities are those the deans and we view as singularly strategic and deserving of central support as we approach the 21st Century. They are stepping-stones to the future: together they form a pathway of new promise for the University.
- Beginning the day after Labor Day, the Academic Planning and Budget Committee has joined in the work on both the content of the University priorities and the form in which they were presented in the preceding pages.
- This publication today is for your information and comments, which we need to receive no later than *Friday, October 4*. One week thereafter we will discuss these University priorities with the trustees. Written comments may be submitted to either of our offices, or e-mailed to [plan@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:plan@pobox.upenn.edu).

— Judith Rodin and Stanley Chodorow