To the University Community:

The following three pages contain the final version of our strategic plan, “Choosing Penn’s Future.” It has benefitted from the extensive scrutiny it has received throughout the fall term, and I am deeply grateful to the many individuals and groups who have read, thought about, and commented upon the plan. It is a much better document because of all of their efforts.

I urge you all to read the document with care. Short as it is, “Choosing Penn’s Future” is a set of important judgments about our future priorities, a description of the sort of university we are and the direction in which we are going, and a broad statement of the criteria that will be used to make future decisions.

The title was chosen for two reasons. It is intended to emphasize a commitment to planning, one of the principal commandments of the document. It is also meant to suggest an active and purposeful attitude that will guide University affairs. We intend to shape our own future, rather than leaving it to be molded by events and impersonal forces.

“Choosing Penn’s Future” has a simple structure. It begins by describing the sort of university we are, focusing upon our energetic and inventive personality, and then it briefly describes the problematic environment into which we are moving. The body of the document outlines our strategy for making the most of the circumstances we face.

Certain themes run through the plan. One is the need to strengthen our sense of community, to reinforce the quality of residential life at Penn and achieve the sort of atmosphere in which every member of the community will feel a very strong sense of belonging. That, in combination with our traditional richness and flexibility of programs, will give us the best of all worlds.

In many ways, we intend to build upon the intellectual coherence of Penn, a rare thing for a major research university. We are not just a collection of schools and departments located in the same place, but a latticework of mutually supportive academic pursuits.

To maintain the vitality of these pursuits, we must retain our ability to invest in new programs and fields, and we must remain willing to do so even when having to impose austerity elsewhere.

The four maxims are just that: truths that will guide future behavior. Even more important, the three challenges (undergraduate education, research capacity and financial aid) clearly set forth our three highest priorities for the forthcoming period.

I believe the strategy contained in “Choosing Penn’s Future” is the right one for Penn at this particular time. It is certainly not the only one available. We could have decided, for instance, to maintain the current balance among graduate education, undergraduate education and research programs, and maintain our size, and let the quality of students find its own level in the face of the demographic changes we face. This would be the least painful option in the short run.

Alternatively, we could maintain our current academic balance and seek to maintain the quality of students by allowing enrollment to drop as the student pool shrinks. Revenue losses would be offset by cutting costs and reducing staff. The implications for morale are clear. A second version of this option might foresee offsetting revenue losses by putting less University money into financial aid. The implications for diversity are clear.

A third tack might be to emphasize graduate study and not invest in any of the curricular or extracurricular amenities of collegiate life for undergraduates. Undergraduate enrollments would seek their own level as they responded to the ebb and flow of students whose sharply defined interests would bring them to study in such an unrelieved environment.

We have chosen none of the foregoing strategies, but a fourth: the one described in “Choosing Penn’s Future.” It is the most aggressive of the options available, and carries with it the greatest short-term uncertainty. On the other hand, if successful it will preserve more of our treasured values and will do more to add to the lustre of the University than the others.

To implement this strategy successfully will take much hard work and the cooperation of all of us. I am firmly convinced that together we can do it. Furthermore, the effort will be exhilarating. I look forward to it.

S. Hackney
Choosing Penn's Future

Sustaining a great tradition requires judicious change. If the University of Pennsylvania is to continue to fulfill its mission of providing educational, intellectual, and scientific leadership, it must respond creatively to the challenges of the present. Those of us here now are obliged to conserve and strengthen the University. While we benefit from the past, we should prepare for the future—a future that must be chosen with care from among the many that are possible, and then brought to reality by dedicated effort. Because important clues to current strategic decisions are revealed in our history, the past is an important guide to the future.

The distinguishing features of the tradition that we must consciously bend to the realities of the future are readily discernible. We are an institution of firsts, a pioneer of new academic forms, new lines of research, new areas of education. Yet, over the years and in many ways, we have remained true to our founding vision, an institution in which the liberal arts and sciences flourish by side by side with professional education and in which the various disciplines draw important sustenance from one another. More than at other major universities, the internal matrix of intellectual interaction is vibrantly alive at Penn.

Like our stimulating urban setting, we are an energetic community, a bustling collection of entrepreneurs of the mind, finding ingenious ways to stretch slender resources to further ambitiously conceived academic ideas. Penn has been nurtured over the years by the creation of significant new knowledge—electronic digital computers and applied econometrics, the nature of the American historical experience and the shape of ancient civilizations, genetic engineering in animals and devices employing nuclear magnetic resonance.

A formidable array of difficult problems now faces us: an adverse economic situation, made hazardous by slow growth, high interest rates, the ravages of inflation, and an unusual degree of uncertainty; a demographic trends that will produce a precipitous decline in the number of college-age eighteen-year-olds, thus requiring greater effort to attract outstanding undergraduates; a government budgetary situation of the Commonwealth, presage inadequate levels of compensation in the academic enterprise and that in the private sector; the threatened shift in federal policy—particularly with respect to research support and student aid—that, together with the precarious financial situation of the Commonwealth, presage inadequate levels of government support.

In time of plenty, institutions often grow haphazardly; in time of adversity, there is danger that they will wither wherever the attrition of the marketplace happens to strike. Our challenge is to make purposeful decisions, drawing broadly on the collective wisdom of the University's faculty, students, and staff. We must plan, and we must be sure that our plans are feasible, that they address real problems, and that we pursue attainable goals. We must ask: what might we do to accomplish our task better? What academic investments could yield exciting results over the long-run? What potential contractions could make us a more effective educational enterprise? We must call upon Penn's strategic advantages to strengthen it as a major research university committed to undergraduate, graduate, and professional education.

The decisions we make will be the right ones only if we develop a strong sense of common purpose and direction, remaining faithful to the Pennsylvania tradition, nearly a quarter millennium in the making, which contains adaptive mechanisms of proven strength and strategic utility. Four general planning maxims define our priorities and establish a framework for future decisions.

1. The University's quality is the strength of its faculty. The University's faculty is remarkably strong. It is our most important resource. The critical issue we face is how best to maintain and enhance our faculty strength. The rich blend of superb teaching and outstanding research—mutually reinforcing qualities—sets apart the faculty of a great university. Faculty compensation, facilities and time for scholarly and scientific investigation, and an environment that encourages the functioning of the community of scholars must be provided at a level that promotes faculty quality. In considering every faculty appointment and promotion, we must insist on superior academic credentials. In addition, we must consider with care the centrality of the position to the School's academic plan and the importance of the position to related programs, disciplines, and departments.

2. The University must conserve its resources and protect its financial integrity. In the years ahead, there will be a tendency for Schools, departments, and programs to seek individual accommodations within a framework of an increasingly harsh set of economic realities. The University must operate within a balanced budget; academic aspirations and plans must conform to budgetary constraints. At the same time, the detailed five-year plan that each School and Resource Center is developing must ensure that academic priorities shape budget decisions and not the reverse. Finally, we are committed to the efficient utilization of campus space.

3. The University's special character is reflected in the diversity of interest and people it attracts to its community. We must continue actively to seek the talent for our faculty, our student body, and our administrative and operating personnel that will produce a community at Pennsylvania marvelously diverse in backgrounds, interests, and perspectives. Just as we have drawn advantage from the complexity of our intellectual makeup, and the especially strong global dimension of our programs, so the human community that comprises the University gains strength from its diversity. Men and women of different races, religions, nationalities, regions, and economic backgrounds now join their efforts to the University's ultimate purpose: the improvement of the human condition through the pursuit of learning. Heterogeneity is prized at Penn not only because it fulfills a commitment to equal educational opportunity, but, even more, because it helps to create the educational environment that best prepares people to contribute to an increasingly diverse and rapidly shrinking world. We have a clear commitment to affirmative action for women and minorities.

4. The University's scale must ensure the highest academic quality of its students and research efforts. Pennsylvania's vitality depends more on quality than quantity. Although we intend to remain a university of roughly our current size, we must not maintain our size at the price of losing quality. Academic excellence is our most vital asset; maintaining excellence is our most important goal. There are three necessary conditions for each of the University's constituent parts; failure to meet any one will require a careful reappraisal.

- Each School and program must preserve the strength and diversity of its student body. For undergraduate programs, this means garnering a larger share of a declining supply of the nation's high-ability students. We have already begun to achieve modest success in our plan to attract more students than Pennsylvania has traditionally drawn from outside the Northeast. This
effort must prove increasingly successful if we are to preserve the current scale of our undergraduate programs. Our graduate programs, the centerpiece of a great university, must succeed in training the very finest Ph.D.s. Such efforts are essential if we are to attract and retain outstanding faculty whose presence will ensure excellence in both graduate and undergraduate programs.

- Each School and program must invest in new faculty, and when necessary, in the refurbishing of basic research space. Although the times demand imaginative and sensitive cost containment, we cannot rely on a democracy of suffering. On the contrary, we must fund promising ventures, and invest in good opportunities even while cutting back elsewhere, including the elimination of what is not working well. Clearly, we will not have the resources to push ahead on all the creative ideas that will emerge from our faculty. The University must therefore focus its limited resources for innovation on those special opportunities where targeted investments can significantly enhance academic quality.

- Each School and program must maintain its ability to attract and retain faculty on a par with the very best universities. Each School and program must ensure growth of faculty real income at both junior and senior ranks.

To be successful over the next decades, the University must not only adhere to these axioms but must respond to three special challenges with the fervor and commitment that have given Pennsylvania its reputation and distinction: undergraduate education, research excellence, and student financial assistance.

1. Undergraduate Education

Pennsylvania's competitive edge in attracting high-ability undergraduate students results from the variety and richness of its academic programs and its unusually productive mix of the liberal arts and professional disciplines. Our policy is to make undergraduate education the responsibility of the entire University faculty. Our challenge is to avoid the constrictions of an undue emphasis on preprofessional education, yet to make the general education of our undergraduates uniquely rich by bringing to bear the full range of the University's academic talents.

We should remove the disincentives to graduate and professional school faculty members' teaching undergraduates. While recognizing a commitment to the overall well-being of the University, our graduate and professional schools must nonetheless understand that they cannot expect significant financial benefits from the teaching of undergraduates. The real question is not whether we can afford to involve all faculty in undergraduate education, but rather whether a great university can afford not to involve its faculty in this most essential academic endeavor.

The opportunities for bringing more of the University's intellectual resources to bear upon undergraduate education are enormous and must be translated into action by the deans and faculties involved. Some techniques are already in use and can be expanded or intensified. The freshman seminar program in the College and the honors program offer great possibilities. The lessons in educational synthesis learned in the Exxon and Sloan experimental courses need to be applied more broadly. Multidisciplinary courses, joint degree programs, and undergraduate courses of study involving mixed faculties—as, for example, the Design of the Environment, Urban Studies, Management and Technology, and the Biological Basis of Behavior—are already in operation and might be further expanded. Submatriculation and other means of bridging advanced undergraduate and graduate education offer further promise for opening up the resources of the University to its undergraduates.

To help focus consideration of undergraduate education at the University, a new Faculty Council for Undergraduate Education will be formed, chaired by the Provost and including proportionate representation from each of our Schools. As its first task, the Council should recommend a set of curricular options and instructional mechanisms for University undergraduates that draw on the strengths, experiences, and academic perspective of faculty from the liberal arts and the professions. In addition, the Council should consider the exciting possibility of designing common academic experiences to be shared by undergraduates across the University, no matter what their School or program, as one part of their general education requirement. We have long weighed the relative advantages and disadvantages of such curricular opportunities. Now is the time for purposeful experimentation. The result may well be yet another Pennsylvania first: sound and exciting options that take advantage of the diversity and richness of our academic community and produce a unique educational experience.

Beyond providing Pennsylvania undergraduates an unmatched set of choices in fulfilling their degree requirements, a range that is only possible at a university of our complexity and flexibility, we should offer all students the sort of intellectual experience that stretches and pushes them to the limits of their individual capabilities. This implies not new standards but an acute sensitivity to the individual needs of students at a crucial period in their education. It also implies paying critical attention to the informal curriculum, that part of a student's educational experience that takes place beyond the classroom. That curriculum is important to our success, because it is vital to the personal growth of the students for whose total development we are responsible. In this realm, strengthening academic advising is essential. Another key is bringing faculty members and students together in settings that promote conversation and the exchange of ideas, interests, and experiences. Our College Houses do this already as do various other living-learning programs in the residences, many departments, faculty groups, and extracurricular activities. There are also important roles that graduate students can play in encouraging interaction between faculty and undergraduates. Yet, much more is required.

Our goal is to shrink the psychological size of the University while preserving the advantages of its variegated social, cultural, and intellectual life. No student—undergraduate, graduate, or professional—should complete a course of study without knowing several faculty members well. Similarly, Penn should be a university in which virtually every member of the standing faculty takes pride in regularly teaching undergraduates.

Fresh thinking and new investment are necessary, including the creation of more faculty and staff housing adjacent to the campus. We will also require a responsive attitude on the part of the faculty. Because we are part of a learning community that is residential, we have responsibilities to our colleagues and students that transcend formal curricula. The sense of community must be palpable and intense, or we will be achieving less than our full potential.

2. Research Excellence

The research strengths of the University are extraordinary. Our Ph.D. programs in the arts and sciences are among the oldest, as they are among the best, in the world: and our research libraries, imaginatively kept current by a combination of attention from the graduate groups and the library staff, have achieved international distinction. Research
time, research facilities, and a probing atmosphere of creative thought are special concerns, the combination of which must reinforce our university-wide attention to undergraduate as well as graduate education. Ongoing cutbacks in federal funding, coupled with rising costs and past practices of deferred maintenance, pose a fundamental threat to the excellence of our research enterprise, especially in the physical and biological sciences. We must quickly complete an assessment of the University's research facilities; including space, in order to calculate the investment needed for their rehabilitation.

We cannot afford to diminish our efforts to attract the most promising graduate students whose scholarly pursuits will, under faculty guidance, redound to the University's credit. This effort must include developing financial arrangements to address the increasingly high costs of graduate education. The Council of Graduate Faculties is charged with examining the University's programs of graduate support. Working with the Development Office, the Council will also explore new ways to raise support for graduate study, including the creation of more named fellowships. In short, in order to maintain Pennsylvania's competitive advantage in graduate education, we must continue to seek ways to utilize available resources more efficiently.

Toward this goal, we must seek new combinations of academic enterprise that respond to both rapidly expanding bodies of knowledge and highly changeable social and economic environments. At the request of the Academic Planning and Budget Committee, the Provost's Office will embark on a general review of the scale, scope, and coordination of our graduate programs. Clearly, those programs must be commensurate with the University's ability to attract a select collection of the most able and creative minds.

The University's competitive advantage in research derives from the inventive energies of its faculty and from the wide range of first-rate research facilities that it houses. Our Hospital, Libraries, and Museum are three examples of world treasures that are integral parts of the University.

The close physical proximity of the University's research facilities insures continuing interaction among the various disciplines and a stimulating mix of both informal and formal collaborations. Joint research ventures such as the Laboratory for Research on the Structure of Matter, the Leonard Davis Institute, and the Institute for Law and Economics are the fruits of such collaborations. In the past, such joint ventures were made possible by federal grants; in the immediate future, the University will have to generate a larger share of its research support from capital gifts and grants from private industry as well as by cost savings and innovative substitutions.

One essential task is to reconceive the federal government that scientific and technological progress demands continuing investment in basic research and graduate education. The University must also play a more direct role in developing research support. To complement the recently established Research Foundation—into whose endowment are channeled patent royalties—we must create a research venture fund out of new and diverted monies. We must define reasonable incentives to encourage individual investigators and departments to develop new sources of outside funding. We must both assess our need for laboratory instrumentation and renovation and carefully weigh the options for accomplishing these goals through long-term financing. Though several sensitive issues remain unresolved with regard to the emerging new forms of cooperation between industry and universities, we must seek to resolve them and to capture a share of the potential commercial value of new knowledge created on our campus.

At the same time, each School should consider the opportunities for establishing new and enhanced patterns of compensation through group practices and other mechanisms that allow and facilitate faculty in providing services outside the University. The School of Medicine's Group Practices offer one approach; there are many others. Each set of arrangements must reflect the particular traditions and academic standards of the participating disciplines and Schools. More important, each arrangement must link academic activity to professional practice in a way that provides substantial educational benefits to the School.

3. Student Aid and Financial Assistance

More than ever before, we require new funds with which to make a Pennsylvania education available to the broadest range of qualified undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. There is little prospect that annual tuition increases will be significantly lower than the rate of inflation, so we must broaden our concept of financial aid and of who needs it. Already, a large majority of Pennsylvania students requires the University's help in arranging educational financing through the University's own resources or through federal and state programs. In recent years, two of every three undergraduates and three of every four graduate and professional school students required such assistance.

We must develop new ways to stretch limited University funds and to assist our students in finding long-term educational financing. We will investigate ways of using the University's credit to generate funds that might be used in an attractive and sound long-term loan program. We will also consider using more of the University's financial aid budget to subsidize interest payments on funds borrowed elsewhere by our students and their families. In these and other ways, we will help our students meet the increasing cost of a Pennsylvania education.

To fulfill our promise, we must set out on a bold course of reappraisal and academic planning with primary initiative residing in our Schools and Resource Centers. They have the responsibility for defining academic programs, organizing research efforts, and providing scholarly and professional services. Each School and Resource Center now requires a detailed five-year plan including strategies for increasing the real incomes of faculty and staff, for attracting more minority faculty and students, and for developing new sources of external support. These five-year plans should begin with a clear statement of the intellectual directions of the School or Resource Center over the next decade and must necessarily include frank appraisals of current programs, administrative organization and functions, and physical facilities. New ventures must be identified along with the substitutions and reallocations necessary to fund them. Finally, each School and Resource Center will have to address questions of scale by examining its ability, during a decade of economic uncertainty, to maintain the quality of its student body and to make critical investments in new faculty and programs.

We must also recognize that none of our academic objectives can be realized without the work of a dedicated administrative and support staff. We must continue to build the sort of environment that leads to productive and satisfying work lives for all of Penn's employees. This requires additional emphasis on staff mobility and development, communications within the University, and opportunities for staff members to contribute ideas for improving the operations of the University.

These efforts together should ensure that the commitment and verve that launched the University of Pennsylvania on its journey to academic excellence 243 years ago are renewed today, that these centuries of growth and development have prepared us for a time of still further accomplishment, and that our future will be one of even greater distinction.