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Penn Cost Calculator Launched to Increase Financial Aid Program Transparency for Prospective Undergraduate Students

On October 14, Penn launched the Penn Cost Calculator, a purpose-built, highly customized and proprietary tool to make Penn's robust undergraduate financial aid program more transparent and more easily understood for prospective students and their families. By providing highly-individualized net cost estimates that are reliable for most families, the Penn cost calculator marks a significant step in Penn's commitment to affordability transparency and access. The calculator complements [Penn's Quaker Commitment](#) financial aid program, which meets 100% of demonstrated need with grant-based aid and no loans. Penn has awarded more than \$1.3 billion in grant-based undergraduate aid in the last five years alone; it began its no-loans policy in 2008.

The Penn Cost Calculator was developed by Penn as a priority of [Penn Forward](#), a Uni-

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Ronny Drapkin: President and CEO of the Wistar Institute

The Wistar Institute's Board of Trustees has appointed Ronny Drapkin, a physician-scientist and leading ovarian cancer researcher at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, to be the institute's next president and CEO, effective November 30, 2026. Dr. Drapkin succeeds Dario Altieri, who is stepping down after a decade of transformative leadership.

As Wistar president & CEO, Dr. Drapkin will lead the institute's early-stage discovery research in cancer, immunology and infectious disease; strengthen and expand its workforce education and training programs; and broaden support for Wistar's scientific mission and future growth by working closely with donors, trustees, corporate and academic partners, and policymakers.

"After an extensive national search, we are thrilled to welcome Ronny as our new president and CEO," said Rick Horowitz, chair of Wistar's Board of Trustees. "Ronny has everything we are looking for in our next president and CEO. His outstanding contributions to cancer research and extensive experience in translational medicine, along with an impressive track record of organizational leadership, make him ideal for the role. We are confident Ronny will build on what the institute is now achieving and accelerate our mission to change lives across the

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Ronny Drapkin

\$3.5 Million NIH Pioneer Award to Perelman School of Medicine and Weitzman School of Design to Study Whether Built Environment Can Improve Public Health

As 3D-printed housing developments spring up in communities around the U.S., a new Penn study will examine the technology's potential role in improving health. The study is part of a new collaboration between Michael Levy, a professor of epidemiology in the Perelman School of Medicine and the study's lead researcher, and Dorit Aviv, an associate professor of architecture in the Weitzman School of Design and the director of the Thermal Architecture Lab, to unlock the potential of the built environment to improve public health, through a \$3.5 million NIH Pioneer Award.

"I am very excited about this unique collaboration with Professor Levy," said Dr. Aviv. "By bringing together methods from two fields that are rarely in direct dialogue—architecture and epidemiology—we can rethink how the built en-

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Penn Arts & Sciences Receives \$3 Million Gift to Establish the Georgia and Jesse Feldman Professorship of Jewish Studies

Georgia A. Feldman, C'00, and Jesse Feldman have made a commitment of \$3 million to establish the Georgia and Jesse Feldman Professorship of Jewish Studies in the School of Arts & Sciences. Simcha Gross, of the department of Middle Eastern languages & cultures, has been named the inaugural Georgia and Jesse Feldman Associate Professor of Jewish Studies. Dr. Gross is a historian of religious communities in the Near East over the first millennium of the Common Era and has published widely on Jews and Christians in their Roman, Persian, and early Islamic contexts.

"This gift will go a long way in further bolstering Penn's robust Jewish Studies Program," said Mark Trodden, dean of the School of Arts & Sciences and the Thomas S. Gates, Jr. Professor of Physics & Astronomy. "Our faculty members are the foundation of our excellence, and Simcha is a perfect example of that. I am extremely grateful to Georgia and Jesse for their foresight and continued generosity."

Dr. Gross's research spans late antique Jewish life, from Jewish royal dynasties to intimate rabbinic study circles, from the hippodrome to the synagogue, from the Talmud to medieval historiography, and from incantation bowls to head coverings.

His work also examines how Jews were shaped by the empires and cultures that surrounded them and how, in turn, their experiences reveal those systems' underlying assumptions about belonging and otherness. This research advances a historically grounded and interconnected vision of Jewish history, revealing both the common textures of ancient life

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Scott and Elena Shleifer Commit \$20 Million for Penn Forward and to Expand Affordability and Opportunities for Undergraduates

The University of Pennsylvania has received a \$20 million commitment from Scott and Elena Shleifer to expand affordability and opportunity for undergraduate students and provide flexible support for Penn Forward, a University-wide initiative to shape Penn's future.

The gift includes \$12 million to create and endow the Shleifer Scholars Program, which will provide scholarships and additional support to help students participate fully in the Penn experience. An additional \$3 million will establish the Shleifer Family Quaker Commitment Challenge. The remaining \$5 million will support the President's Priorities Fund, providing flexible resources to advance key areas of Penn Forward.

"Scott and Elena have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to Penn and our students," said Penn President J. Larry Jameson. "Penn is deeply committed to enabling more students to attend through our grant-based financial aid. The Shleifers' generosity will open doors for talented undergraduates while strengthening Penn's ability to invest in our future and deliver on our mission. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and for the example they continue to set."

The Shleifers have long been champions of undergraduate financial aid and the student experience at Penn. In 2022, they made an \$18 million commitment to Penn First Plus, providing significant support for students who are the first in their family to pursue a four-year baccalaureate degree or who come from modest financial circumstances. The commitment also named the Shleifer Family Penn First Plus Center in College Hall.

The Shleifers' latest gift builds on their longstanding support through the Quaker Commitment, Penn's pledge to meet 100% of demonstrated need for all aided undergraduate students. The Shleifer Scholars Program will establish a permanent cohort of undergraduate students whose Penn education is made possible through the Quaker Commitment, delivering comprehensive funding that covers full tuition for students from middle-income families and empowers them to engage in experiences beyond the classroom.

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Supplement: From the Committee on Open Expression: Proposed Revisions to the Guidelines on Open Expression

October University Council Meeting Coverage

The University Council met on October 14, 2026 in the Hall of Flags in Houston Hall.

Penn President J. Larry Jameson opened the meeting by reaffirming Penn's "unwavering" commitment to preventing sexual misconduct. He also noted the recent launch of Penn's Center for Civil Rights ([Almanac September 29, 2026](#)). He called on the Penn community to be "a model of excellence, not just in academics, but in culture."

As part of the President's Report on *Penn Forward*, President Jameson introduced David A. Asch, Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives. Dr. Asch described the rollout of *Penn Forward*, a strategic initiative to position Penn to make meaningful contributions for the next 50 years. He elaborated on three initiatives being implemented as part of *Penn Forward*:

- The Penn Quaker Commitment, which will make the cost of attending Penn clearer, more predictable, and more attainable, and includes the Penn Cost Calculator, which had launched earlier the day of the meeting
- Penn San Francisco, an initiative to build a more comprehensive, multi-school Penn presence in the Bay Area
- Penn Partners for Impact, Penn's effort to streamline the links between faculty innovation and industry, making Penn a world-class translational partner

Dr. Asch indicated that the Penn community will receive frequent updates about these and other initiatives related to *Penn Forward*.

For the Provost's Report, Provost John L. Jackson, Jr., introduced professors Eric Feldman, Senior Advisor to the Provost on Open Expression, and Paul Heaton, academic director of the Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice, to discuss the status of proposed revisions to Penn's Guidelines on Open Expression. The presenters summarized the process thus far, and Dr. Feldman encouraged Penn community

members to submit feedback on the next draft of the guidelines, which appears in this issue of *Almanac*, online or during three additional listening sessions, to be held on November 17, 19, and 20, 2026. The committee aims to present a final draft of the guidelines to President Jameson for review in early 2027. Several people asked questions about submitting feedback and about University Council's role in approving the final guidelines.

Lizann Boyle Rode, associate vice president and associate University secretary, addressed the new business topics raised at the September 9 Council meeting and announced that the next meeting of the University Council, on November 18, will include an open forum. Members of the Penn community who wish to submit topics should email ucouncil@pobox.upenn.edu.

In the New Business section, speakers:

- Requested increased funding and staffing for the Weingarten Center.
- Proposed a "teaching faculty track" for lecturers.
- Called for Penn to be a responsible environmental steward in an era of increasing AI use.
- Urged the University to provide effective support for survivors of sexual violence.
- Called for increased funding to the Title IX office and to set up concrete protections for vulnerable populations on campus.
- Called attention to federal rollbacks on Title IX protections for the LGBTQ community and asked for clarification of the protections Penn will provide.
- Noted that Penn's immigrant students may not report sexual violence because of sensitivity to law enforcement.
- Called for more student representation on the committee to choose Penn's next president.
- Asked for institutional assistance with federal fee increases for international students participating in optional practical training (OPT) at U.S. universities.

School of Social Policy & Practice Launches Center for Climate Resilience

As climate change continues to reshape communities around the world, Penn's School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2) is home to the Center for Climate Resilience (CCR), a new research center dedicated to advancing the science and practice of climate adaptation and resilience.

Led by environmental and labor economist R. Jisung Park, the center brings together researchers from SP2, Wharton, and partner institutions to produce rigorous, decision-relevant evidence that helps people, organizations, and governments respond to the growing impacts of climate change.

While reducing global greenhouse gas emissions remains essential, experts increasingly recognize that adaptation and resilience must become a central complement to mitigation in the response to climate change. Even with rapid emissions cuts, the warming that has already occurred, along with impacts such as sea-level rise, will persist for decades. CCR was established to help address these challenges by advancing climate resilience: the ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate-related disruptions.

Housed within SP2 and the Wharton School, CCR reflects both schools' longstanding commitment to addressing society's most pressing challenges through research and interdisciplinary collaboration. CCR expands this work by focusing on the social and economic dimensions of climate adaptation and resilience.

The center's approach is grounded in the idea that social systems and public policies can either reduce or amplify the effects of climate change. The center's research examines some of the most pressing climate hazards and challenges facing communities today, including extreme heat, wildfires, and air pollution, and their impacts on workers and working conditions, learning and human capital, housing affordability and access, adaptation and resilience policy, and corporate and firm risk and resilience. Through this work, CCR aims to generate practical insights that support evidence-based decision making across sectors.

The center builds on Dr. Park's nationally recognized research examining how environmental conditions shape economic opportunity, education, labor markets, and human well-being. Under his leadership, CCR will bring together a labor markets research leader, postdoctoral and doctoral researchers, and affiliated economists, and will convene Research in Climate Adaptation and Resilience (R-CAR), a community of Penn students and early-career scholars. CCR also reflects Penn's broader commitment to addressing complex global challenges through interdisciplinary collaboration and research-driven solutions.

For more information about the Center for Climate Resilience, visit <https://climateresilience.upenn.edu>.

From the Faculty Senate Office

The following is published in accordance with the Faculty Senate Rules. Among other purposes, the publication of SEC actions is intended to stimulate discussion among the constituencies and their representatives. Please communicate your comments to Patrick Walsh, executive assistant to the Senate Office, either by telephone at (215) 898-6943 or by email at senate@pobox.upenn.edu.

Faculty Senate Executive Committee Special Meeting Actions Tuesday, October 20, 2026

Mail Ballot. A mail ballot was distributed to SEC members on Thursday, October 8, 2026, with a proposed letter to be transmitted privately to Ramanan Raghavendran, chair of the Penn Trustees, regarding the composition of the Presidential Search Committee. As of Friday, October 9, the vote was 36 in favor and one opposed with one abstention. Because (1) this vote exceeded both requirements of a mail ballot that 2/3 of potential votes cast, (2) passage requires a simple majority of those voting, (3) a simple majority of overall SEC members was exceeded, and (4) given the time sensitivity regarding its subject matter, the letter was transmitted to Mr. Raghavendran on the afternoon of Friday, October 9. The mail ballot remained open for the required ten-day period: upon closure of the voting period, the final vote was 38 in favor and one opposed, with one abstention.

Meeting Announcement. Faculty Senate chair Roy Hamilton announced a special meeting of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee by email on Monday, October 13, 2026. The meeting was held on Thursday, October 15, for the purpose of information exchange and discussion regarding a matter related to the Presidential Search Committee.

Meeting Discussion. Professor Hamilton summarized his conversations with Mr. Raghavendran, and SEC members discussed next steps.

Members of the University community are invited to bring topics to the

University Council Open Forum Wednesday, November 18, 2026, at 4 p.m. Hall of Flags, Houston Hall

A PennCard is required to attend University Council meetings

PennCard holders who want to be assured of speaking at Open Forum must submit a request to the Office of the University Secretary (ucouncil@pobox.upenn.edu) by 10 a.m. on Monday, November 9, 2026, briefly indicating the subject of the intended remarks. Speakers' statements are limited to three minutes and should be framed to present topics of general University interest and be directed to University Council as a body through the moderator, and not to an individual.

Those who have not submitted a timely request to the Office of the University Secretary will be permitted to speak if time remains after the registered speakers and at the discretion of the moderator.

For the meeting format and guidelines for remarks, please consult the University Council website at <https://secretary.upenn.edu/univ-council/open-forum>.

The Office of the University Secretary can be contacted at ucouncil@pobox.upenn.edu or (215) 898-7005.

—Office of the University Secretary

Ronny Drapkin: President and CEO of the Wistar Institute

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globe through high-risk, high-reward discovery and translational science.”

Dr. Drapkin’s appointment comes at a milestone moment for Wistar, which has expanded to 43 principal investigators, including six hired this year. He will guide Wistar’s critical contributions to the life science ecosystem regionally, nationally and globally. Wistar’s departing CEO, Dario Altieri, led Wistar through a period of unprecedented growth in which the institute’s annual budget quadrupled, its endowment tripled, and its scientific footprint expanded with the addition of two new research centers.

As biomedical research becomes increasingly interdisciplinary, data-driven and translational, Dr. Drapkin’s experience spanning laboratory science, clinical medicine, team science, and institutional leadership uniquely positions him to build on that momentum in propelling Wistar’s next phase of growth.

As the Franklin Payne Professor of Pathology in Obstetrics and Gynecology in Penn’s Perelman School of Medicine, Dr. Drapkin leads an active lab known for cutting-edge research focused on high-grade ovarian carcinoma, the deadliest form of ovarian cancer. His laboratory played a leading role in establishing the fallopian tube as the principal site of origin for these cancers, a discovery that fundamentally changed scientific understanding of how ovarian cancer develops and has helped drive new approaches to prevention, including opportunistic removal of the fallopian tubes in average-risk women and risk-reducing strategies for women with inherited BRCA1/2 mutations. Building on this work, Dr. Drapkin also leads an international effort to build a comprehensive atlas of ovarian precancer, bringing together investigators around the world to define the earliest molecular and cellular changes that precede cancer and nominate new biomarkers for early detection and targets for prevention and therapy.

At Penn Medicine, Dr. Drapkin directs the Ovarian Cancer Research Center, directs the gynecologic cancer research program at the Basser Center for BRCA, and co-directs the Ovarian Cancer Translational Center of Excellence at the Abramson Cancer Center. His interdisciplinary research unites scientists, physicians, and other experts in local, regional and international collaborations—the same team-based approach that drives discovery at Wistar. His other organizational leadership roles include deputy dean of the Department of Defense Ovarian Cancer Academy; director of the BioTrust Collection, a repository for gynecologic oncology research; and co-director of the Johns Hopkins University–University of Pennsylvania Specialized Program of Research Excellence in Ovarian Cancer.

“I am honored to assume this leadership role at an institution I have so long admired and to help it further expand its contributions to life-saving medical science,” Dr. Drapkin said. “Wistar’s scientific engine has never been a more powerful driver of biomedical innovation and regional economic growth than it is right now. Few basic research centers have achieved such an extraordinary record of scientific contribution while maintaining the agility, focus, and commitment to collaboration that characterize Wistar. I am grateful for the years I spent at Penn and hope to continue many of the fruitful collaborations between Penn and Wistar.”

Go Paperless with Your 2026 W-2

If you receive University pay for service during this calendar year as a faculty, staff, post-doc, temporary, student worker, or other paid worker, you can choose how to receive your W-2 tax form in January 2027. Going electronic is a smart move.

Why Go Paperless?

- It’s safe and secure
- No waiting on U.S. Postal delivery
- No worrying about lost or delayed forms
- Help to reduce paper waste

Act Before December 31, 2026

Update your W-2 delivery preference in Workday. If you have already selected electronic delivery, no further action is needed.

Go Paperless in Five Easy Steps

1. Log in to [Workday](#)
2. Go to the Benefits, Comp and Pay Hub. Find it in the Personal tab on the left menu
3. Under Tasks and Reports, click My Tax Documents
4. Find the table called Tax Forms Printing Elections and click Edit
5. Select electronic copy, then click OK

If you need a demonstration or more information, check out the hub’s announcement, “Smart Action for Your W-2.” There, you can access a link to Workday Learning, where a 90-second video walks you through the process. The hub announcement also includes information on how you receive your W-2 if you decide to keep paper delivery.

Please contact the [Penn Employee Solution Center](#) if you have questions.

Scott and Elena Shleifer Commit \$20 Million for Penn Forward and to Expand Affordability and Opportunities for Undergraduates

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In addition to scholarship support, Shleifer Scholars will receive resources to pursue experiences that are vital to their academic, professional, and personal development, including faculty-mentored research, internships, entrepreneurial ventures, community engagement, and global experiences.

The Shleifer Family Quaker Commitment Challenge will encourage new donors to invest in Penn’s permanent financial aid resources. Through the Shleifer challenge, six first-time donors to Penn’s Named Scholarship Program are challenged to establish \$1 million endowed scholarships with gifts of \$500,000, matched dollar-for-dollar by the Shleifer family. In total, the challenge aims to generate \$6 million in new endowed scholarship support.

“Penn had a profound impact on my life, and Elena and I want more students to have access not just to a Penn education, but to the full range of experiences that make that education so meaningful,” said Scott Shleifer. “We also hope this challenge encourages others to join us in building permanent support for financial aid.

Investing in students is one of the most meaningful ways we can invest in Penn’s future.”

The Shleifers’ commitment also includes \$5 million for the President’s Priorities Fund, giving Penn leadership flexible resources to advance key priorities within Penn Forward and respond to emerging opportunities and needs.

Scott Shleifer is a 1999 graduate of the Wharton School and a former partner at Tiger Global Management, where he co-founded the firm’s venture capital business. He and his wife, Elena, are dedicated philanthropists whose generosity at Penn includes naming the Shleifer Family Penn First Plus Center, supporting multiple undergraduate scholarships, and providing meaningful contributions to the School of Arts & Sciences, the Graduate School of Education, the Wharton School, and a range of other University-wide initiatives. Beyond Penn, the Shleifers’ philanthropy reaches broadly across educational and community organizations through their family foundation, reflecting their deep commitment to expanding opportunity and strengthening the institutions that support children and families.

Penn Arts & Sciences Receives \$3 Million Gift to Establish the Georgia and Jesse Feldman Professorship of Jewish Studies

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and the distinctive contours of Jewish experience, in its own moment and in relation to the present.

Dr. Gross is the author of two books and numerous scholarly articles. His first book, *Babylonian Jews and Sasanian Imperialism in Late Antiquity*, received several awards, including the National Jewish Book Award for Scholarship and the American Academy of Jewish Research’s Salo Baron Prize for the best first book in Jewish Studies. His second book, *Communities, Empires, and Loyalty on the Roman-Sasanian Frontier*, is forthcoming. Dr. Gross has held fellowships at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the Harvard Center for Jewish Studies, the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, and Penn’s Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, and he was an Alexander von Humboldt Experienced Research Fellow at the

Freie Universität Berlin.

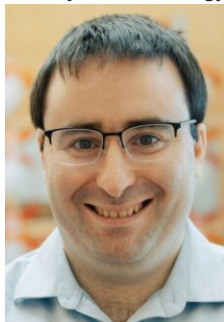
“I recall my time at Penn with the utmost fondness,” said Georgia A. Feldman. “Our desire to make this gift reached back to my direct experience with the Jewish Studies Program there. We want to ensure that students are able to have the same formative experience of studying with professors who spark a lifelong interest in history and Jewish Studies.”

Georgia A. Feldman, a freelance graphic designer and art director at Georgia Feldman Design in Boston, and Jesse Feldman, a general partner at Battery Ventures, a global, technology-focused investment firm, established the professorship to recognize scholarly excellence in Jewish Studies. In addition to endowing the professorship, they have also endowed a scholarship for students in the College of Arts & Sciences and supported the Penn Fund.

Honors & Other Things

Adam J. Stevens: NIH New Innovator's Award

Adam J. Stevens, an assistant professor of cancer biology in the Perelman School of Medicine, has received an NIH New Innovator Award. Dr. Stevens uses synthetic biology to study the molecular logic of how cells form and maintain tissues. The award, from the National Institutes of Health Director's High-Risk, High-Reward Research program, supports exceptionally creative scientists pursuing bold ideas with the potential for broad impact.



Adam Stevens

"The goal of my team's research is to create better tools for disease modeling and to advance cell therapies in cancer treatment and regenerative medicine," Dr. Stevens said. His project aims to overcome some of the challenges associated with engineering human tissues to create organoids, which researchers can use to study how diseases develop and respond to treatment.

Dr. Stevens will use the grant to develop new tools to control how complex multicellular ensembles are built, with the goal of precisely constructing synthetic tissues that can model and treat disease. To do this, his lab will engineer cell adhesion molecules, the surface proteins that determine how cells stick to each other and to their environment.

Part of the NIH Common Fund's High-Risk, High-Reward Research program, the Director's Awards are designed to accelerate discovery by supporting unconventional ideas with the potential to transform broad areas of research.

The latest honors build on a longstanding history of recognition for Penn Medicine researchers through the NIH Director's High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program. Penn researchers have received multiple NIH Director's awards in recent years, supporting innovative research across areas including cancer, neuroscience, genetics, immunology, and precision medicine.

Kyla F. Ortved: Inaugural ACVS Rising Star Award

Kyla F. Ortved, an associate professor of large animal surgery in Penn Vet and the Jacques Jenny Endowed Chair in Orthopedic Surgery, has been named the inaugural recipient of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons (ACVS) Rising Star Award. The new award recognizes early- to mid-career diplomates of the ACVS who have demonstrated exceptional achievements and contributions while excelling in surgical practice and leadership.

Dr. Ortved joined the faculty at New Bolton Center (NBC), Penn Vet's large animal hospital and research campus, in 2016. Her surgical work spans the full spectrum of equine orthopedics, from acute injuries to complex chronic conditions that affect performance horses. She is recognized for her expertise in advanced orthopedic and minimally invasive techniques and, as an ACVS Founding Fellow in Minimally Invasive Surgery (large animal orthopedics),

has helped shape standards within this specialty while maintaining a commitment to excellence in patient care.

Osteoarthritis challenges veterinarians and owners alike, affecting horses of every breed, age, and level of athletic activity. Dr. Ortved's research targets the disease itself rather than its symptoms. Her orthopedic regenerative medicine laboratory investigates the molecular signals that drive cartilage to break down and to regenerate, using that knowledge to develop gene- and cell-based strategies that help damaged cartilage heal, slow joint degeneration, and prevent osteoarthritis after trauma. Her broader work in gene therapy, stem cell biology, and immunomodulation also contributes to a comparative understanding of joint disease. Equine osteoarthritis closely parallels the human condition, and her findings inform both veterinary and human orthopedic medicine.

"Dr. Ortved embodies what we strive for at New Bolton Center: she is a clinician who delivers outstanding care to our equine and large animal patients, and also a scientist whose work is changing how we approach disease," said Katrin Hinrichs, the Harry Werner Endowed Professor of Equine Medicine and chair of the department of clinical studies at New Bolton Center. "It's wonderful that the American College of Veterinary Surgeons chose Kyla as the first recipient of this award, and we are so proud to have her as a member of our faculty."

"Dr. Ortved leads not by directing, but by inspiring—by building an environment where trainees, colleagues, and collaborators are motivated to reach their highest potential," said Penn Vet's Holly L. Stewart, an assistant professor of large animal surgery, who nominated Dr. Ortved for the award.

Eric Schelter: Department of Energy Ernest Orlando Lawrence Award

Eric Schelter, the Hirschmann-Makineni Professor of Chemistry in the School of Arts & Sciences, has received a 2026 Ernest Orlando Lawrence Award from the U.S. Department of Energy for his "fundamental chemical studies of energy-critical metals leading to new methods for their selective and sustainable separations." The honor, which recognizes mid-career scientists and engineers who have advanced new research and scientific discovery, went this year to nine researchers in nine categories across the United States.



Eric Schelter

"I'm thrilled to accept this award on behalf of students and postdocs in my research group who have worked on problems in critical metal separations since 2010," Dr. Schelter said. "And I'm grateful to the Department of Energy for the long-term support of our vision."

For nearly two decades, Dr. Schelter has worked on techniques to separate and recycle critical elements like cobalt, nickel, and rare earths needed for the batteries and magnets used in many products. Beyond the scientific discovery of expanding what we know about these metals, the work aims to ensure that products

most people use daily can be created with minimal harm to the environment and recycled indefinitely.

Established in 1959, the Lawrence Awards are among the longest-running and most prestigious science and technology awards bestowed by the U.S. government. "This year's Lawrence Award recipients exemplify the ingenuity and determination that drive America's leadership in science and technology," noted Secretary of Energy Christopher Wright in announcing the honorees. "From achieving fusion ignition to advancing critical materials and high-performance computing, these scientists and engineers are tackling some of our nation's most complex challenges and translating groundbreaking research into real-world capabilities."

Each winner receives a citation signed by the Secretary of Energy, a gold-plated medal bearing the likeness of Ernest Orlando Lawrence, and a \$20,000 honorarium.

Alisha Ramirez and Marta Guron: 2026 Green Purchasing Award



Alisha Ramirez and Marta Guron

The recipients of the University of Pennsylvania's 2026 Green Purchasing Award, presented by Penn Procurement Services and Penn Sustainability, were announced on September 21. Now in its tenth year, the award honors outstanding contributions made to sustainable purchasing at Penn.

This year's award honors Alisha Ramirez, Penn's sustainable labs manager, and Marta Guron, a project manager with Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (EHRS), for their efforts to reduce waste and unnecessary purchasing through the redistribution of surplus laboratory supplies.

Ms. Ramirez and Dr. Guron developed a practical approach to connecting unused materials from laboratories that are closing, relocating, or shifting their research focus with other labs that can put those supplies to use. Their work advances Penn's sustainability goals while delivering meaningful environmental and financial benefits.

Among their accomplishments, Ms. Ramirez and Dr. Guron have redistributed approximately 2,000 glass pipettes, saving more than \$3,100 and diverting approximately 120 pounds from landfill disposal. They also redistributed 409 boxes of nitrile gloves, saving receiving labs more than \$7,200. In FY26 alone, the initiative redistributed more than 1,094 pounds of supplies valued at \$28,145.

The effort continues to expand through a labware inventory developed by Ms. Ramirez, which helps connect surplus materials not only with other Penn laboratories, but also with Philadelphia public schools and STEM education programs.

Through their collaboration and commitment, Ms. Ramirez and Dr. Guron demonstrate a simple principle of sustainable procurement: *Sometimes the greenest purchase is the one you don't have to make.*

\$3.5 Million NIH Pioneer Award to Perelman School of Medicine and Weitzman School of Design to Study Whether Built Environment Can Improve Public Health

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environment supports human health and addresses indoor environmental hazards.”

Their research has three areas of focus: investigating the biome of new 3D-printed housing; integrating architectural and epidemiological models; and conducting lab and field testing of specific architectural interventions.

First, the team will investigate the microbes and animals that inhabit 3D-printed homes and examine how these ecological communities differ from those found in conventionally constructed housing in similar environments.

Additionally, the project will bring together models of thermal comfort and indoor environmental quality with ecological and epidemiological models to better understand how housing design influences disease risk and which species are likely to flourish under different environmental conditions. The research will explore how homes can be designed to reduce exposure to organisms that pose risks to human health.

Finally, the team will develop and test new approaches to wall assemblies and housing design intended to reduce harmful exposures in the home. These interventions will be evaluated through laboratory studies and field trials, with the goal of identifying architectural strategies that can improve human health.

Dr. Levy works at the intersection of epidemiology, ecology, and statistics to understand and control infectious diseases. His research spans urban Chagas disease in Peru, housing and health in the United States, and the development of new approaches to studying disease transmission and controlling disease vectors. Dr. Aviv leads the Thermal Architecture Lab, a cross-disciplinary research laboratory at the intersection of thermodynamics, architecture, and materials science. Her research focuses on new approaches to mitigating urban heat and improving community well-being, and explores how architectural materials and forms shape building energy performance, indoor environmental quality, and human health.

The project is aligned with the Weitzman School's four-point strategic framework, *Making Space for the Public Good*, which aims to create healthier cities through design and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Book ISBNs and Price Information Available from Penn Bookstore

The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires universities to make available to students, for each course, the International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) and price information for required/recommended books and supplemental materials.

To comply with this requirement, the University of Pennsylvania works closely with Barnes & Noble Education, managers of the Penn Bookstore, to maintain a simple and cost-effective process to provide ISBNs to our students. Through the bookstore's online system, students have access to a complete list of materials for their courses, along with the ISBNs for each listed text. Textbook information can be provided to other vendors, and students are in no way required to purchase their books at the Penn Bookstore. Faculty can also indicate that no course materials are required, which helps to ensure the completeness of the University's reporting.

Penn Cost Calculator Launched to Increase Financial Aid Program Transparency for Prospective Undergraduate Students

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versity-wide initiative designed to adapt to the world's changing needs, expand opportunities to reach learners worldwide, accelerate discovery, and address rising public skepticism of higher education.

“The cost of higher education is important for families and prospective students,” said Penn President J. Larry Jameson. “Even with Penn's historic investments in need-based financial aid, too many people do not realize that the cost of a Penn education can be affordable for them. Alongside our Quaker Commitment financial aid program, this easy-to-use tool empowers families to envision access to a Penn education, equipped with the financial insight they need and can rely on.”

Penn's Quaker Commitment expanded in the 2025-26 academic year to provide a tuition-free education for families earning up to \$200,000 per year with typical assets, and full coverage of billable expenses for families earning up to \$75,000 per year with typical assets. Many families with incomes over \$200,000 are also eligible for aid.

Other financial aid calculators used by colleges and universities are frequently built by third parties and are less customized. They often do not save estimates, require manual input of financial data, and fail to capture the nuance of each university's individual financial aid formulas. The Penn Cost Calculator is tailored for Penn's specific financial aid program.

How Penn's Cost Calculator differs from existing net cost calculators:

- **Secure 1040 upload.** A secure 1040 upload option delivers an efficient way for prospective students and their families to provide accurate tax information. Penn does not retain personal information or documents to ensure privacy. A 1040 upload is also not required to use the calculator.
- **Four-year projections.** Recognizing that financial planning goes beyond the first year of attendance, the calculator projects anticipated changes over the duration of a prospective student's time at Penn. This accounts for meaningful financial variables that families can anticipate, such as a sibling entering college.
- **Sample personas from diverse family circumstances.** Eight pre-loaded personas are quickly accessible and represent a variety of income profiles, assets, and family circumstances without needing to enter any personal information. Those personas' information can be edited by users to reflect a family's own circumstances.
- **“Why This Number?”** The calculator explains, in plain language, how factors like income and assets influence the estimate, helping families understand not just the outcome, but the reasoning behind it.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of Penn faculty members to work with the Penn Bookstore to provide this important information for our students. For additional information, or to submit your course materials directly, you can visit: <http://www.upenn.edu/coursematerials>.

—John L. Jackson, Jr., Provost

—Russell Composto, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

—Kelly Jordan-Sciutto, Vice Provost for Graduate Education

- **Mythbusters.** Common misconceptions about financial aid, like how home equity is factored into a financial aid package, are debunked while inputting information. An AI chat function trained by Penn's financial aid team answers questions along the user journey.

“This tool was designed around the real questions and circumstances students and families encounter as they consider whether Penn is within reach,” said Whitney Soule, vice provost and dean of admissions. “Extensive testing and feedback with real students, families, and counselors helped us build an experience that gives families a clearer, more personalized estimate, which helps them understand and plan for what a Penn education may cost over time. Having this context around cost is empowering and will help us reach students for whom Penn might be a great match but assume they can't afford it.”

A key feature of the Penn Cost Calculator is the ability for families to understand how Penn arrived at the estimate, including an itemized list of billable expenses and what is covered by Penn.

“A major benefit of this calculator is that it provides families with not only an early estimate to help them start planning, but also transparent explanations as to how their income and assets are driving the calculation,” said Mariana Valdes-Fauli, associate vice president of student registration and financial services. “Prior to the new calculator, this level of individualized insight would not have been available to families until they had a conversation with someone on the financial aid team. By shining light on some of these factors, we are giving families more context than ever before, which helps them ask better questions and make more informed decisions about paying for college.”

The Penn Cost Calculator is expected to be a meaningful way for students, families, and counselors to gain clarity earlier in their college search.

“College affordability can be one of the biggest sources of uncertainty for families during the college search,” said Stephanie Shandra, director of college counseling at Scranton Preparatory School and a member of Penn Admissions' Counselor Advisory Board. “Penn's new cost calculator is a great tool that provides meaningful transparency by helping families better understand their potential cost early in the process. I appreciate resources that allow students and their families to make informed decisions about financial fit with greater clarity and confidence.”

The calculator is designed to address most financial scenarios; however, families with complex circumstances, such as divorced or separated parents, noncustodial parent requirements, or nonstandard tax situations, may not receive an automated estimate. In those instances, users are given information for how to have a conversation with Penn's financial aid team. The calculator does not yet address financial aid for international students.

Penn has also recently announced a \$20 million commitment from Scott, W'99, and Elena Shleifer to expand affordability and opportunity for undergraduate students. The gift includes \$15 million toward undergraduate scholarships and the Quaker Commitment.

**Division of Public Safety
University of Pennsylvania Police Department Crime Report**

About the Crime Report: Below are the crimes against persons and/or crimes against property from the campus report for **October 5-11, 2026**. The crime reports are available at: <https://almanac.upenn.edu/sections/crimes>. Prior weeks' reports are also online. –Eds.

This summary is prepared by the Division of Public Safety (DPS) and contains all criminal incidents reported and made known to the Penn Police, including those reported to the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) that occurred within our patrol zone, for the dates of **October 5-11,**

2026. The Penn Police actively patrol from Market Street to Baltimore Avenue and from 30th Street to 43rd Street in conjunction with the Philadelphia Police.

In this effort to provide you with a thorough and accurate report on public safety concerns, we hope that your increased awareness will lessen the opportunity for crime. For any concerns or suggestions regarding this report, please call DPS at (215) 898-7297. You can view the daily crime log on the [DPS website](#).

Penn Police Patrol Zone

Market Street to Baltimore Avenue and from 30th Street to 43rd Street

Crime Category	Date	Time	Location	Description
<i>Aggravated Assault-Gun Assault</i>	10/08/26	5:18 PM	4000 Market St	Aggravated assault involving firearm
	10/05/26	12:50 AM	1 S 40th St	Simple assault
<i>Auto Theft</i>	10/08/26	8:38 PM	300 S 41st St	Complainant assaulted by unknown subject on an e-bike
	10/10/26	8:04 AM	1 Convention Ave	Subject assaulted a staff member
	10/05/26	4:33 PM	3700 Spruce St	Theft of a secured electric scooter from bike rack
	10/05/26	11:20 PM	3620 Walnut St	Theft of a secured electric scooter from bike rack
	10/05/26	11:40 PM	3701 Walnut St	Theft of a secured electric scooter from bike rack
	10/06/26	2:57 PM	3333 Walnut St	Theft of a secured electric scooter from bike rack
<i>Burglary</i>	10/09/26	11:29 AM	400 Curie Blvd	Theft of a secured electric scooter
	10/11/26	7:46 PM	3820 Locust Walk	Theft of an unsecured electric scooter from bike rack
<i>Other Offense</i>	10/06/26	1:42 PM	3930 Spruce St	Report of burglary at residence
<i>Retail Theft</i>	10/07/26	1:34 PM	3335 Woodland Walk	Harassment by communication
	10/05/26	11:45 AM	3604 Chestnut St	Retail theft of consumables; offenders fled area
<i>Theft from Building</i>	10/06/26	8:00 PM	4233 Chestnut St	Retail theft of alcohol
	10/06/26	1:23 PM	3925 Walnut St	Retail theft/Arrest
	10/10/26	10:15 AM	3250 Chestnut St	Retail theft of sports apparel
	10/10/26	7:49 PM	4233 Chestnut St	Retail theft of alcohol
	10/11/26	2:54 PM	4233 Chestnut St	Retail theft of alcohol
	10/05/26	10:05 PM	3611 Walnut St	Stolen iPad from location
	10/05/26	12:57 PM	4001 Walnut St	Theft of a chair inside unsecured parking attendant's booth
	10/05/26	11:58 AM	240 S 40th St	Theft of money and a credit card from unsecured unattended wallet
	10/05/26	7:23 PM	111 S 38th St	Theft of an unattended backpack from inside location
	10/06/26	3:58 PM	3820 Locust Walk	Package theft from inside lobby area
<i>Theft from Vehicle</i>	10/06/26	3:12 PM	220 S 33rd St	Theft of an unattended wallet
	10/06/26	4:45 PM	3935 Walnut St	Theft of an unattended backpack
	10/07/26	3:41 PM	3820 Locust Walk	Package theft from foyer area of lobby
	10/08/26	4:27 AM	3300 Walnut St	Theft of parked vehicle's tires from highway
<i>Theft Other</i>	10/05/26	12:16 PM	3918 Sansom St	Package theft from residence porch
	10/07/26	8:34 PM	4054 Spruce St	Package theft
<i>Vandalism</i>	10/07/26	11:13 PM	2930 Chestnut St	Unauthorized use of credit cards after wallet was stolen
	10/09/26	3:14 PM	125 S 40th St	Subject vandalized a restaurant sign and threatened staff/Arrest

Philadelphia Police 18th District

Schuylkill River to 49th Street & Market Street to Woodland Avenue

Below are the crimes against persons from the 18th District: 10 incidents were reported for **October 5-11, 2026** by the 18th District, covering the Schuylkill River to 49th Street & Market Street to Woodland Avenue.

Crime Category	Date	Time	Location
<i>Aggravated Assault</i>	10/08/26	5:19 PM	4000 Market St
	10/08/26	6:31 PM	4736 Baltimore Ave
	10/11/26	1:43 PM	S 45th St & Baltimore Ave
<i>Aggravated Assault-Arrest Assault</i>	10/09/26	7:39 PM	4301 Chestnut St
	10/05/26	1:50 AM	20 S 40th St
	10/06/26	2:23 PM	3320 Market St
	10/07/26	8:49 AM	4628 Chester Ave
	10/07/26	5:00 PM	100 S 44th St
	10/08/26	9:58 AM	4247 Locust St
	10/10/26	8:38 AM	1 Convention Ave

The Division of Public Safety offers resources and support to the Penn community. DPS has developed a few helpful risk reduction strategies outlined below. Know that it is *never* the fault of the person impacted (victim/survivor) by crime.

- See something concerning? Connect with Penn Public Safety 24/7 at (215) 573-3333.
- Worried about a friend's or colleague's mental or physical health? Get 24/7 connection to appropriate resources at (215) 898-HELP (4357).
- Seeking support after experiencing a crime? Call Special Services (support and advocacy resources) at (215) 898-4481 or email an advocate at specialservices@publicsafety.upenn.edu.
- Use the [Walking Escort](#) and [Riding](#) services available to you free of charge.
- Take a moment to update your cell phone information for the [UPennAlert Emergency Notification System](#).
- Download the [Penn Guardian App](#), which can help police better find your location when you call in an emergency.
- Access free [self-empowerment and defense courses](#) through Penn DPS.
- Stay alert and reduce distractions. (Using cell phones, ear buds, etc. may limit your awareness.)
- Orient yourself to your surroundings. (Identify your location, nearby exits, etc.)
- Keep your valuables out of sight and only carry necessary documents.

One Step Ahead

Security & Privacy Made Simple

Another tip in a series provided by the
Offices of Information Security, Information
Systems & Computing and Audit,
Compliance & Privacy

Be More Secure—Move Away from SMS and Phone Calls for Two-Step Verification

Two-Step Verification helps protect your accounts by asking for a second form of confirmation when you sign in. Choosing a stronger verification method can make your account safer.

People often choose SMS or text messages for verification because they are familiar and easy to use. For many accounts, SMS/text was the primary verification method offered, and sometimes it was the only option available.

However, SMS/text is not the most secure choice for verification.

There are several risks to using SMS/text for verification. An attacker may be able to transfer your phone number to another device through phone number porting or SIM swapping. SMS/text verification codes can also be stolen through phishing or social engineering and used to gain access to your accounts. In addition, text messages may sometimes be delayed or unavailable because of coverage or network issues.

Some of these risks also apply to using phone calls for verification.

Penn is moving away from SMS and phone calls for Two-Step Verification. These verification options will be phased out on February 23, 2027.

When you enroll in Two-Step Verification for your PennKey, you can add additional verification methods. You should do this whenever possible. Penn offers several alternatives, including Duo Push, passcodes generated by the Duo Mobile app, Touch ID on supported devices, Duo hardware tokens, and security keys. Having multiple verification methods can help prevent you from being locked out of your account if one method fails or is not available.

Review your Two-Step Verification settings and make sure you have another verification method configured before SMS and phone call verification are phased out.

For more information:

- [Text/SMS and phone calls ending for Two-Step](#)
- [Text/SMS and phone calls ending for Two-Step FAQ](#)
- [Two-Step Verification: Login Options](#)
- [Two-Step Verification: Managing Devices](#)

For additional tips, see the
One Step Ahead link on the
Information Security website:
<https://isc.upenn.edu/security/news-alerts%23One-Step-Ahead>.

Update

October AT PENN

CONFERENCES

21 *Cybersecurity at the Crossroads: Technology, Security and Society in the Age of AI*; brings together leading experts from academia, government, and industry to examine the future of cybersecurity as part of the launch of the Schlein Center for Cybersecurity at Penn Engineering; 2-6 p.m.; auditorium, Gutmann Hall (Penn Engineering).

23 *Penn Law Review 2026 Symposium: Administrative Law's New Era*; leading scholars and practitioners will discuss the implications of a suite of recent Supreme Court decisions on administrative law, as well as actions of the current administration in Washington, D.C.; all day; room 100, Golkin Hall; register: <http://tinyurl.com/Symposium175> (Penn Law Review).

EXHIBITS

23 *Performance: Wilmer Wilson IV: Skirl*; Wilmer Wilson IV embarks on a durational, ambulatory performance across parks, streets, and sidewalks of Philadelphia; the performance begins at ICA promptly at 11 a.m., and continues offsite at unplanned locations; 11 a.m.; Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA). Also October 24, 11 a.m.

FILMS

22 *Anuja*; turns on a deceptively simple problem: what does it mean to choose when material, social and economic conditions of agency have already been radically constrained? 6:30 p.m.; Public Trust, 4017 Walnut Street (History of Art).

LEARNING & WORKSHOPS

21 *Explore Penn's Master in Law & Non-profit Leadership Master's Programs*; learn about the Master of Science in Nonprofit Leadership and the Master in Law, and the NPL/ML dual degree; hear from program staff and students about academics, admissions, and the student experience; noon; Zoom webinar; noon; Zoom webinar; register: <https://tinyurl.com/ml-npl-info-oct-21> (Penn Carey Law).

27 *Mentora Scholars Info Session*; learn about a selective, fully-funded fellowship that prepares exceptional college students to become exemplary changemakers in their careers and communities; noon; room G08/09, College Hall; register: <https://form.jotform.com/261741794847471> (Center for Undergraduate Research & Fellowships).

Penn Libraries

Various locations. Info: <https://www.library.upenn.edu/events>.

21 *Build Your Own Study Kit*; noon-5 p.m.; Van Pelt Library, Fisher Fine Arts Library, Holman Biotech Commons.

Research Data Sharing for Reproducibility and Compliance; noon; Fairchild Classroom, Hill Pavilion.

History of Text Technologies: Make Your Own Illuminated Initial; 2-4 p.m.; room 623, Van Pelt Library.

22 *Open-Source Geospatial Data and Tools*; 4 p.m.; online webinar.

23 *Digital Mappa (DM): An Introduction*; noon; online webinar.

26 *Introduction to Dedoose*; 3 p.m.; online webinar.

This is an update to the [October AT PENN calendar](#). Check online for more events. To submit events for upcoming AT PENN calendars or weekly updates, email almanac@upenn.edu.

Nominations Open for Interim WPPSA Leadership

Following its September call for weekly-paid staff to help re-establish the Weekly-Paid Professional Staff Assembly (WPPSA), the Penn Professional Staff Assembly (PPSA) is facilitating an interim election to help establish WPPSA's initial leadership. The initial outreach generated strong interest, and this next step will give the broader eligible community an opportunity to participate in selecting its interim leaders.

Full-time, non-union, weekly-paid University employees are invited to nominate themselves or an eligible colleague for one of two temporary positions: interim chair and interim secretary. These leaders will coordinate the initial work to re-establish WPPSA, including reviewing and seeking approval of its existing by-laws, with the goal of holding formal elections in June 2027. Eligible weekly-paid professional staff are welcome to remain involved and contribute to this effort.

Interim Election Timeline:

October 20–30, 2026: Nomination period

November 2–9, 2026: Voting period

November 10, 2026: Election results announced

To submit a nomination, please complete the [Qualtrics nomination form](#).

The interim positions will sunset when the newly elected WPPSA leadership team's term begins in July 2027. Individuals elected to interim positions may also run in the formal election cycle. PPSA is facilitating this initial process and providing support as eligible weekly-paid staff work to re-establish WPPSA and shape its future.

For questions or more information, please contact PPSA@lists.upenn.edu.

—PPSA Tri-Chairs

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The University of Pennsylvania's journal of record, opinion and news is published Tuesdays during the academic year, and as needed during summer and holiday breaks. Its electronic editions on the Internet (accessible through the Penn website) include HTML, Acrobat and mobile versions of the print edition, and interim information may be posted in electronic-only form. Guidelines for readers and contributors are available on request and online.

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AI Helps Detect Media Bias, Informing Voters and News Consumers

News media shapes how people understand the world around them. The stories we encounter can influence what we believe is important, how we understand political and social issues, which people and perspectives we trust and ultimately the choices we make.

When researchers at the Computational Social Science (CSS) Lab, a joint a venture of Penn Engineering, the Annenberg School for Communication and the Wharton School, launched the Media Bias Detector in 2024, the goal was to give news consumers a more objective way to examine how different outlets cover the same events, and ultimately decide how they perceive and use information shared in the media. The public-facing dashboard uses artificial intelligence to analyze news articles for characteristics including topic, tone, political lean, and the facts and people included in coverage.

Now, the team is taking the project a step further.

In a new paper published in *Science Advances*, a research team led by Duncan Watts, the Stevens University Professor and director of the CSS Lab, introduces the scientific framework behind the Media Bias Detector and releases a data set containing more than 140,000 articles published during the 2024 U.S. presidential election year.

Rather than asking whether a news outlet is simply “biased,” the framework breaks news coverage into measurable components, allowing researchers to study how editorial choices shape what readers see, and what they don’t.

“The dashboard was pretty full-featured relative to what else is out there in the media bias space,” added Dr. Watts. “But the data set underlying it is much richer than any dashboard can adequately capture. This paper provides just a taste of what is possible with this new class of large-scale but still very granular news data.”

The new data set is a research resource. Other scholars can use it to investigate news coverage of specific topics, time periods or publishers at scale or even combine it with other previously collected data on news consumption to study even more complex research questions.

Bias Is Not Black and White

Instead of assigning news organizations a single “bias score,” their framework measures dimensions such as political lean, tone, topics, events and which individuals are quoted. This makes it possible to compare how different publishers cover the same subject without first deciding what perfectly unbiased coverage would look like.

“The fundamental challenge with measuring bias is that, by definition, it requires one to know the ‘true’ value of the thing you’re measuring,” said Dr. Watts. “And, for most topics in the news, objective ground truth simply isn’t available.”

Instead, the researchers look for what Dr. Watts calls the signatures of bias: systematic differences in the way publishers select and frame information.

What Gets Covered and What Gets Left Out

The larger data set allows the researchers to ask questions that go beyond how an individual article is written. One finding illustrates the potential of examining those questions systematically across hundreds of thousands of articles. During the 2024 election, news organizations devoted more than four times as much coverage to the presidential “horse race” as to all policy topics combined.

The tendency toward covering who is ahead, who is behind and what the polls say is not new. But the scale of the imbalance surprised the researchers.

“I think it’s important to see results like this because the news media often advertises themselves as informing their readers about the important issues of the day,” said Dr. Watts. “But, when it comes to politics, what we find is that, across the board, the news did not inform people about the issues. It was more like sports commentary.”

A Warning on Headlines

In their work, the researchers found systematic differences between the political lean of headlines and the articles they accompany. The headline is often the only part of a story many people encounter, particularly when news is consumed through social media. Even readers who continue to read the article encounter the rest of the story through the lens established by its headline.

The Media Bias Detector dashboard gives users a way to explore patterns in news coverage and make their own decisions about how they use information shared in the media. The underlying data set outlined in this paper and integrated into the dashboard gives researchers the ability to ask entirely new questions, recombine different measurements, and develop

analyses that the dashboard itself cannot display while improving the user experience for better informed news consumption.

Adapted from a [Penn Engineering article](#) by Melissa Pappas, September 28, 2026.

Mimicking Natural Connections Could Improve Rotator Cuff Repair

Researchers have developed a “scaffold” that mimics natural tissue and could lead to more durable rotator cuff repairs, including for large injuries and cases involving bone and tissue degeneration that are often the most difficult to fix. Devised by a team at the Perelman School of Medicine at Penn, the new system was detailed in *Science Advances*.

“Successful rotator cuff repair requires more than just simply reattaching tendon to bone because the tendon-to-bone interface has a highly organized transition from tendon to fibrocartilage to bone, and each region provides distinct signals that guide how cells behave and what type of tissue they form,” said senior author Su Chin Heo, an assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery and bioengineering in the McKay Orthopaedic Research Laboratory. “The body’s cells constantly sense and respond to the physical, mechanical, and biomechanical signals in their surrounding environment. By designing our scaffold to better mimic these different microenvironments, we believe we’re able to provide the right cues in the right places for more complete and effective healing.”

Before it can be used in humans, the fix needs to go through trials in large animals. However, the team believes that, since it was designed to fit in with suturing systems used widely on current repairs, it could be taken up quickly by surgeons once proven ready.

Working in a Problem Joint

The rotator cuff is a joint where the arm meets the shoulder and features a variety of muscles with tendons keeping everything both moving and in place. Roughly 250,000 people each year in the United States alone require surgery on the joint. While athletes who rely on constant throwing motions—such as baseball players and football quarterbacks—can be susceptible, rotator cuff injuries are extremely common among older adults, with about 40 percent of people 60 or older experiencing injuries to the joint.

Average rotator cuff repair is conducted via minimally invasive arthroscopic procedures, ending with the reattachment of damaged tendons via “suture anchors” (a system that uses anchoring screws and thread) in the arm bone. However, many of these repairs fail to heal properly, in part because they do not recreate the natural transition from tendon to cartilage-like tissue to bone that helps to guide healing.

Dr. Heo and his team set out to design a repair system that does more than simply hold tendon and bone together—one that more closely recreates the different tissue environments found naturally to help guide healing.

Creating a Scaffold for the Shoulder Joint

The team created a scaffold with different regions designed to recreate the natural transition from tendon to cartilage-like tissue to bone. The tendon and cartilage-like regions used nanofibers derived from cow Achilles tendons combined with hyaluronic acid, while the bone region used a citrate-based porous material designed to support bone integration. Importantly, the scaffold was designed to integrate with existing suture anchor systems already used in rotator cuff repair.

When the researchers tested their system in cells in the lab, they noted that its different regions guided stem cells toward forming tendon- and cartilage-like tissues. In addition, on animal models of rotator cuff injuries, they noted that the scaffold also promoted more organized formations of tendons, cartilage-like tissue, and bone at the repair site, more closely resembling the body’s natural tendon-to-bone connection than repairs without the scaffold.

Helping Patients With No Alternatives

The large population of older patients who suffer these injuries often have complicating factors that make a rotator cuff repair unlikely to succeed or even not an option. That can include past repairs failing, poor quality of their tendons, and the general slow-down in healing capacity that comes with age.

“There are wide populations of people whose repair chances are limited,” said first author Zizhao (Molly) Li in the McKay Orthopaedic Research Laboratory. “Many patients with large tears, poor tissue quality, or failed previous repairs have limited treatment options. By recreating the biology of the native tendon-to-bone interface, we hope to improve the quality and durability of healing for these challenging cases.”

Adapted from a [Penn Medicine news release](#) by Frank Otto, August 25, 2026.