Penn Medicine Partners with Cohen Veterans Network to Open Free Mental Health Clinic for Veterans and Military Families

US military veterans and their families living in the Philadelphia area have new access to free, easily accessible and comprehensive mental health care through an innovative partnership between the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and The Cohen Veterans Network (CVN). The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania, which began accepting patients on September 6 of this year, is the first clinic of its kind in the region and is part of a $275 million overall commitment from Steven A. Cohen to support mental health services for veterans and their families.

“We are honored to open the Cohen Military Family Clinic here at Penn,” said Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania. “Penn has a long history of supporting veterans through education and community initiatives. This new clinic will continue that tradition while also supporting efforts in the Philadelphia region to provide the men, women and their families who have bravely served our country with essential mental health services.”

The Cohen Military Family Clinic at Penn, located at 3535 Market Street, is part of the Cohen Veterans Network’s national efforts to provide access to evidence-based, customized outpatient care to veterans and their families in order to treat a variety of mental health issues including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, adjustment issues, anger, grief and loss, family issues and children’s behavioral problems. In addition to mental health services, the clinic will also offer support related to unemployment, housing, finance and education and will provide resources such as transportation assistance and child care to its patients.

“Since 2002, almost two million US military personnel have become veterans with approximately 58 percent experiencing mental health issues,” said David W. Oslin, executive director of the Cohen Military Family Clinic at Penn. “This clinic will help break down barriers, such as stigma and accessibility, that prevent many veterans and their families from seeking the mental health care they need to lead healthy and productive lives once they have left active duty.”

Penn Cell Biologist’s $5.2 Million Grant from NIH for Lung Regeneration Research

Penn Medicine researchers, along with colleagues at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and Boston University, have received a $5.2 million, seven-year grant from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the cellular and molecular mechanisms that promote lung regeneration. The aim of the grant is to develop treatments for children with congenital lung diseases and adults whose lungs have been damaged from smoking, genetic defects and acute injury.

The Penn—Cincinnati Children’s Hospital—Boston University research group is one of seven new research hubs that will comprise the new Progenitor Cell Translational Consortium, bringing together multidisciplinary researchers in the heart, lung, blood and technology fields from different institutions throughout the country. Recipient institutions will receive a total of $40 million over the next seven years. The consortium’s focus will be on translating advances in progenitor cell biology to new treatments for heart, lung and blood diseases.

The Penn component of the consortium is led by Edward Morrissey, the Robinette Foundation Professor of Medicine, a professor of cell and developmental biology, and the director of the Penn Center for Pulmonary Biology, in the Perelman School of Medicine. Dr. Morrissey is also the scientific director of the Penn Institute for Regenerative Medicine.

“The aim of our consortium is to harness the innate power of stem and progenitor cells in the lung to promote repair and regeneration and target them using emerging techniques for promoting tissue regeneration,” Dr. Morrissey said. “We will be examining both pediatric and adult populations since many children suffer from chronic lung diseases such as severe asthma and cystic fibrosis. In adults, we are interested in determining whether we can harness the innate ability of the lung to repair and regenerate to treat chronic lung diseases as well as acute injury.” The Penn group will also explore whether new advances in gene editing can be used to treat postnatal lung diseases.

One of the major progenitor cell types that will be targeted by the Penn group is called the alveolar type 2 (AT2) cell. AT2 cells, along with AT1 cells, line the alveoli of the lungs. Alveoli are the tiny air-filled sacs, arranged in clusters in the lungs, in which the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide takes place. AT2 cells are responsible for generating pulmonary surfactant, a mixture of proteins and lipids that is necessary for allowing lungs to expand and deflate during every breath as well as fight lung infections. When functioning normally, AT2 cells divide to replace old or damaged lung cells including AT1 cells, maintaining lung health. However, AT2 cell injury can lead to defective regeneration and other diseases, including lung cancer and lung fibrosis. The Penn consortium will work to characterize AT2 cells at multiple levels from mouse and human lungs, seeking to better understand their role in lung function and repair. This information will be used to determine whether AT2 cells can be targeted using gene editing techniques to alter their regenerative potential or correct disease-causing mutations.

The project will concentrate on the role of the ABCA3 gene in AT2 cell biology, in which mutations can cause severe acute and chronic pulmonary disorders in infants and children. ABCA3 mutations account for up to 50 percent of cases of full-term infants with congenital lung disease who are resistant to conventional therapies. At present, there are no proven effective therapies for ABCA3 deficiency other than lung transplantation.

“Using disease-inducing ABCA3 mutations as a paradigm for congenital lung disease, we will target AT2 cells to correct these mutations as well as attempt to promote lung regeneration,” Dr. Morrissey said. “Ultimately, we hope to use lung stem and progenitor cells for treatment of various forms of lung disease.”

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Pullout: November AT PENN
W.C. D. (Doug) Hare, Veterinary Medicine

William Currie Douglas (Doug) Hare, a former associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania Veterinary School, died February 2, 2016, in Ottawa, Canada. He was 91 years old.

Dr. Hare was born and raised in North Berwick, Scotland, and educated in Edinburgh. He attended Edinburgh Academy and the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. He served in the army during WWII and was a POW until his release in 1945. He completed his veterinary degree program in 1950. He earned a PhD in the department of veterinary anatomy from the University of Edinburgh in 1953.

He worked in the department of anatomy at Ontario Veterinary College from 1954-1958. In 1958, Dr. Hare joined Penn as an associate professor in the department of anatomy at the veterinary school. His studies focused on veterinary cytogenetics.

In 1974, he left Penn to return to Canada, where he joined the Animal Disease Research Institute (ADRI) in Ottawa as a senior research scientist. He worked with a team focused on embryo transfer and related research. He was pivotal in pre-sexying the first bovine embryo to survive to term and in investigating risks of disease transmission through embryo transfer.

Dr. Hare retired in 1990 and was appointed in that same year as editor-in-chief of Canadian Veterinary Journal, a position he held until 2008.

Dr. Hare was an instrumental part of the International Embryo Technology Society (IETS). He was a member of the IETS import/export committee and chaired a research subcommittee in the 1980s. He also organized the International Embryo Movement Symposium in 1986.

In 1991, Dr. Hare received the first IETS Distinguished Service Award to recognize his contributions to both the society and the embryo transfer industry. He is survived by his three children, Sara, Simon and Alastair.

Deaths

Harry Gillin, Development

Harry Loftus Gillin, GPU’09, a former administrative assistant in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at the University of Pennsylvania, died on October 12 of cancer of the appendix. He was 32 years old.

Mr. Gillin was born in Lower Merion Township and graduated from St. Joseph’s Preparatory School in 2002. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore in 2006. In 2009, he earned a master’s degree in government administration with a concentration in politics from the Fels School of Government at Penn. He worked at Penn from 2007-2014, in the Penn Fund and in the gift accounting and administration department of Development & Alumni Relations. He subsequently worked as a data analyst for Sonapar USA.

Mr. Gillin volunteered for Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans in 2011 and 2012. His family described him as a “man of others” who always put family and friends first.

He is survived by his parents, Eugene and Elizabeth; his sisters, Deirdre Ruttle (Daniel) and Kayla Gillin; a niece, Molly Ruttle; and several aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the Alumni Records Office at Room 517, Franklin Building, (215) 898-8136 or email record@ben.develop.upenn.edu

To Report A Death

Almanac appreciates being informed of the deaths of current and former faculty and staff members, students and other members of the University community. Call (215) 898-5274 or email almanac@upenn.edu

However, notices of alumni deaths should be directed to the Alumni Records Office at Room 517, Franklin Building, (215) 898-8136 or email record@ben.develop.upenn.edu

CDC Award for Penn Med to Combat Antibiotic Resistance

The Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania has been awarded more than $1 million by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop new approaches to combat antibiotic resistance. Penn researchers will lead three separate projects to support CDC’s Antibiotic Resistance Solutions Initiative. The awards are part of a larger Broad-Agency Announcement (BAA) from the CDC providing a total of more than $14 million in funding for 34 projects focused on understanding the role of the microbiome in order to prevent antibiotic resistance infections, or superbugs.

Antibiotics are life-saving medicines, but they also can disrupt a person’s microbiome and increase the risk for drug-resistant infections such as Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), Carbapenem-Resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) and Clostridium difficile (C. difficile). Patients carrying drug-resistant bacteria can easily spread these to other people, especially those who also have an abnormal microbiome, such as patients with compromised immune systems.

“By studying the microbiome of patients at risk for antibiotic-resistant infections, we seek to better understand how these infections occur and how they can be prevented,” Dr. Kelly said. “We hope that our research will help advance the global effort to prevent these life-threatening infections.”

Penn, in partnership with the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), is also one of only 10 academic medical centers to be designated as a CDC Prevention Epicenter, a patient safety research effort known as the Prevention Epicenters Program (Almanac April 12, 2011). The CDC program was created in 1997 to address the emerging problem of health care-associated infections, including antibiotic resistance.

Portable 3-Year Academic Calendar

Did you know that Penn’s new 3-year academic calendar is available on Almanac’s website, Penn’s mobile website and as a PDF?

You can also sync the calendar with MS Outlook, Apple iCal, Google calendar and your mobile devices by visiting www.upenn.edu/almanac/calendar.html and following the instructions from the link at the top of the page.

ALMANAC October 25, 2016
Anita Allen and Martha Curley: National Academy of Medicine

Two University of Pennsylvania faculty have been elected to the National Academy of Medicine, formerly the Institute of Medicine: Anita Allen, vice provost for faculty and a Penn Integrates Knowledge professor with appointments in the Law School and the School of Arts & Sciences, and Martha A. Q. Curley, the Ellen and Robert Kapito Professor in the School of Nursing and a professor of anesthesia and critical care medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine.

Dr. Allen, the Henry R. Silverman Professor of Law and Philosophy, is the sole law professor among this year’s newly elected members. She is an expert on privacy law, the philosophy of privacy, bioethics and contemporary values. She has been recognized for her scholarship on legal philosophy, women’s rights and race relations. In 2010, President Obama appointed her to the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues. She has written extensively on these issues, including more than 100 scholarly articles and the books Unpopular Privacy: What Must We Hide, The New Ethics: A Guided Tour of the 21st Century Moral Landscape and Why Privacy Isn’t Everything: Feminist Reflections on Personal Accountability, among others.

Dr. Curley is a leading clinical researcher in nurse-implemented therapies for acute respiratory failure in critically ill pediatric patients. She has served as the principal investigator on several major clinical trials in pediatric critical care and actively mentors scientists through leadership in the Pediatric Acute Lung Injury and Sepsis Investigator Network and the World Federation of Nurse Scientists in Pediatric Critical Care.

Currently, Dr. Curley studies how nurses can create pediatric ICU environments conducive to healing through methods like better support of parents, incorporating a child’s normal sleep patterns into a hospital stay and modulating the floor’s light and noise to comfort children. She also helped develop a patient-care model that bases nursing care on the needs of patient and family, one now integrated into many nursing curricula and credentialing programs.

Amy Bleakley, Daniel Hopkins and Robin Stevens: LDI Senior Fellows

Three Annenberg School scholars, Amy Bleakley, Daniel Hopkins and Robin Stevens, were recently named Senior Fellows of the Leonard D. Davis Institute of Health Economics (LDI). LDI and its Senior Fellows are pioneers in interdisciplinary health services research.

Dr. Bleakley, a senior research scientist at Penn’s Annenberg School, investigates the intersection of youth, media and health. Her current research focuses on the behavioral effects of adolescents’ exposure to various combinations of risky behavior in entertainment media.

Dr. Hopkins, an associate professor of political science in Penn’s School of Arts & Sciences and secondary faculty at Annenberg, studies American political behavior and policymaking. He recently studied the role of media framing in shaping attitudes toward the Affordable Care Act.

Dr. Stevens, Gr’ASC’09, is an assistant professor in nursing at Penn’s School of Nursing and director of the Health Equity & Media Lab. Her research integrates public health and communication science to influence the determinates that drive health equity. She specializes in examining the relationship between new and traditional media and adolescent risk behavior.

Bridge Brawner: Vice-Chair, Minority Fellowship Program National Advisory Committee

Bridge Brawner, assistant professor of nursing at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, has been appointed vice-chair of the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) National Advisory Committee.

“As vice-chair of this amazing group, I look forward to having a hand in preparing the next generation of psychiatric/mental health scholars,” Dr. Brawner said. “To date, the fellowship program has made a tremendous impact on transforming research and treatment for underserved groups, and I am honored to serve with them as we move forward.”

Dr. Brawner will serve from January 1-December 31, 2017.

Penn Nursing Partnership

The partnership among the Free Library of Philadelphia (FLP), Penn’s Biomedical Library and Penn Nursing recently received the Philadelphia Chapter of the Medical Libraries Association’s Randy Brenner Memorial Award.

This award is given to an individual or group in recognition of outstanding contribution to consumer health information services and patient education. The collaboration between FLP, the Biomedical Library and Penn Nursing was selected for bringing Health Corners to a few branches of FLP, most located in West Philadelphia.

Health Corners offer the public a private space to investigate questions and concerns they have about their health. With a computer, printer, online access, books, brochures and magazines, this dedicated space offers a variety of resources from which the public can learn about everything from healthy eating to prescription medication to heart health and more—all for free. These spaces are located at Lucien E. Blackwell West Philadelphia Regional, Kingsessing and Paschalville libraries.

“In addition to the free resources available, the libraries have periodic programming with Penn Nursing students, who volunteer their time to provide the community with interactive information sessions,” said Monica Harmon, senior lecturer at Penn Nursing. “In fact, some students who take our Nursing 380 course complete their clinical practicums at the libraries.”

Kevin Bonner: Associate AD for Administration & Strategic Communications

University of Pennsylvania Athletics Director Grace Calhoun announced that Kevin Bonner, who has nearly 15 years of communications and administrative experience at three universities in Philadelphia, has been appointed associate athletic director (AD) for administration and strategic communications.

As associate AD, Mr. Bonner will be responsible for managing strategic communications for Penn Athletics, serving as primary communications contact for the office of the director while also managing special projects. He will oversee the men’s and women’s lacrosse and men’s and women’s tennis programs.

“We are excited to welcome Kevin and his family to Penn,” Dr. Calhoun said. “He joins us with a wealth of communications experience and both local and national connections that will help us promote our areas of excellence. Kevin will be instrumental in managing and promoting the division’s strategic plan being launched this fall.”

Mr. Bonner arrives at Penn after seven years at La Salle University, most recently as the associate athletic director. He was responsible for the publicity of the men’s basketball program and also directed the Explorers’ marketing and promotions, social media, video and community service efforts.

“I am excited to join Grace and her team at the University of Pennsylvania,” Mr. Bonner said. “I look forward to helping advance the strategic priorities of Penn Athletics and working with the staff, coaches and student-athletes at this world-class institution.”

At La Salle, Mr. Bonner successfully pitched stories to national outlets such as the New York Times, ESPN.com, Sports Illustrated and NCAA Champion Magazine and coordinated all publicity for the men’s basketball team’s trip to the 2013 NCAA Sweet 16. He was also the media coordinator for the 2016 NCAA Men’s Basketball East Regional held at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia.

Prior to arriving at La Salle, Mr. Bonner spent five years at Temple University from 2004-2009, advancing to the role of assistant athletic director/media relations and publications. He began his career in athletic communications at Saint Joseph’s University from 2002-2004.

Mr. Bonner was an all-conference and academic all-district baseball player at Elizabethtown College, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in computer science in 2002. He received a master’s degree in sports administration from Temple in 2008.
Unpredictable Schedules Linked to Health Problems

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of California, Berkeley, found that people who work in the service sector and have unpredictable, unstable schedules experience a range of negative physical and mental consequences.

“People have long suspected this was the case,” said Kristen Harknett, an adjunct social professor at Penn’s sociology department in the School of Arts & Sciences. But “we haven’t had systematic evidence.”

Dr. Harknett and Daniel Schneider, assistant professor at Berkeley, focused on two dimensions: the amount of notice employees have for their work schedules and amount of instability in those schedules.

They used Facebook ads targeted at 18- to 50-year-olds who were employed by eight of the largest retailers across the country, where these scheduling practices are common. The ads offered a lottery incentive to employees who took a 20-minute online survey. About 6,000 responses were received.

The survey results showed that those who were given more lead time about work days and hours experienced less stress, better overall health and less trouble sleeping. In addition, more lead time led to more time with children for working parents.

“There’s a lot of anecdotal evidence about how harmful these practices [of giving employees unstable and unpredictable schedules] are and how difficult the lives of working parents are when they have a complete inability to plan,” Dr. Harknett said. “If you don’t know your work schedule in advance, you can’t have a second job, you can’t go to school, you can’t have a regular child-care commitment. Everything has to be changed at the last minute.”

The study was funded by the Washington Center for Equitable Growth and, at UC Berkeley, the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, Hellman Fellows Fund and UC Berkeley School of Public Health.

Failed Replication Shows Literary Fiction Doesn’t Boost Social Cognition

A 2013 study published in Science found that reading literary fiction for just 20 minutes could improve one’s social abilities, but researchers who attempted to replicate the findings using the original study materials and methodology were unable to obtain the same result.

The team, which included researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, Pace University, Boston College and the University of Oklahoma, published its results in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Deena Weisberg, a senior fellow in Penn’s psychology department in the School of Arts & Sciences, and Thalia Goldstein, assistant professor of psychology at Pace University, wanted to replicate the study to improve their understanding of how such a small change involving a specific storytelling type could result in this response.

“Why would literary fiction be particularly good at doing this? Why not romance literature, which is primarily about relationships? Or why not something more absorbing?” Dr. Weisberg said. “Literature is harder to absorb. Those questions made me raise my eyebrows.”

Once the paper was completed, their BC and Oklahoma researchers also had attempted and failed to replicate the results of the original study. The separate groups collaborated on the paper.

Dr. Weisberg and colleagues did find that subjects who recognized more authors on an Author Recognition Test also scored better on the social cognition measure.

“One brief exposure to fiction won’t have an effect, but perhaps a protracted engagement with fictional stories such that you boost your skills would,” Dr. Weisberg said. “It’s also possible the causality is the other way around: It could be people who are already good at theory of mind read a lot. They like engaging in stories with people.”

Toxins from Food Mold Weaken Airway’s Defenses to Cause More Damage

Mold that grows on nuts or corn forms toxins that can weaken airways and immunity, according to researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. The study results are published in Nature Scientific Reports.

Poisonous and cancer-causing aflatoxins contaminate 25% of the world’s food crops, as well as many grain-based livestock and pet foods. These mycotoxins, which are produced by certain fungi that grow on and in certain foods, can cause allergic fungal rhinosinutis and bronchopulmonary aspergillosis, two infections that can be treated with antifungal medications and surgery, if needed.

The study showed that acute exposure to aflatoxins slowed down key defense mechanisms in the airways. Laboratory imaging showed impairment of mucosal ciliary clearance (MCC) and ciliary beat frequency (CBF), suggesting that aflatoxins enhance the pathogenicity of the fungi. They may also do so for other co-infecting pathogens like bacteria.

“With these defenses impaired, it may create a window of opportunity for the infection, and potentially a domino effect,” said lead author Robert J. Lee, an assistant professor in the departments of otolaryngology: head and neck surgery and physiology at Penn.

Senior author Noam A. Cohen, an associate professor of otolaryngology at Penn, said, “Patients may become more susceptible to upper respiratory infections and chronic rhinosinusitis (CRS) that can ‘seed’ lower respiratory infections.” This suggests that individuals with compromised immune system. It can also exacerbate the more severe lung diseases, such as cystic fibrosis or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.”

The study also showed that fungal toxins activate protein kinase C (PKC), which decreases ciliary beat frequency and thus decreases MCC. This shows potential for treatment. The researchers found that CBF reductions could be blocked by the anti-inflammatory drugs Gö6983 and calphostin C, which are PKC inhibitors. This suggests that inflammation could potentially be used to treat the fungal infection and prevent further co-infections.

The use of anti-inflammatory drugs to treat these infections could lessen the need for patients — human and animal — to use antibiotics. Upper respiratory infections often lead to CRS, a driver of antibiotic resistance.

The next step is for the researchers to examine longer-term effects of aflatoxins, to learn more about chronic exposure and its effects on airways.

Plant-made Antimicrobial Peptide Targets Dental Plaque and Gum Tissues

A single use of protein drugs, which derive from biological sources, has been limited in the field of dental medicine due to high costs and invasive delivery methods. But a new report from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine suggests a new approach for delivering a protein drug that can treat and prevent oral disease including dental caries, commonly known as cavities. The researchers were able to kill tooth-decay-causing bacteria and prevent them from forming biofilms on a tooth-like surface using a single topical treatment of antimicrobial peptides produced by plants. The study also showed that these peptides could impact periodontal and gingival cells, which means the new delivery method could help treat diseases that affect the gum tissues.

The novel platform is a relatively cost-effective method of producing biopharmaceuticals and could lead to the development of an affordable therapeutic approach to attack plaque and promote gum health.

“As scientists we have many opportunities to develop breakthrough treatments but cost is a huge obstacle,” said Hyun (Michel) Koo, co-corresponding author on the study and professor in the department of orthodontics and divisions of pediatric dentistry and community oral health in Penn Dental Medicine. “What makes this approach so exciting is not only the science but, because the production costs are low, the feasibility of getting the therapy to the population who truly needs yet can’t afford it.”

Dr. Koo partnered with co-corresponding author Henry Daniell, director of translational research and professor in Penn Dental Medicine’s department of biochemistry and pathology, who created groundbreaking plant-produced therapeutics for several important human infectious and inherited diseases.

“It was a synergism,” Dr. Daniell said. “Bringing our research together led to this new concept of a topical protein drug made in plants that can both kill bacteria and break down the oral biofilm.”

The researchers combined antimicrobial peptides with enzymes that can break down the biofilm matrix and used a plant-based drug production platform to reduce the cost. The process forms a plant leaf with gold particles coated in a cloned gene in order to reprogram the chloroplasts to synthesize the associated protein. For the study, the researchers used the process to manipulate plants to produce two antimicrobial peptides, reticulin and protegrin.

To test whether the plant-made agents could prevent biofilm from forming, they exposed a saliva-coated tooth-like surface to the plant-made protegrin for 30 minutes, then exposed the surface to S. mutans cells along with sugar. They found that the protegrin significantly impaired the ability of the bacteria to form a biofilm compared to an untreated surface.

Next, they exposed a pre-formed biofilm on the tooth-mimicking surface to either protegrin alone or a combination of protegrin along with a matrix-degrading enzyme to test the therapeutic possibilities. While the enzyme alone had no effect and the antimicrobial alone had some effect, the combination was able to successfully degrade 60% of the matrix and kill even more bacteria.

“A single topical treatment was capable of disrupting the biofilm,” Dr. Koo said. “Its effectiveness was comparable to that of chlorhexidine, which is considered the ‘gold standard’ for oral antimicrobial therapy.”

The study also showed that the plant-made antimicrobial peptides could be taken up by human cells in the oral cavity.

A collaboration with Johnson & Johnson Consumer Inc. will allow the researchers to continue developing the antimicrobial-enzyme production system. They may create a chewing gum laced with antimicrobial peptides or investigate growing the peptides in the betel leaf, which is commonly chewed in some Asian cultures.
Senate Executive Committee

Members Elected by Constituency

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3. SAS: Anthropology, History of Art, Music: Carol Muller (Music)
4. SAS: Mathematics: Ron Donagi
5. SAS: Biology: Brian Gregory
6. SAS: Chemistry, Earth & Environmental Science, History & Sociology of Science: Elizabeth Rhodeas (Chemistry)
7. SAS: Classical Studies, Germanic Languages & Literatures, Romance Languages, Slavic Languages & Literatures: Vacant
8. SAS: Economics: Steven Matthews
9. SAS: English: Rita Barnard
10. SAS: Linguistics, Philosophy: Jianjing Kuang (Linguistics)
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12. SAS: Physics & Astronomy: Masao Sako
13. SAS: Political Science: Nancy J. Hirschmann
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15. SAS: Sociology, Criminology: Melissa Wilde (Sociology)
16. Dental Medicine: Kathleen Boesze-Battaglia
17. GSE: Richard Ingersoll
20. Design: Franca Trubiano
21. Law: Mitch Berman
22. PSOM: Biochemistry & Biophysics, Biostatistics & Epidemiology, Cancer Biology, Cell & Developmental Biology, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine: Douglas Wiebe (Biostatistics & Epidemiology)
23. PSOM: Anesthesiology & Critical Care, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Radiation Oncology: David Smith (Anesthesiology & Critical Care)
24. PSOM: Dermatology, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine & Community Health, Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic Surgery, Otorhinolaryngology, Psychiatry: James Palmer (Otorhinolaryngology)
25. PSOM: Genetics, Medical Ethics & Health Policy, Microbiology, Neurology, Neuroscience, Neurosurgery, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Physiology, Systems Pharmacology & Translational Therapeutics: Michael McGarvey (Neurology)
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27. PSOM-Medicine: General Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, Hematology/Oncology, Rheumatology, Translational Medicine & Human Genetics: Bruce Gjiantonio (Hematology/Oncology)
28. PSOM: Pediatrics: Julie Brothers
29. PSOM: Radiology, Surgery: Jose Pascual (Surgery)
30. Nursing: Eileen Lake
31. Social Policy & Practice: Toorjo Ghose
32. Veterinary Medicine: Biomedical Sciences, Pathobiology: Anna Kashina (Biomedical Sciences)
33. Veterinary Medicine: Clinical Studies-New Bolton Center, Clinical Studies-Philadelphia: Paula Henthorn (Clinical Studies-Philadelphia)
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Membership of University Council, 2016-2017

Steering Committee
The Steering Committee shall consist of the president of the University, the provost, the chair, the chair-elect and the past chair of the Faculty Senate, the chair of the Undergraduate Assembly, the chair of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, the chair of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly and the chair of the Weekly-Paid Penn Professional Staff Assembly. Drawn from the Council membership there shall be in addition four faculty members, one graduate/professional student and one undergraduate student elected by the respective governing bodies, as well as one additional member of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly and one additional member of the Weekly-Paid Penn Professional Staff Assembly, each elected by their representative assemblies. The chair of the Faculty Senate shall be the chair of the Steering Committee. In the absence of the chair, or at the request of the chair, the chair-elect shall serve as chair of the Steering Committee. The Council moderator will be an official observer at meetings of the Steering Committee. The secretary of the Council shall serve as secretary of the Steering Committee. Members of the Steering Committee may attend the meetings of Council committees.

Members of Council Committee
Faculty: Forty-five members of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate shall insure that each faculty is represented and that at least three assistant professors serve on the Council. The members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee who are members of the Council shall otherwise be chosen in accordance with the rules of the Faculty Senate. One full-time lecturer and one full-time member of the research faculty to be selected to serve two-year terms by vote facilitated by the Office of the Secretary in consultation with the Steering Committee of the full-time lecturers and research faculty, respectively, from a slate consisting of the five lecturers and the five members of the research faculty receiving the largest number of nominations by lecturers and members of the research faculty. If the Steering Committee receives fewer than five nominations for either group, additional nominations shall be solicited from the constituency representatives of the Senate Executive Committee.

Administrative and Staff: Eleven administrative officers, including the president, the provost and nine members of the administration to be appointed annually by the president, at least five of whom shall be deans of faculties.

Two elected representatives of the Penn Professional Staff Assembly. One elected representative of the Librarians Assembly. Two elected representatives of the Weekly-Paid Penn Professional Staff Assembly.

Students: Fifteen graduate and professional students elected as members of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly. The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly shall ensure that, to the extent possible, each school is represented. The members of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly who are members of the Council shall otherwise be chosen in accordance with the rules of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly.

Fifteen undergraduate students elected as members of the Undergraduate Assembly. The Undergraduate Assembly shall ensure that, to the extent possible, each undergraduate school is represented. The members of the Undergraduate Assembly who are members of the Council shall otherwise be chosen in accordance with the rules of the Undergraduate Assembly.

One elected representative of the United Minorities Council.

Members of the Administration
Steve Fluharty
William Gipson
Amy Gutmann
John Jackson
Vijay Kumar
Anna Mastroieni
Vincent Price
Ted Rüger
Maureen Rush
Valarie Swain-Cade McCoullough
Toni Villarruel

Elected by Faculty At Large
Laura Perna, Chair
Reed Pyeritz, Past Chair
Marcella Devoto, Secretary
Paul Goldin, Secretary-Elect

Elected by the Faculty Constituency
1. Kathleen Hall Jamieson
2. Robert St. George
3. Carol Muller
4. Ron Donagi
5. Brian Gregory
6. Elizabeth Rhodees
7. Vacant
8. Steven Matthews
9. Rita Barnard
10. Jianjing Kuang
11. Steve Tinney
12. Masao Sako
13. Nancy J. Hirschmann
14. Elizabeth Brannon
15. Melissa Wilde
16. Kathleen Boesze-Battaglia
17. Richard Ingersoll
18. Gershon Buchsbaum
19. Robert Ghrist
20. Franca Trubiano
21. Mitchell Berman
22. Douglas Wiebe
23. David Smith
24. James Palmer
25. Michael McGarvey
26. Frank Leone
27. Bruce Giantonio
28. Julie Brothers
29. Jose Pascual
30. Eileen Lake
31. Toorjo Ghose
32. Anna Kashina
33. Paula Henthorn
34. Dylan Small
35. Karen Lewis
36. Jehoshua Eliashberg

Penn Association for Senior & Emeritus Faculty
Martin Fring, PASEF Representative

University Council Meetings and Resolutions, see the Council website: http://www.upenn.edu/secretary/council/index.html
### University Council Committees, 2016-2017

**Academic & Related Affairs:**
- **Chair:** Ani Nenkova, SEAS
- **Liaison:** Leo Charney
- **Staff:** Nicole Tillman
- **Faculty:**
  - Yuko Butler, GSE
  - Frederick Dickinson, SAS
  - Eric Feldman, Law
  - Nicola Mason, Vet Med
  - Rahim Rizi, PSOM
- **Graduate Students:**
  - Angela Ddamba
  - Bowen Lou
- **Undergraduate Students:**
  - Zixin Lee
  - Naomi Kadish

**Personnel Benefits:**
- **Chair:** Reed Shuldiner, Law
- **Liaisons:** Jack Heuer, Susan Sproat
- **Staff:** Sheila Hall
- **Faculty:**
  - David Balamuth, SAS
  - Robert Boruch, GSE
  - C. Neill Epperson, PSOM
  - Russell Localio, PSOM
  - Jonathan Smith, SEAS
  - Rakesh Vohra, SEAS/SAS
- **PPSA:**
  - Adam Roth Saks
  - Susan Russomillo
  - Amy Nothelfer
- **WPPSA:**
  - Peter Rockett
  - Kelly Walsh
  - Joyce Woodward-Jones
- **Ex Officio**
  - Anita Allen

**Diversity & Equity:**
- **Chair:** Ezekiel Dixon-Román, SP2
- **Liaison:** Sam Starks
- **Staff:** Kuan Evans
- **Faculty:**
  - Regina Austin, Law
  - H. Gerald Campano, GSE
  - Nancy Hirschmann, SAS
  - Jonni Moore, PSOM
  - Sharrona Pearl, Annenberg
  - Deborah Small, Wharton
  - Ebony Thomas, GSE
- **Graduate Students:**
  - Lloyd Talley
  - Sashae Sabrina Mitchell
- **Undergraduate Students:**
  - Erica Dienes
  - Calvary Rogers
- **PPSA:**
  - Kristin Field
  - Shaina Adams-El Guabli
- **WPPSA:**
  - Lauren Kemp
  - Irene Tan

**Campus & Community Life:**
- **Chair:** Emily Hannum, SAS
- **Liaison:** Karu Kozuma
- **Staff:** Cydnee Bryant
- **Faculty:**
  - Anne Barnhill, PSOM
  - Monica Calkins, PSOM
  - Annette Lareau, SAS
  - Americus Reed II, Wharton
- **Graduate Students:**
  - Ian Deas
  - Ashali Jain
- **Undergraduate Students:**
  - Werner Glass
  - Sam Shea
- **PPSA:**
  - Ashley Bush
  - Tessa Mansell
- **WPPSA:**
  - Simcha Katsnelson
  - Joyce Woodward-Jones

**Facilities:**
- **Chair:** Masao Sako, SAS
- **Liaison:** David Hollenberg
- **Staff:** Taylor Berkowitz
- **Faculty:**
  - Tom Daniels, Design
  - Kathryn Michel, Vet Med
- **Graduate Students:**
  - Jessie Haeyun Yi
  - Suraj Bharadwaj
- **Undergraduate Students:**
  - Timothy Chang
  - Michelle Xu
- **PPSA:**
  - Elizabeth Hartzell
  - Kristen McMullen
- **WPPSA:**
  - Leon Malloy
  - Irene Tan

**Committee on Committees:**
- **Chair:** Santosh Venkatesh, SEAS
- **Staff:** Joe Gasiewski, Patrick Walsh
- **Faculty:**
  - Mitch Berman, Law
  - Eileen Lake, Nursing
  - Michael McGarvey, PSOM
  - Laura Perna, GSE
  - Reed Pyeritz, PSOM
  - Melissa Wilde, SAS
- **Graduate Student:** 1 TBD
- **Undergraduate Student:** Caleb Carter
- **PPSA:**
  - Heather Kelley
- **WPPSA:**
  - Loretta Hauber

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### 2016-2017 Meetings and Discussion Topics for University Council

The following are the dates for meetings of the University Council, which are open to observers who register their intention to attend by calling the Office of the University Secretary in advance at (215) 898-7005. All meetings are held on Wednesdays at 4 p.m. in Bodek Lounge, Houston Hall. The agenda will be announced in *Almanac* prior to each meeting. Council meeting coverage is also published in *Almanac* in the issue following the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 9, 2016</td>
<td>State of the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 2016</td>
<td>Increasing opportunities for student/faculty innovation/entrepreneurship: Pennovation Center and other campus resources, including PCI, Wharton, PennDesign, Weiss Tech, Penn Medicine Center for Health Care Innovation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1, 2017</td>
<td>A discussion of academic and personal integrity at Penn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 22, 2017</td>
<td>A discussion of online learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22, 2017</td>
<td>Five-year update on Penn’s Action Plan for Faculty Diversity and Excellence</td>
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- **Reports on budgets and plans for next academic year**

- **April 19, 2017**
  - Presentation of final committee reports
  - Discussion of potential focus issues for the 2017-2018 academic year
  - Discussion of potential committee charges for the 2017-2018 academic year
The Office of the Ombudsman was created at the University of Pennsylvania to serve as a central place where anyone in the Penn community can bring problems and concerns for impartial discussion. In the wave of student demonstrations on the campus in the late 1960s, a Task Force on University Governance recommended the creation of the position, and the Faculty Senate supported the proposal. In 1971, Penn’s then President Martin Meyerson appointed the first Ombudsman, Joel Conarroe, professor of English in the School of Arts & Sciences. At the present time, Lynn Hollen Lees, professor of history emerita, serves as Ombudsman, and Marcia Martinez-Helfman, JD, MSW, is the Associate Ombudsman.

The mandate of the Ombudsman’s office is large: any member of the Penn community may bring to us a problem or matter of concern related to the University. We offer a neutral place where individuals can get information, voice dissatisfactions, and explore ways to resolve differences. Our aim is to de-escalate tension and to settle disputes informally. We can explain University policies and procedures and help visitors evaluate their options. Our office offers help with conflict resolution and, if appropriate, mediation services. We are able to carry out informal inquiries about the underlying circumstances of issues brought to our attention, although we do not conduct formal investigations. Often we refer visitors to other University resources, but we also can and do bring patterns of problems forward to appropriate administrators. Our mission is to improve those conditions which hinder members of the Penn community from functioning or which diminish their satisfaction with their work, studies, teaching, research or any other aspect of their lives at Penn. We do not take sides in a dispute. Although we have no power to impose a particular resolution of a problem, we do advocate for fairness and consistency. Our office is pledged to promote fair and equitable treatment of all members of the Penn community. Our office has established guidelines for practice that address its independence, neutrality, confidentiality and informality.

Our office values the privacy of those who consult us. We will neither identify our visitors nor discuss their concerns with anyone unless we have been given explicit permission to do so. The only exceptions to confidentiality arise when there is a risk of imminent harm to the visitor or to someone else, or if we have a legal obligation to disclose information.

In July 2016, our office was added to the list of confidential resources available to faculty, students and staff under the revised Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence and Stalking Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy. We can provide counseling and support, as well as discussion of other University resources and possible next steps for any affected parties. The Office of the Ombudsman is a confidential and safe space where visitors may voice their concerns and weigh their options. During the past academic year, 150 visitors raised a wide variety of issues with our office (see Table 1). The largest number were University employees (41%). Significant numbers of faculty (26%), graduate students (19%), and undergraduates (9%) also contacted us. In comparison to total consultations during the previous four years (2011-2015), the proportion of faculty using our services has risen while the proportion of undergraduates has decreased slightly (see Table 2). Alumni, former students and staff and parents also sometimes consult with us.

During the past year, the number of complaints about inappropriate or abusive behavior has risen sharply in comparison to the period 2011-2015, and they constitute the largest single category of our cases. Protests against abrasive and abusive treatment have come to us from people in all parts of the University. Some perceive that they are being treated with a lack of respect; others feel that they are being bullied. The fear of retaliation discourages many from open complaints. The common denominator in such cases is the disparity in power wielded by supervisors over employees, faculty over students, and tenured faculty over untenured faculty or adjuncts.

The examples that are brought to our office signal a lack of consensus about acceptable modes of communication. The manner in which an unfavorable review is delivered can be just as or even more important than the bad news itself. Much more work needs to be done to maintain open lines of respectful communication and to foster greater trust across the University. The challenge is to identify more effective ways to ensure accountability in instances of unfair treatment. We have raised these issues with a number of University leaders and will continue to engage in these conversations. A growing number of individuals have brought to our office disputes over rights related to academic publications and the use of data generated within a lab or a research unit. Post-doctoral fellows might believe that they are not receiving appropriate credit for contributions made to jointly authored articles. The departure of a faculty member and an associated research project sometimes gives rise to ongoing conflict over access to, and permission to employ, previously generated data. These complaints arise in multiple schools and have been brought to the Office of the Ombudsman by students, faculty and staff. The frequency with which such issues arise suggests the need for a clear, comprehensive and accessible statement of school-specific policies that address authorship rights and responsibilities among faculty and associated researchers, procedures for disclosure of conflicts and processes for the resolution of disputes over publications.

What should a student expect from an advisor or a teacher with respect to accessibility, to timely commentary on work, or to the writing of recommendations? How should evaluations of performance or decisions about termination from a program be handled? Faculty members sometimes find themselves in disagreement over who has primary responsibility for advising a student and for allocating funding. The absence of clear policies in these areas can produce tension among students because of perceptions of unequal treatment. The great differences among disciplines and Schools across the University suggests that a uniform code would not be appropriate. Each School should consider, however, developing statements detailing the academic rights and responsibilities of faculty and students. The school can determine whether these articulated practices should be formulated at the departmental level or school-wide. In light of the fact that each school is required to have its own Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility, perhaps these groups could be tasked with the development of appropriate statements and procedures. We have begun conversations at the University and school level about the need for such policies.

In any given year, our office sees only a tiny fraction of the University community, the dissatisfied who are seeking options and possible solutions or who decide to take action. Yet even if the vast majority of those on campus are satisfied and working productively, efforts to improve communication, to promote transparency and to ensure fairness will benefit all. To this end, we applaud the Provost’s ongoing Campaign for Community and urge all to support it. We also encourage those with concerns related to the University to contact our office so that we can explore solutions for issues that are troubling them.

The office is located in 113 Duhring Wing, adjoining the Fisher Fine Arts Library in the center of the Penn campus. Our website (www.upenn.edu/ombudsman) gives information on the office and its activities, as well as contact information. The office can be reached by telephone at (215) 898-8261 or online through the office website. We respond to inquiries quickly, and anyone experiencing difficulties who would like to speak with us is encouraged to set up an appointment. Our office is an autonomous unit, independent of the organizational hierarchies of all the schools and overseen only by the President’s Office. As a confidential resource, we keep neither the names of visitors nor written records of discussions. Individuals who request a meeting need not disclose their identities and may remain anonymous.
Table 1  
July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016

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Table 1  
July 1, 2011-June 30, 2016

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<td>153</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>581</td>
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Table 2  
July 1, 2011-June 30, 2016

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<td>0.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visitors by Categories of Status

| Staff                                  | 63        | 66        | 55         | 59        | 243            | 41.82%     |
| Faculty                                | 35        | 32        | 13         | 31        | 111            | 19.10%     |
| Post-Doctoral Fellows                  | 6         | 8         | 4          | 6         | 24             | 4.13%      |
| Residents                              | 0         | 1         | 1          | 0         | 2              | 0.34%      |
| Students-Undergraduate                 | 28        | 13        | 11         | 16        | 68             | 11.70%     |
| Students-Graduate/Professional         | 34        | 33        | 29         | 20        | 116            | 19.97%     |
| Other                                  | 3         | 0         | 9          | 5         | 17             | 2.93%      |
| Total                                  | 169       | 153       | 122        | 137       | 581            | 100.00%    |

*Data for 2013-2014 may be incomplete due to possible untallied visits.
Controlled Substances Disposal Event

The Office of Environmental Health & Radiation Safety (EHRS) and the Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) will host an event to facilitate the disposal of registrants’ outdated and unwanted controlled substances. The event is scheduled for November 14, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., in conference room 104 Stellar-Chance at the Perelman School of Medicine. The event is free of charge but registration is required. You must register by submitting an electronic drug transfer form by November 4. Additional information about the event and transfer forms can be found at the EHRS website (www.ehrs.upenn.edu). Contact Jim Crumley at (215) 746-5036 if you have questions.

New Bike Commuter Expense Reimbursement Program: Starting in 2017

In January 2017, bike commuters can look forward to the launch of a new program that supports their work commute to and from Penn. The Bike Commuter Expense Reimbursement Program will provide up to $240 annually to qualified faculty and staff for any out-of-pocket eligible expenses. Unlike a flexible spending account, reimbursement comes directly from the University and is not set aside from pre-tax pay by the individual program participant.

The IRS statute has guided the development of the program and the types of allowable expenses for reimbursement. Under Penn’s new program, expense categories that the University will reimburse are: bike purchases; maintenance, improvements and bike accessories; parking and commercial storage costs; and safety gear. Purchases such as membership and program fees, bike rentals, along with clothing and apparel are not considered allowable expenses.

To participate in the Bike Commuter Expense Reimbursement Program, one must:

- Be full-time benefits-eligible faculty or staff;
- Commute by bicycle to and from Penn more than 50% of the time in a qualified bike commuting month;
- Not participate in any of Penn’s other commuter transit or parking programs; and
- Register the bike with the Division of Public Safety.

The first year of the program officially kicks off on January 1, 2017, and extends until the end of the Tax Year. Claims from Tax Year 2017 may be submitted beginning January 1 until February 28, 2018. Concur, the University’s expense management system, will be leveraged to support the overall process. Bike commuters are encouraged to access Concur at any time throughout Tax Year 2017 to upload their receipts of eligible expenses.

The introduction of Penn’s new bike commuter program parallels the continual increase of biking to and from Penn. The Bike Commuter Expense Reimbursement Program will provide up to $240 annually to qualified faculty and staff for any out-of-pocket eligible expenses.

To access the Frequently Asked Questions about the program, see https://cms.business-services.upenn.edu/parking/sustainable-commuting/biking/bike-commuter-faqs.html

—Division of Business Services

Penn’s Way 2017 Raffle

Week 3 Winners

National Constitution Center: Freedom Family Membership, value: $95—Kristen Nobles, HUP
Landmark Theaters & Thermo Fisher Scientific: Two VIP guest passes & $50 gift card to Cheesecake Factory, value: $70—Stefan Hailey, HUP
Helium Comedy Club: Admission for six, value: $96—Julie Raja, HUP
White Dog Café: Gift card, value: $50—John Muschek, Pennsylvania Hospital
Nixon Uniform & Medical Wear & Thermo Fisher Scientific: Regal Cinemas gift card & Olive Garden gift card, value $75—Jeron Harris, Pennsylvania Hospital
Thermo Fisher Scientific: Starbucks gift card, value: $50—Sharon Allen, Clinical Practices
Thermo Fisher Scientific: iTunes gift card, value: $50—Ashley Bell, HUP
Philadelphia Catering Company: gift certifi cate-dessert tray, value: $65—Aileen Morrin, HUP

Week 5 (10/31 Drawing)*

Thermo Fisher Scientific: Regal Cinemas gift card & Cosi beverages & entreés for two, value: $55
Landmark Theaters & Thermo Fisher Scientific: Two VIP guest passes & $50 gift card to Cheesecake Factory, value: $70
Philadelphia Museum of Art: Four guest passes, value: $80
Penne Restaurant & Wine Bar: Gift certificate, value: $100
The Logan Hotel: Spa Services gift certificate, value: $100
Morris Arboretum: Family membership, value: $100
The Logan Hotel: Spa Services gift certificate, value: $100
Thermo Fisher Scientific: iTunes gift card, value: $50
Novartis: Thermo Fisher Scientific: J.C. Penney gift card, value: $50
Thermo Fisher Scientific: Starbucks gift card, value: $50

* Drawing dates are estimated; actual drawings take place upon the notification from Payroll that all data has been entered from prior week. Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on Friday for inclusion in a given week’s drawing.

Note: Prizes valued at over $100 are subject to state and federal income taxes. Winners of those prizes will be contacted individually about how those taxes are to be handled.

Q: Why isn’t the keyword search working on the online pledge form?

A: You must enter only a single keyword to search our online database. Entering multiple words as search criteria will not return any results.

Q: Can I participate in Penn’s Way 2017 without donating money?

A: Yes, all employees are encouraged to participate regardless of their planned gift amount. Employees who contribute elsewhere and/or those wishing to participate without giving may do so by checking the appropriate box on the online pledge form or by indicating a $0 gift amount on the paper pledge form. All employees who participate will be eligible for the weekly employee prize raffle as well as the midway prize and grand prize.
Homecoming Alumni Show at Burison Gallery: October 28

The Burrosion Gallery is hosting the Homecoming Alumni Show from October 28 through November 10 with a reception, in the University Club, at the Inn at Penn, on Friday, October 28 from 3-6 p.m. Luminosity (below), an oil on canvas by Terrill Warrenburg (’C 16), is one of 47 pieces on display. Another dozen images are in a collage which is in the November AT PENN calendar. There are more than four dozen artists represented in the show, including alumni from the early 1960s up to the most recent Penn graduates. Their works include giclée prints, oils on canvass, goulache on paper, photographs, pen & pencil, watercolor and mixed media.

Liz Vice at Annenberg Center: October 29

Gospel, soul and R&B combine in the timeless vocals of breakout artist Liz Vice who will be performing at Annenberg Center’s Harold Prince Theatre on October 29 at 8 p.m. This inspiring, up-and-coming artist is dedicated to making positive social change through her genuine yet playful approach to soul-filled music. Come what may, Liz Vice is going to let it shine. For tickets, visit https://www.annenbergcenter.org/event/liz-vice

Penn Abroad Information Sessions

Penn Abroad is hosting five sessions for undergraduates to learn more about studying abroad. These sessions at Penn Global (3701 Chestnut Street) will provide information on the policies and procedures for lodging study abroad applications.

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Alumni Show from October 28 through November 10. This show includes work from more than forty dozen artists represented in the show, including alumni from the early 1960s up to the most recent Penn graduates. Their works include giclée prints, oils on canvass, goulache on paper, photographs, pen and pencil, watercolor and mixed media.

Almanac On-the-Go: RSS Feeds

Almanac provides links to select stories each week there is an issue. RSS is a way to distribute new content to users of RSS readers or news aggregators directly to your computer and other web-enabled devices. Visit Almanac’s website at http://www.upenn.edu/almanac for instructions on how to subscribe to the Almanac RSS Feed.

The University of Pennsylvania values diversity and seeks members of the Penn community; for more details & to register: https://www.pennovation.upenn.edu/pennovation-center-grand-opening (Pennovation Center).

18th District Report

Below are the Crimes Against Persons from the 18th District: 5 incidents with 4 arrests (2 domestic as well). These crimes were handled by the University Police, 1900 Spruce St. The crimes include harassment, theft, and assault/robbery.

Accessing Almanac Online

Subscribe now to Express Almanac (http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/exprrss.html) to receive each Tuesday’s issue in your inbox before it reaches your desk. Breaking news will be posted in the Almanac Between Issues section of The Almanac website and sent out to Express Almanac subscribers.
With the increasing evidence supporting structured, active, in-class learning (SAIL), I set out to convert my sophomore level biomechanics course, BE200, to a SAIL format in the fall of 2014. As I spent hours developing new material, struggling with the best way to implement this structure, I wondered if the conversion was really going to be better for my students. How was I going to tell if this worked? What did I actually want my students to get out of this experience? Grades certainly aren’t the only metric of learning, but what does learning really mean? And once I figured out what was important, how was I going to tell if my students accomplished those things?

Assessment can mean many different things in the classroom—verbal and written exams, group work and papers to name a few. The gold standard tends to be final grades, but I was hesitant to rely solely on a metric that can vary so much from semester to semester. I also knew that many factors go into obtaining a high grade in a course, including exam anxiety, time management and math errors in problem solving, unrelated to a student’s actual grasp of the material. After much thought, I decided to focus on two specific areas connected to the goals of my course: increasing students’ conceptual understanding and increasing students’ confidence in their skills. The first was an attempt to decouple learning from the other factors that can influence grades. The second stemmed from my desire to better understand the self-perceived learning of my students. How would they describe their abilities when they entered the course, and how did they change as the semester progressed? I would consider a successful class one in which students became more confident over the course of the semester, even if those feelings fluctuated during the term as they struggled with new or difficult topics.

To assess conceptual understanding, I drew from previously published concept inventories—assessments common in math and physics. These inventories focus on the concepts behind mathematical and engineering theories rather than the numbers or “correct” solution. Questions are more general and have multiple choice answers with formats such as “expect an increase” or “A will move faster than B” and are presented in both words and graphical form. The published inventories formed the basis of my assessment, and to fill in any gaps, I created course questions in a similar style. These concept questions were administered at the beginning and end of the semester to track student conceptual gains in both the SAIL course version and the previous year’s lecture-only version. While not graded, students were required to complete the assessments for participation ensuring a near-complete student sampling. Material was divided into prerequisite material and new biomechanics material. The prerequisite material included topics from math and physics that my biomechanics course would build directly upon—material that the students should have already learned. New biomechanics material tested conceptual knowledge of topics they’d learn over the course of the semester. I didn’t expect them to know the mathematical reasoning behind any of these solutions, but since it was a conceptual assessment in a course driven by physical phenomenon, I was interested in knowing what their “gut” told them.

At the end of the course, students showed increased gains in biomechanics course material in the SAIL formatted class compared to the traditional, lecture-only format. As a baseline assessment, this was an encouraging result. However, this increase was not noted in the prerequisite material. Though improved understanding of the prerequisite material was not an explicit course objective, these ideas were reinforced throughout the semester as the concepts were applied to biomechanics examples and problems. Perhaps this simply means the SAIL format isn’t changing how students apply concepts from other courses, but considering that the scores were far from 100%, it made me realize that these connections are not as clear to the students as I think they should be. This was also a result that would have been difficult to observe in grades alone. Because prerequisite material is buried within the course material, my traditional homework and exams may never have picked up on this trend if I had not implemented this type of assessment.

To better understand the self-perceived learning of my students, a completely different type of assessment was needed. I wanted to know if the types of activities we were utilizing in the SAIL course increased student confidence or if the required interactions in the student group work stressing them further. Surveys were given at the beginning and end of the semester inquiring about students’ confidence in their skills. Questions in multiple choice and short answer format covered topics such as group work, applying concepts to their other math and science courses, enjoyment in learning biomechanics and problem solving skills to name a few.

Over the course of the semester, students’ confidence levels in both problem solving skills and group work grew. However, the most interesting finding was how these changes in confidence related to their conceptual gains on the concept assessments. Students entering the course were clustered into two groups based on pre-instructional confidence in problem-solving related skills: the low pre-instructional confidence group and the high pre-instructional confidence group. As may be expected, students in the low pre-instructional confidence group showed significantly lower prerequisite conceptual gains over the course of the semester. These results suggest that students with low confidence, perhaps as a result of previous experiences with learning math and physics, may have a disadvantage when it comes to learning new related material. However, and perhaps most importantly, students in the low pre-instructional confidence cluster showed equal biomechanics conceptual gains compared to their peers, suggesting that this barrier can be overcome. Unfortunately, these positive conceptual gains did not translate into higher grades; students that entered the course with low confidence tended to receive lower grades than their peers.

The disconnect between grades, confidence and conceptual understanding is still unclear to me but has made me slowly rethink the things I emphasize on assignments used to determine grades. For example, conceptual questions and big picture problem solving outlines have made their way onto my exams and homework. The one thing I do know is that without the incorporation of assessments outside of my normal toolbox, I’ll never be able to fully understand my students’ learning process and the impact of my teaching on it.