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$35 Million Gift From John G. and Rosanna Troiano Establishes the Troiano Brain Tumor Center at Penn Medicine

A foundational gift from John Gabriele Troiano, W'92, and Rosanna Troiano has established the Troiano Brain Tumor Center at Penn Medicine. Combined with institutional investment and additional philanthropy, the Troianos' lead gift launches a $35 million initiative that represents a new phase of Penn Medicine's bold, multi-pronged approach to brain tumor research.

"The University of Pennsylvania seeks practical solutions to humanity's greatest challenges," said Penn President J. Larry Jameson. "Through their compassionate philanthropy, John Troiano and his wife, Rosanna, have embraced this mission. Their establishment of the Troiano Brain Tumor Center sets the stage for urgently needed breakthroughs in brain tumor research and care. We are grateful for their partnership."

This recent gift builds upon the Troianos' previous support of cancer immunotherapy research at Penn Medicine for the treatment of terminal brain cancers, specifically the groundbreaking work of Donald M. O'Rourke, with CAR T cell therapy for glioblastoma (GBM), the most aggressive and hard-to-treat type of brain tumor.

"For our family, having lost both my parents to brain tumors, this is personal," said John G. Troiano. "No one should lose a loved one to this disease, and we know the devastation of that kind of loss all too well. Rosanna and I have made it our mission to ensure that others don't experience the same. Creating the Troiano Brain Tumor Center at Penn Medicine brings to life our commitment to creating a world where there is hope for people with brain tumors, and, as a proud Penn alum, I believe there is no better place than Penn to deliver on that mission. We invite others to join us on our philanthropic mission to further accelerate the work of this important center."

The Troiano Brain Tumor Center will unite experts across multiple disciplines—including neurosurgery, neurology, hematology-oncology, neuroradiology, neuropathology, and cancer biology—to advance new approaches for brain tumor treatment.

Strengthened by an integration with the Abramson Cancer Center, the Troiano Brain Tumor Center will focus on translating scientific discoveries into clinical care through innovative research; early-phase clinical trials; and coordinated, patient-centered treatment, under

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Penn Dental Medicine Launches Caregiver Dental Hub, a National Resource for Those Supporting Individuals with Disabilities

Penn Dental Medicine, with support from the Delta Dental Community Care Foundation, has launched the Caregiver Dental Hub, the first university-affiliated national resource dedicated to supporting caregivers who provide daily oral care for individuals with disabilities.

More than 63 million Americans serve as caregivers, often assuming responsibilities for medical, nursing, and oral healthcare with little formal training. Through conversations with hundreds of caregivers, Penn Dental Medicine project leaders Stephen N. Abel and Joan Gluch heard a consistent message: caregivers need practical, easy-to-understand guidance they can use every day. Drs. Abel and Gluch, nationally recognized dental educators, used this vital feedback to shape the hub's caregiver-focused design and informational content.

CaregiverDentalHub.org offers instructional videos, caregiver stories, expert demonstrations, and practical resources on topics such as choosing oral health products, preventing tooth decay, making healthier food choices, communicating with dental professionals, safe positioning techniques, and reducing stress during daily brushing and mouth care routines.

Visitors to the site can learn directly from dentists, dental hygienists, caregivers, and other professionals through real-world demonstrations and conversations designed to answer common caregiver questions. Another feature of CaregiverDentalHub.org is its directory of disability-friendly dentists experienced in treating patients who may need special accommodation.

"Throughout this project, caregivers explained their challenges in providing oral healthcare to family members and clients," Dr. Abel said. "We are excited to offer them this readily accessible online resource that turns evidence-based information into practical strategies."

"Now caregivers have practical information they can trust, presented in a way that fits the realities of daily caregiving," Dr. Gluch said. "It is a source of support, education, and encouragement for caregivers at no cost."

"With the launch of the Caregiver Dental Hub, Penn Dental Medicine is working to break down barriers to oral healthcare in order to improve the quality of life for people everywhere," said Mark S. Wolff, dean of Penn Dental Medicine. "This is a transformative resource that prioritizes the caregiver community, the individuals and teams that facilitate some of the most needed care for persons with disabilities."

"By supporting Penn Dental Medicine's work for this community, we at Delta Dental Community Care Foundation are proud to invest in a compassionate, prevention-focused initiative that equips thousands of caregivers with the skills and confidence needed to transform daily oral hygiene habits and advance health equity across our communities," said Kevin Ryan, director of the Delta Dental Community Care Foundation.

Frederick R. Dickinson: Lauder Professor of International Relations

Frederick R. Dickinson has been named the Lauder Professor of International Relations in the School of Arts & Sciences. Before this appointment, he served as co-director of the Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies from 2012 to 2019. He has also served as director of Penn's Center for East Asian Studies since 2019.



Frederick Dickinson

Born in Tokyo and raised in Kanazawa and Kyoto, Japan, Dr. Dickinson writes and teaches about modern Japan, on empire, politics, and nationalism in East Asia and the Pacific, and on world history. He holds an MA and PhD in history from Yale University and holds an MA in international politics from Kyoto University. Dr. Dickinson is the author of *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919*; the biography, *Taisho Tenno; World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919-1930*; and *A Global History of Modern Japan*.

Dr. Dickinson has received grants from the Japanese Ministry of Education, the Fulbright Commission, and the Japan Foundation. He was a National Fellow at the Hoover Institution, a research scholar at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, and a Fulbright U.S. Scholar at Fulbright University Vietnam. He has also held visiting professorships at Swarthmore College, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Kyoto University, and Kwansei Gakuin University.

The late Leonard A. Lauder, W'54, was a University of Pennsylvania Emeritus Trustee and co-founder and governor of the Lauder Institute. He also served on the boards of advisors of Penn Arts & Sciences and the Wharton School. In 1983, he and his brother, Ronald S. Lauder, W'65, established the Joseph H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies at Penn in honor of their father. Leonard Lauder received Penn's Alumni Award of Merit in 1996 and has provided wide-ranging support for Penn through the decades.

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$35 Million Gift From John G. and Rosanna Troiano Establishes the Troiano Brain Tumor Center at Penn Medicine

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the leadership of Nduka M. Amankulor, executive director; Dolores Hambardzumyan, scientific director; and Stephen J. Bagley, clinical director.

Notably, Dr. Amankulor's research focuses on how brain tumors evade the immune system and how immune-based therapies could help. As a White House Cancer Moonshot Scholar, he investigates immune biomarkers that could help predict how patients respond to treatment.

"The Troiano Brain Tumor Center brings together an exceptional team to tackle one of the most challenging areas in cancer care," said Daniel Yoshor, the Charles Harrison Frazier Professor and chair of the department of neurosurgery. "John and Rosanna Troiano's generous support comes at a pivotal moment at which our team is making groundbreaking discoveries in this field. Their partnership will help advance this work to the benefit of patients around the world."

The Troianos' support also will enhance a range of initiatives to improve outcomes for patients with brain tumors, including multidisciplinary clinics, a survivorship clinic, and integrated clinical care; advance pioneering clinical research and support much-needed clinical trials; and foster the development of the next generation of brain tumor experts.

The gift will support the recruitment and retention of talented faculty to Penn's brain tumor research community, including through two endowed professorships named for John Troiano's parents: the Maria R. Troiano Professorship in Neurosurgery Research and the Gabriele J. Troiano Professorship in Neurosurgery.

"The Troianos have made a wonderful commitment to propel research that will pave the way for a brighter future for patients with brain tumors of all types," said Jonathan A. Epstein, Dean of the Perelman School of Medicine and Executive Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania for the Health System. "Their support empowers our experts to build on innovations like CAR T therapy and the Nobel Prize-winning mRNA platform—discoveries made here at Penn—to explore therapies that will truly help people and keep Penn Medicine at the leading edge of brain tumor research and care."

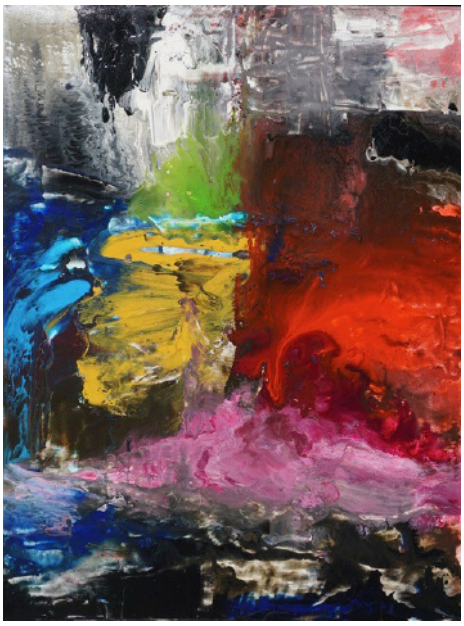
The investment comes at a critical moment in brain cancer research. Under the center's leadership, researchers are pursuing new ways to understand not only cancer cells themselves, but also the tumor microenvironment—the network of immune and other cells surrounding a tumor that can influence how it grows and responds to treatment.

Dr. Hambardzumyan's research has helped define how different brain tumors shape their immune environments and how those environments can affect treatment response, while Dr. Amankulor's work focuses on how brain tumors evade the immune system and how immune biomarkers may help predict which therapies are most likely to benefit patients. Together with a promising dual-target approach to CAR T cell therapy for GBM, led by Drs. O'Rourke and Bagley, these efforts aim to develop more effective, personalized therapies for patients.

"Penn Medicine has spent decades investing in the science behind breakthrough therapies," said Kevin B. Mahoney, CEO of the University of Pennsylvania Health System. "Now, bolstered by the Troianos' visionary philanthropic leadership, we can accelerate the research that drives better outcomes for patients with brain tumors."

John G. Troiano is the founder, a managing partner, and CEO of private equity firm the Beekman Group. He received a bachelor of science in economics from the Wharton School in 1992, summa cum laude with concentrations in finance and accounting, and later earned an MBA from Harvard Business School. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Episcopal School in the City of New York and has served on the board of Regis High School. With his wife, Rosanna, he has endowed a perpetual scholarship for underserved middle school children in his hometown of Staten Island, New York, and is involved with various other charitable organizations.

Paintings by Alfred Ortega on Exhibit in the University Club's Burrison Gallery from November 6 Through December 31



A new exhibition of paintings by Alfred Ortega will open at the Burrison Gallery at the University Club at Penn on November 6.

Noted for his bold use of color, Mr. Ortega's paintings and oil prints emanate primal energy. His prominent, large canvases reveal a dynamic world populated with vibrant forms and figures barely contained within their frames. Born in Philadelphia, Alfred Ortega studied painting and sculpture at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Mr. Ortega has previously exhibited his work at the Woodmere Art Museum and Knapp Gallery in Philadelphia; his work is featured in the permanent collection of the Pennsylvania State Museum and in private collections.

The show will run from November 6 through December 31, with a reception on November 13 from 4–7 p.m.

The Burrison Gallery supports the vision of Maurice Burrison by providing an intimate space for artists from the University community and West Philadelphia to showcase their work. The gallery, located on the 2nd floor of the Inn at Penn, 3611 Walnut Street, is open Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Deaths

Louis F. Rose, Penn Dental Medicine

Louis F. Rose, D'70, a former professor at Penn Dental Medicine and a renowned periodontist with a profound influence on the dental and medical professions, died on September 30. He was 84.

Born in Irvington, New Jersey, he received his DDS from Temple University School of Dentistry in 1968, completed his graduate training in periodontics at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970, and earned his medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine (then known as the Medical College of Pennsylvania) in 1972. He devoted his career to bridging the dental and medical fields, becoming a leading voice on the connection between gum disease and conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and pre-term births. He also served his country in the U.S. Army Reserve.



Louis F. Rose

Dr. Rose was a professor at Penn Dental Medicine for more than 50 years, where he developed and directed a program that taught dental and medical students together. He also served on the faculties of Harvard University and New York University and was professor of medicine and surgery at Drexel University College of Medicine. He joined Penn's 25-Year Club during the 1995-1996 academic year.

He influenced generations of dentists and physicians. He wrote six books, several published internationally, including the textbook *Periodontics: Medicine, Surgery, and Implants*, and published many articles. From 2008 to 2021, he served as editor-in-chief of the *Compendium of Continuing Education in Dentistry*.

Dr. Rose served as president of many dental associations, including the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry and the Northeastern Society of Periodontists, and as vice president for research of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. He became a diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology in 1980 and later served as one of its directors from 2005 to 2011. He received numerous honors, including the Gold Medal, the highest award of the American Academy of Periodontology, in 2013; alumni awards from Temple University and Drexel University; and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cohen Amsterdam Education Foundation. Sought after as a lecturer across the United States and around the world, he was honored with medals from the city of Nice, France, and the island of St. Barts.

Dr. Rose maintained a private practice in Philadelphia for decades. Patients came from around the world to seek his treatment, including the late Princess Grace of Monaco when she returned to Philadelphia for visits.

Dr. Rose is survived by his wife, Claire (née Aberbach); his sons, David (Hedy) and Michael; his granddaughters, Cami and Halle; and his brothers, Jim (Ed), Robert (Debbie), and Jerry (John).

Donations in his memory can be made to the charity of your choice.

Principles of Responsible Conduct—Online Training Modules and Reminder to the Penn Community

The Principles of Responsible Conduct promote the highest standards of integrity and ethics at Penn. To remind the Penn community of the basic expectations that should guide our work at Penn, the Principles of Responsible Conduct are published annually and are found below. Everyone at Penn is expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Principles of Responsible Conduct, which can be found on the Office of Audit, Compliance and Privacy website at: https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/. *Information on how to access the Principles of Responsible Conduct online training modules is provided at the end of the article.*

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The mission of the University of Pennsylvania and its Health System is to offer a world-class education to our students, train future leaders, expand and advance research and knowledge, serve our community and society both at home and abroad, and provide the most expert and outstanding healthcare for our patients. In pursuing this mission, and to ensure the continued excellence of the University and its reputation, all members of the University community need to understand and uphold both legal requirements and the highest ethical standards.

In the following Principles of Responsible Conduct, we articulate the basic expectations that should guide each of us in our work at Penn. These principles are embedded within many policies and practices identified throughout University and Health System handbooks, manuals, websites, and other materials. We have endeavored to distill these policies, rules, and guidelines for easy review and access. The principles are not intended to be a comprehensive catalogue of all applicable rules and policies of the University and the Health System. Rather, these principles set forth the underlying expectations that we have for the conduct of University and Health System activities with the highest standards of integrity and ethics. Useful references to relevant policies and resources are included.

We urge you to read these principles closely and familiarize yourself with both the expectations and the resources provided.

—J. Larry Jameson, President
—John L. Jackson, Jr., Provost
—Mark F. Dingfield, Executive Vice President
—Jonathan A. Epstein, Executive Vice President of the University for the Health System and Dean of the Perelman School of Medicine

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Penn has many policies that govern the behavior of all Penn faculty, administration, and staff. The ethical expectations contained in these policies are highlighted in the text of the ten principles that follow, and supporting policies, statements, and guidelines are available for each at the corresponding web link.

Ethical and Responsible Conduct. Penn's faculty, administration, and staff should conduct themselves ethically, with the highest integrity, in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and University policies, in all aspects of their work. They should be fair and principled in University and Health System business transactions and other related professional activities, acting in good faith when dealing with both internal constituents and external entities. Their conduct should always reflect their positions of trust and loyalty with respect to the University, the Health System, and members of these communities.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/ethical-and-responsible-conduct/

Respect for Others in the Workplace. Penn recognizes that people are the most important resource for achieving eminence in accomplishing our mission in the areas of teaching, research, community service, and patient care. Penn is an institution that values academic freedom, diversity and respect for one another. Penn is committed to the principle of non-discrimination and does not tolerate conduct that constitutes harassment on any basis, including sexual, racial, ethnic, religious, or gender harassment.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/respect-for-others-in-the-workplace/

Avoidance of Conflict of Interest. As more fully stated in Penn's conflict of interest policies, Penn's faculty, administration, and staff should avoid conflicts of interest in work at Penn. As a non-profit institution, it is imperative, for both legal and ethical reasons, that University and Health System employees do not improperly benefit from their positions of trust at Penn. Financial conflicts must be appropriately disclosed in accordance with conflict of interest and conflict of commitment policies, so that they can be reviewed, and as appropriate, managed or eliminated. Faculty, administrators and staff are responsible for identifying potential conflicts and seeking appropriate guidance.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/avoidance-of-conflict-of-interest/

Responsible Conduct in Research. As members of a complex research university, Penn faculty, administrators, and staff have significant responsibility to ensure that research is conducted with the highest integrity, and in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as well as University and Health System policies.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/responsible-conduct-in-research/

Responsible Stewardship and Use of Penn Property, Funds, and Technology. Penn faculty, administration, and staff are expected to ensure that Penn property, funds, and technology are used appropriately to benefit the institution, consistent with all legal requirements as well as University and Health System policies.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/responsible-stewardship-and-use-of-penn-property-funds-and-technology/

Environmental Health and Safety. Penn is committed to the protection of the health and safety of the University community and the creation of a safe working environment. To accomplish this end, Penn provides training in health and safety regulation and policy and Penn faculty, administration, and staff are expected to comply with sound practices and legal requirements.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/environmental-health-and-safety/

Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality. In their various roles and positions at Penn, faculty, administration, and staff become aware of confidential information of many different types. Such information may relate to students, employees, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, research sponsors, licensing partners, patients, and others. Penn faculty, administration, and staff are expected to inform themselves about applicable legal, contractual, and policy obligations to maintain the confidentiality of such information, so as to protect it from improper disclosure, and to protect the privacy interests of members of our community.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/respect-for-privacy-and-confidentiality/

Appropriate Conduct with Respect to Gifts, Travel and Entertainment. Penn faculty, administration, and staff are expected to conduct themselves so as to ensure that their positions are not misused for private gain, with respect to acceptance of gifts and the undertaking of University-related travel and entertainment.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/appropriate-conduct-with-respect-to-gifts-travel-and-entertainment/

Appropriate Use of the University Name and Logos. Penn regulates the use of its name, its shield, and related trademarks and logos in order to protect the University's reputation, and to ensure that their use is related to the University's educational, research, community service, and patient care missions. Faculty, administration, and staff are expected to protect the University name and logos from improper use.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/appropriate-use-of-the-university-name-and-logos/

Responsible Reporting of Suspected Violations and Institutional Response. Penn faculty, administration, and staff are expected to report suspected material violations of University and Health System policies, as well as violations of applicable laws and regulations, including laws requiring the reporting of sexual abuse involving minors, to appropriate offices, as set forth in the various policies. Penn faculty, administration, and staff may be subject to discipline in accordance with the policies.
https://oacp.upenn.edu/oacp-principles/responsible-reporting-of-suspected-violations-and-institutional-response/

If you have questions or concerns about possible violations of policies or legal requirements, employees may contact the (215) P-COMPLY Confidential Reporting and Help Line. The (215) P-COMPLY Confidential Reporting and Help Line is available to all employees by calling (215) P-COMPLY or logging onto www.upenn.edu/215pcomply.

Principles of Responsible Conduct training videos for Penn employees are also available and may be accessed through the Workday catalog or by using the links below:

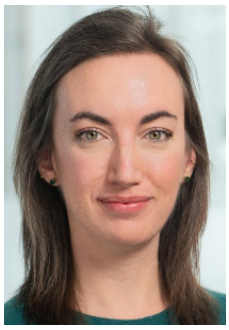
- Principles of Responsible Conduct Training Video (https://oacp.upenn.edu/compliance-training-videos/)
- Conflicts of Interest Training Video (https://oacp.upenn.edu/compliance-training-videos/)
- Stewardship Training Video (https://oacp.upenn.edu/compliance-training-videos/)

In addition, printed versions of the Principles of Responsible Conduct are available for Penn employees. If you are interested in obtaining the brochure or have questions about accessing the online training, please contact Linda Egerter Yoder, deputy institutional compliance officer, at (215) 573-3347 or elyoder@upenn.edu.

Honors & Other Things

Lorena Grundy: 2026 AIChE 35 Under 35 Award

Lorena Grundy, a practice assistant professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering at Penn Engineering, has been named a recipient of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers' (AIChE) 35 Under 35 Award, which recognizes 35 outstanding AIChE members under the age of 35 who have made significant contributions to chemical engineering and AIChE. Awardees are recognized for accomplishments across seven categories, including bioengineering, chemical and materials, education and outreach, energy and environment, innovation and entrepreneurship, leadership, and safety.



Lorena Grundy

Dr. Grundy, who is recognized in the education and outreach category, works at the intersection of chemical engineering, energy and sustainability, and engineering education. At Penn Engineering, she develops curricula and programming designed to prepare students to address complex challenges in energy and sustainability, with a particular focus on connecting technical engineering knowledge with real-world applications.

"I'm incredibly grateful to receive this recognition from AIChE," said Dr. Grundy. "At Penn Engineering, I am putting my energy into our educational mission, from building a new master's program to teaching courses and mentoring students. It's meaningful to see that kind of educational innovation and leadership recognized by the chemical engineering community, and it motivates me to keep finding new ways to help our students grow."

At Penn Engineering, Dr. Grundy directs the undergraduate energy and sustainability minor and founded the master of science in engineering in energy and sustainability (MESE), which welcomed its first cohort in 2026. The program brings together technical training, interdisciplinary learning, and hands-on experience to help students develop the skills to become leaders in addressing climate and sustainability challenges.

Sarah J. Jackson: President of the International Communication Association for 2028-2029

Sarah J. Jackson, an associate professor of communication at the Annenberg School for Communication, has been elected president of the International Communication Association (ICA), the major professional association for communication researchers worldwide.

She will serve as president-elect beginning on June 7, 2027—the last day of the association's annual conference in Glasgow, Scotland—and will move into the position of president a year later.

"I am deeply honored by the trust that my colleagues, students, and mentors across the field of communication have placed in me through this election," Dr. Jackson said. "I am thrilled by the opportunity to serve the International Communication Association and the remarkable community of scholars who make it a vital intellectual home."



Sarah Jackson

Dr. Jackson, co-director of the Media, Inequality & Change Center in Penn's Annenberg School, studies how media, journalism, and technology are used by and represent marginalized publics, with a focus on how communication arising from Black, feminist, and activist spaces contributes to U.S. progress. Her research includes investigations into how marginalized groups use social media to advance counter-narratives through hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo; political dissent by Black celebrities in the Black and mainstream press; and how television news shapes collective memory of Black activism.

Her new book, *A Second Sight: How the Wonder and Vision of Black Mediamakers Push America Toward Freedom,* traces how Black journalists, photographers, filmmakers, radio hosts, and podcasters have, throughout history, advanced democracy and broadened the most fundamental American values.

"I am thrilled that Sarah has been elected ICA President," said Sarah Banet-Weiser, dean of the Annenberg School. "The honor is a well-deserved recognition of her standing as a leading scholar of race, media, and social justice. Sarah is also a generous colleague and mentor, deeply committed to supporting our students, especially our students of color, advising junior scholars, and teaching courses on relevant and urgent issues. Annenberg is immensely proud, and we know she will lead the association with vision and care."

An Andrew Carnegie Fellow, Dr. Jackson has earned awards and fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study, the Harvard Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics and Public Policy, and New America, among others. She is also the co-author of *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* and *Black Celebrity, Racial Politics, and the Press: Framing Dissent.* Her research has been widely published, and she is regularly called on as an expert by local and national media outlets.

ICA is an international association with more than 5,000 members in over 80 countries and advances the scholarly study of communication by encouraging and facilitating excellence in academic research worldwide. Since 2003, ICA has been officially associated with the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO).

Reflecting on her new role, Dr. Jackson said: "I accept this responsibility with clear eyes. We are living through a moment of profound challenges for higher education, democratic institutions, and our media and information ecosystems. Yet it is precisely in moments like these that communication scholarship is most urgent. Our research, teaching, and public engagement have an essential role to play in helping societies understand and address the complex issues before us."

Cara McClellan: 2026 Peace & Justice in PA Award from PennLive

Cara McClellan, GEd'12, a practice associate professor of law and founding director of the Advocacy for Racial and Civil Justice Clinic (ARC) at the Penn Carey Law School, has received the 2026 Peace & Justice in PA Award from the PennLive Editorial Board in tribute to her work battling systemic racism as a lawyer and civil rights advocate on the state and national levels.



Cara McClellan

Ms. McClellan was honored as this year's individual recipient alongside two organizations: Pennsylvania Legal Aid and We Are Casa Pennsylvania. The awards were presented during a livestreamed ceremony on October 13, with remarks from Lt. Gov. Austin Davis and Attorney General Dave Sunday.

"I am humbled by this recognition, which is a testament to the work of the ARC Justice Clinic, our incredible students, and our courageous clients," said Ms. McClellan.

In announcing the award, PennLive's Editorial Board praised this year's honorees for "the courage and determination to remain true to their mission to fight injustice despite the political headwinds that have forced so many to cower and hide."

Ms. McClellan founded the ARC Justice Clinic in 2023. One of the school's Gittis Legal Clinics, the ARC Justice Clinic provides pro bono representation to Philadelphia residents and gives students hands-on experience in civil rights litigation and policy advocacy around systemic racism.

In addition, Ms. McClellan represents the Avenging the Ancestors Coalition and the Black Journey tour company in ongoing litigation over the National Park Service's removal of exhibits on slavery from the President's House Site in Independence National Historical Park, and argued before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in June.

Before joining the Penn Carey Law faculty in 2022, Ms. McClellan served as assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., where she focused on education equity and ending the criminalization of Black people. She was lead counsel in *Smith v. City of Philadelphia*, a case challenging the Philadelphia Police Department's use of military-style weapons against protesters, residents, and bystanders in a predominantly Black West Philadelphia community.

Since 2021, PennLive and *The Patriot-News* have partnered with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission to host the annual Peace & Justice in PA forum, which assesses the commonwealth's progress toward combating extremism and honors those on the front lines of that work.

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The award follows Ms. McClellan's selection earlier this year for the Barristers' Association of Philadelphia's 2026 Presidential Award of Courage.

Penn Vet's Institute for Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases Announces 2026 Fellows

The University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine's Institute for Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases (IIZD) has named six new fellows for the 2026–2027 academic year, selected from 27 applicants, for their innovative research on infectious diseases affecting humans, animals, and wildlife.

The IIZD Fellowship program supports predoctoral and postdoctoral trainees pursuing multidisciplinary research under the mentorship of IIZD faculty, helping to prepare future leaders in infectious disease research to confront emerging threats. The fellows are:

2026 Martin & Pamela Winter Infectious Disease Fellows

- Theresa Astmann (Mentor: Nicole Marino)
- Maria Maltepes (Mentor: Louise Moncla)
- Drake Philip (Mentor: Kellie Ann Jurado)
- Qiqi Yang (Mentor: Louise Moncla)

2026 Ceva Animal Health One Health Fellows

- Fenglin Li (Mentors: Yi-Wei Chang and Boris Striepen)
- Lauren Olenick (Mentor: Michael Hogan)

"We want to thank all of this year's applicants for their impressive proposals, and our reviewers for the time and expertise they contributed to a highly competitive selection process," said IIZD's director Christopher A. Hunter, the Mindy Halikman Heyer Distinguished Professor of Pathobiology.

This year's fellows are supported by two philanthropic partnerships that reflect a shared commitment to advancing the fight against infectious and zoonotic diseases:

The Martin E. Winter and Pamela Winter Infectious Disease Fellowship Fund was established in 2021 by Martin Winter, a Penn alumnus and vice chair of Penn Vet's Board of Advisors, and his wife, Pamela, whose vision has been instrumental in building IIZD's fellowship program from the ground up. The fund provides critical financial support to emerging experts in infectious disease research, enabling the IIZD to attract and retain outstanding veterinary and PhD students, as well as residents drawn to this multidisciplinary work. Since 2022, the Winters' generosity has supported 17 pre- and postdoctoral fellows, helping to launch the careers of a new generation of infectious disease researchers and cementing the fund's role as the cornerstone of IIZD's fellowship program.

"Infectious disease doesn't respect the line between animal and human health, and neither should the scientists studying it," said Mr. Winter, G'76, W'76, who has served on Penn Vet's Board of Advisors since 2012. "Pamela and I are proud to support researchers who are tackling that challenge head-on, and grateful to the institute for training a generation of scientists equipped to meet it."

The Ceva Fellowship Fund for One Health, established by Ceva Animal Health in June 2026, marks a significant new industry partnership for IIZD. The fund provides financial support and industry mentorship to graduate trainees conducting research in areas central to disease prevention and control, including nucleic acid delivery, vaccine development, and parasitology.

Founded in 1999, Ceva Animal Health has grown rapidly into the 5th-largest global animal health company. Ceva strives to be more than just an animal health company. Ceva's "Together, beyond animal health" vision emphasizes that the health and well-being of people, animals, and our planet are interlinked.

"Ceva's commitment to One Health extends beyond innovation in animal health products to supporting the people and scientific partnerships that will shape the future of disease prevention," said Brad McCollum, senior vice president of Ceva North America. "We're proud to partner with Penn Vet and support emerging researchers whose work has the potential to create meaningful impact across animal and human health."

"We are very grateful to Martin and Pamela Winter for their ongoing support, and for Ceva Animal Health's inaugural partnership and its support of fellows Fenglin Li and Lauren Olenick," Dr. Hunter said. "Our institute looks forward to a fellowship program that grows in the years ahead."

Martha Curley: Inaugural International Game Changer in Pediatric Intensive & Critical Care

Martha A.Q. Curley, a professor in Penn Nursing's department of family and community health and the Ruth M. Colket Endowed Chair in Pediatric Nursing at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), has been selected as one of the inaugural recipients of the World Federation of Pediatric Intensive & Critical Care Societies (WFPICCS) International Game Changers in Pediatric Intensive and Critical Care Award.

Presented by the WFPICCS at its September congress in Melbourne, the honor recognizes individuals who have made exceptional and sustained contributions to pediatric intensive and critical care on a global scale. It celebrates visionary pioneers whose groundbreaking research and clinical innovations have shaped the landscape of pediatric critical care. Dr. Curley was one of only twelve individuals selected globally, one of four women, and one of only two actively practicing to receive this honor.

"Dr. Curley's dedication to advancing pediatric critical care has changed the landscape of nursing practice globally," said Antonia M. Villarruel, the Margaret Bond Simon Dean of Nursing. "To be recognized among the very first WFPICCS International Game Changers is a testament to her profound impact as a nurse scientist, clinical innovator, and leader. Penn Nursing is pleased to celebrate this remarkable global honor with her."

Dr. Curley has transformed pediatric critical care nursing through landmark clinical trials, validated assessment tools, and models of family-centered care. Her work continues to shape evidence-based nursing standards, clinical training, and patient-centered practice worldwide. This international accolade added to a distinguished career of honors for Dr. Curley, who is also an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine and has been designated a Living Legend by the American Academy of Nursing.

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

Avoid Getting Caught by "Accidental Deposit" Scams

Payment apps such as Venmo and Cash App make it easy to send money to friends and family, but they have also become a target for scammers. One increasingly common tactic is the *"accidental deposit" scam*.

Here's how it works: You receive an unexpected payment from someone you do not know. Shortly afterward, the sender contacts you claiming the money was sent by mistake and asks you to return it immediately. They may create a sense of urgency, saying they need the money back right away or that it was intended for a family member or friend.

Although genuine mistakes can happen, scammers often exploit people's willingness to help. In some cases, the original payment may have been made using a stolen account or fraudulent payment method. If you send the money back, you could lose your own funds when the original transaction is later reversed.

Protect yourself by following these steps:

- Do not return the money directly to the sender.
- Do not spend, transfer, or withdraw the funds.
- Stop communicating with anyone pressuring you to return the money.
- Contact the payment app's support team and report the unexpected payment.
- Allow the platform to investigate and resolve the issue.

Remember, legitimate payment services provide mechanisms for handling disputed or mistaken transactions. Scammers, on the other hand, rely on urgency and emotional pressure to convince victims to act before thinking.

Whether using payment apps for personal transactions or making purchases online, take a moment to verify requests involving money. If something feels unusual or rushed, pause and confirm through official channels before taking action.

For more information:

Venmo Payment from a Stranger: https://help.venmo.com/cs/articles/payment-from-a-stranger-vhel162

Cash App: Avoiding Common Scams: https://cash.app/help/us/en-us/6544-avoiding-common-scams-with-cash-app

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

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 19-25, 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 19-25, 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
Assault	10/20/26	4:46 PM	3535 Market St	Known suspect threatened staff member
	10/20/26	12:15 PM	3400 Civic Center Blvd	Suspect sent multiple unwanted emails and text messages to staff members
	10/22/26	11:20 AM	3737 Market St	Terroristic threats
Auto Theft	10/21/26	10:45 AM	3744 Spruce St	Unsecured electric bike taken from vestibule
	10/25/26	10:24 AM	200 S 41st St	Stolen automobile from highway
	10/25/26	12:41 PM	231 S 34th St	Theft of secured electric bike from bike rack
Other Offense	10/19/26	6:45 AM	3800 Sansom St	Outstanding warrant during theft investigation/Arrest
	10/20/26	4:21 PM	4041 Sansom St	Subject wanted on warrant/Arrest
Retail Theft	10/19/26	10:21 AM	4233 Chestnut St	Retail theft of alcohol; offender fled area
	10/21/26	6:41 PM	4233 Chestnut St	Retail theft of alcohol
	10/22/26	8:22 PM	4233 Chestnut St	Retail theft of alcohol
	10/22/26	5:40 PM	3744 Spruce St	Retail theft of consumable goods
	10/23/26	8:04 AM	3816 Chestnut St	Retail theft of consumables/Arrest
	10/23/26	4:14 PM	3744 Spruce St	Retail theft of consumables; offender fled the area
Robbery-Retail	10/21/26	10:58 AM	3549 Chestnut St	Retail robbery reported to police
Theft from Building	10/19/26	3:30 PM	3820 Locust Walk	Package theft from common area of building
	10/21/26	9:33 AM	3549 Chestnut St	Attempted theft of Tri Fuel generator from garage
	10/22/26	9:34 AM	3400 Spruce St	Theft of personal items from office
	10/23/26	10:37 PM	3945 Chestnut St	Package theft from common area lobby
Theft Other	10/19/26	6:45 AM	3701 Walnut St	Theft of bicycle tires from secured bike at bike rack
	10/21/26	5:26 PM	255 S 36th St	Theft of money from unattended purse in study hall area
	10/22/26	11:10 PM	4240 Chestnut St	Unsecured dental equipment taken from bench
	10/24/26	3:43 PM	4018 Pine St	Package theft from porch

Philadelphia Police 18th District

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

Below are the crimes against persons from the 18th District: 7 incidents were reported for **October 19-25, 2026** by the 18th District, covering the Schuylkill River to 49th Street & Market Street to Woodland Avenue.

Crime Category	Date	Time	Location
Aggravated Assault	10/19/26	7:05 PM	S 49th & Spruce Sts
Assault	10/19/26	12:04 PM	4626 Baltimore Ave
	10/19/26	1:03 PM	3500 Spruce St
	10/20/26	12:42 PM	3400 Civic Center Blvd
	10/22/26	5:13 PM	4600 Chester Ave
	10/24/26	12:02 PM	132 S 48th St
	10/24/26	4:02 PM	4605 Chester 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.

Update

November AT PENN

LEARNING & WORKSHOPS

3 *Putting Your REES Major to Work: Alumni Career Panel*; hear from three Penn alumni about the diverse academic and professional paths available to students with backgrounds in Russian and East European studies; 3:30 p.m.; room 623, Williams Hall (Russian & East European Studies, Wolf Humanities Forum).

6 *Cold Emailing Workshop*; students interested in getting involved with research are invited to a short presentation on how to write effective cold emails to potential research mentors; 4 p.m.; room 218, Houston Hall (Center for Undergraduate Research & Fellowships).

10 *You Do-Nut Have to Be in STEM*; students are invited to learn from CURF research peer advisors who are working in the humanities and to enjoy free donuts; 4 p.m.; room 108, the ARCH (Center for Undergraduate Research & Fellowships).

TALKS

3 *The Power of Visual Narrative*; Jamar Nicholas, cartoonist; 3 p.m.; RDDSx, Van Pelt Library (Penn Libraries).

4 *Captain of Corruption: Captain Nathaniel Butler Through Add. MS 41616*; Meagan Schulman, Fordham University; noon; room 105, McNeil Center, and Zoom webinar; register: https://tinyurl.com/schulman-talk-nov-4 (McNeil Center for Early American Studies).

5 *Wasserstein Least Squares: From Snapshots to Trajectories*; Jonathan Niles-Weed, New York University; noon; room 414, Gutmann Hall, and Zoom webinar; join: https://upenn.zoom.us/j/98220304722 (Computer & Information Science).

Loyalty, Resentment, and Memory in Syria; Samer Abboud, Villanova University; 5:30 p.m.; room 10, PCPSE; register: https://tinyurl.com/abboud-talk-nov-5 (Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy).

6 *Reframe: Navigating Mistrust and Misinformation in Health Communication*; Florencia Greer Polite, obstetrics & gynecology; noon; Zoom webinar; register: https://shorturl.at/9FvT2 Perelman School of Medicine).

Exploring Diversity in Academic Law Librarianship; Jessica de Perio Wittman, University of Connecticut; Raquel Gabriel, City University of New York; 1 p.m.; Zoom webinar; register: https://tinyurl.com/gabriel-talk-nov-6 (Penn Carey Law Biddle Speaker Series).

9 *A Turning Point for the United States?* Brent Cebul, history; Dirk Krueger, economics; Michael Jones-Correa, political science; Leigh Stearns, Earth & environmental science; noon; Blank Forum, PCPSE; register: https://tinyurl.com/sas-forum-nov-9 (School of Arts & Sciences Community Forum).

Accountability Across Administrations; Michael A. Nutter, former mayor of Philadelphia; G.T. Bynum, former mayor of Tulsa; Daniel Hopkins, political science; Ellen Hur, Results for America; Monroe Nichols, current mayor of Tulsa; 4 p.m.; Kleinman Energy Forum, Fisher Fine Arts Library; register: https://results4america.tfaforms.net/124 (Penn Institute for Urban Research).

This is an update to the November AT PENN calendar, which is online now. To submit events for an upcoming AT PENN calendar or weekly update, email almanac@upenn.edu. The deadline to submit events for the December AT PENN calendar is Monday, November 9.

Veterans Day Flag Raising

The Veterans Day Flag Raising ceremony will take place Wednesday, November 11 from 9 a.m.-9:30 a.m. at the flagpole on College Green. The annual ceremony honors the service of veterans for their service and sacrifice for the common good. It is open to the Penn community.

In the case of inclement weather, the ceremony will move to the Student Service Center of the Franklin Building at 3451 Walnut Street.

Voting Now Open for Interim WPPSA Leadership

Voting is now open to eligible, full-time, non-union, weekly-paid Penn employees to elect the interim leadership of the Weekly-Paid Professional Staff Assembly (WPPSA), which is being re-established after several years of inactivity.

Eligible Penn employees may cast their vote for the interim chair and interim secretary through the Qualtrics voting form below.

Voting Period: November 2–9, 2026

Cast Your Vote: https://upenn.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1FysTqcPCDluZSu

The interim chair and secretary will help coordinate WPPSA's re-establishment, including reviewing the existing bylaws, engaging interested weekly-paid staff, and preparing for formal WPPSA elections in June 2027. The interim roles will conclude when the newly elected WPPSA leadership begins its term in July 2027.

Re-establishing WPPSA will provide eligible weekly-paid staff with an active forum for engagement in Penn governance, including the opportunity to restore two weekly-paid staff seats on University Council.

For more information about the initiative, which is being supported by the Penn Professional Staff Assembly (PPSA), please contact PPSA@lists.upenn.edu.

—Justin D. Purohit, PPSA Chair, 2026–2027
Manager, Accounting Operations, Comptroller's Office
—Elona Canaj, PPSA Chair-Elect, 2026–2027
Educational Tech, Penn Vet
—Dawn Deitch, PPSA Past Chair, 2026–2027
Executive Director, Office of Government and Community Affairs

Penn Moves to New Prescription Drug Plan Administrator

A new year will bring a change to Penn's prescription drug benefits. Knowing what to expect can help make the transition smoother.

Effective January 1, 2027, Navitus Health Solutions will become Penn's new pharmacy benefit manager, replacing CVS/Caremark across all medical plans. Your CVS/Caremark prescription drug coverage will end on December 31, 2026.

While the pharmacy benefit manager is changing, what you pay for medications will continue to depend on your medical plan, how you use your coverage, and the type of prescription (generic, brand-name, or maintenance).

Prepare for the Transition

Here are some important and noteworthy items:

Expect your new ID card. Your Navitus member ID card will arrive in early December. Beginning January 1, please present it at any participating retail or mail pharmacy.

Confirm your pharmacy. Navitus has a broad network of over 60,000 pharmacies, including CVS, most major chains, and all Penn Medicine pharmacies. You may continue using CVS, and you will pay less at in-network pharmacies.

Consider mail service. For long-term prescriptions, you may use Costco Mail Service or Penn Medicine Mail Service, for 90-day fills. Mail service provides the convenience of home delivery, three-month supplies, and lower minimum and maximum coinsurance amounts.

Review medications. Check the Navitus formulary to confirm your medications are covered. Navitus will notify you by mail in January of any changes. Non-formulary medications will have a 90-day grace period to allow for the transition. After that you must select a covered alternative, or the medication will not be covered. If you take a specialty medication, you can get it filled through Lumicera, a Navitus specialty pharmacy, or one of the Penn Medicine pharmacies.

For more details, please call Navitus Customer Care at 1-833-440-5216, visit www.navitus.com/members, or call the University of Pennsylvania Benefits Solution Center at 1-866-799-2329, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET. You may also email answers@HealthAdvocate. com.

Almanac

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Why People Would Rather Give Nothing Than Too Little

We've all done it: convinced ourselves that if we can't donate enough money to a cause, it's better not to give at all. But new research led by Jean Zhang, a postdoctoral researcher at the Wharton School, suggests we're setting the bar for generosity far too high.

The problem isn't that people don't want to give. It's that they often avoid making a small donation because they fear it will seem inadequate. But ironically, those on the receiving end would often have been happy with far less, according to the paper "Give Enough or Not at All" published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*. It was co-authored by Wharton assistant professor of operations, information, and decisions Gal Smitizsky, and UC San Diego professors Marta Serra-Garcia and Ayelet Gneezy. The good news is that this barrier is not fixed.

"Businesses and organizations can make small acts feel legitimate. Show that they count, and that they add up to meaningful progress," said Dr. Zhang, who conducted the research while completing her PhD at UC San Diego.

Why Small Acts Don't Always Feel Like Enough

To test that theory, the researchers ran four studies involving nearly 2,000 people. In the first, participants imagined buying a $30 full-service car wash before discovering they had either just 25 cents or $5 in cash, with no other way to tip. Nearly four in five people with only 25 cents chose not to tip. With $5, almost nine in 10 did. The researchers argue people worried a token gesture would send the wrong signal.

They then asked whether people would be more willing to leave a small tip if nobody knew how much they had given. Concealing the amount more than doubled the likelihood of tipping 25 cents, from 30% to 61%.

The study's authors also found that simply telling participants the amount was considered an acceptable tip increased tipping by 22 percentage points. But did the people on the receiving end actually expect that much?

The authors compared the smallest amount people felt comfortable giving with the smallest amount others were willing to receive. Givers thought a tip needed to be at least $1.89, while the car-wash attendants would have accepted just $1.09.

The same mismatch appeared again in a second experiment. Participants decided how much of a $10 payment to give someone else after they had completed a 10-minute task. Again, people set the bar for giving much higher. On average, givers wouldn't go below $3.38, while recipients would have accepted just $1.97.

How to Get More People to Act

Then, the researchers tested whether the same principle held in the real world, examining whether people would hesitate to make a small donation to help a child with cancer, an emotionally charged appeal, because it felt inadequate. Asking for just $1 changed that. It signaled that a modest contribution was enough—and more than doubled the number of donations.

The implications stretch well beyond charitable giving. Dr. Smitizsky said companies need to think carefully about who they're asking for money. A small suggested donation may encourage more people to give, but it can also nudge generous donors toward giving less. That makes audience segmentation, or grouping donors by their behavior, key.

"If you know your audience, a smaller ask is a good way to raise participation," Dr. Smitizsky said. "But if you're asking people who have given generously before, a higher ask may make more sense."

The study focused on giving money, but the researchers suspect the same pattern extends to other areas too. For now, that's a question for future research. The findings could also have implications for political fundraising. "Campaigns may therefore be able to broaden participation by explicitly signaling that even a very small contribution is useful and welcome," Dr. Smitizsky said. "There is also an important trade-off. In the field study, asking for $1 increased the number of people who donated in a context where a small gift might otherwise have seemed inadequate, but it also shifted donations toward $1 and did not significantly increase the total amount raised."

The paper also carries a message for individuals, not just charities. The findings suggest many of us expect too much of our own generosity, and Dr. Smitizsky urges people not to dismiss small acts that could still make a difference.

"Small actions add up," he said. "If you only have $1 to give today, that's okay. Give a little today. Whatever the action, small steps still count."

Adapted from a Knowledge at Wharton article by Seb Murray, October 8, 2026.

Read the Room: The Science of Experiencing Spaces and Places

Aesthetics is having a moment. From carefully curated interiors to social media feeds and lifestyle trends, the term seems to be everywhere. But aesthetics has a much longer history, rooted in questions about how the brain processes sensory experience, evokes emotions, and shapes the way people perceive the world. For neurologist Anjan Chatterjee of the Perelman School of Medicine, understanding these experiences is at the heart of his research.

"At the broadest view, I am interested in the nature of aesthetic experiences and why they matter," said Dr. Chatterjee, director of the Penn Center for Neuroaesthetics. "We think about this in three overlapping domains: how the brain organizes the world into people, places, and things."

Penn Today spoke with Dr. Chatterjee about his work exploring the impact of space—both nature and the built environment—on people's well-being and emotional states.

More Than Meets the Eye

The aesthetic triad frames much of his team's work, said Dr. Chatterjee, who also has secondary appointments in the Stuart Weitzman School of Design and the School of Arts & Sciences. At its core, he explained, the aesthetic triad describes these experiences as the intersection of three components—perception, emotion, and meaning.

"If we are looking at something beautiful, the experience is almost always pleasurable," he said. "But aesthetic experiences can be more complicated. There can be anxiety, fear—it is more nuanced."

And when the built environment is involved, Dr. Chatterjee added, his team has found that people's experiences also involve three additional dimensions: coherence, which represents how orderly and functional a space is; fascination, which relates to how intriguing a space is; and hominess, which describes how comfortable people feel in a space—something often ignored by designers, who value coherence more than "everyday folks" do.

"These components can vary independently," he said. "You can be in a very organized and fascinating space and still feel like it's not where you belong," he added, noting that emotional responses depend on individual differences and context.

Every Inch Counts

Currently, Dr. Chatterjee's lab is working on a number of projects about space, including a database of interior images that runs the gamut from homes to prisons and sanctuary spaces, expanding the source materials the lab and others can use to study cultural differences in aesthetics. The team plans to use these images in a brain imaging study investigating people's feelings and judgments about them. They are also conducting experiments "in the wild," including a study on Penn's campus that compares nature (the BioPond) with the built environment (at 38th Street and Woodland Avenue).

"We were designed physiologically to respond to brief moments of stress, but now we are bombarded all the time—we are kept in a constant state of vigilance without any opportunity to let go," said Dr. Chatterjee. "This study aims to demonstrate the importance of these 'pocket parks' on our well-being."

In a study that specifically addresses the built environment, Dr. Chatterjee's team has put these principles into practice by helping design a "refresh room" at a substance use disorder facility in Washington, D.C. To determine the effect of the room, they measured common indicators of stress such as heart rate and skin conductance.

"We have collected data from approximately 70 people to date," he said. "It appears that what we think is probably true—that they relax as soon as they come in the room."

To test the effects of the room in a laboratory setting, Dr. Chatterjee is using virtual reality to place undergraduate study volunteers in the room. They elicit stress using tested paradigms—for example, by asking student volunteers to solve difficult math problems in a noisy environment or with someone staring at them—and then measure what happens when the volunteers visit the room virtually. This is the progression, he said: from pictures—two-dimensional images—to virtual reality and then real-world applications.

A Little Distance Can Go a Long Way

Context, Dr. Chatterjee explained, is also important to the aesthetic experience. This could explain why some people enjoy haunted houses. But what is important here is that people know that it is not real—that is the distancing element.

"People are actually open to experiencing the negative emotion because it is not accompanied by the consequences it would have in real life," he said, adding that it is like watching a horror film. "Watching a jerky camera scene going down a dark alley is very different from going down a dark alley in the real world."

Adapted from a Penn Today article by Deborah Stull, October 22, 2026.