August 29, 2017

To:       All Graduate and Professional Students
From:   Wendell Pritchett, Provost; Beth A. Winkelstein, Vice Provost for Education
Subject:  Welcome Back

It is a pleasure to welcome all of you back to another great year at Penn.

Graduate and professional students are at the heart of our campus life – studying across all twelve of our Schools, representing the widest possible range of interests and backgrounds. Our graduate and professional students are just beginning careers that will produce cutting edge research and create solutions to the world’s most pressing problems. In challenging times such as these, it is heartening to know that you are – and will continue to be – the leaders of the next generation.

We are both former Penn students and feel this commitment quite personally. Our years at Penn have been among the most valuable of our lives, and we believe strongly in the essential role of graduate education – and of work-life balance for our graduate and professional students – in our shared community.

As we begin the year, we want to remind you about three vital new initiatives for graduate and professional students that were first announced last March and will take effect this semester.

First, all full-time graduate and professional students now have access to the Pottruck Health & Fitness Center, Sheerr Pool, and Fox Fitness Center included in your general fee.

Second, Penn is dedicating an additional $1M annually for need-based grants to PhD students in good standing in years 1-7 to help defray the costs of extended health insurance, as well as dependent insurance and daycare for PhD students with spouses and children.

Third, the University now subsidizes 50% of the cost of Penn Dental insurance as part of the funding package for all full-time PhD students, which also includes scholarship, stipend, and health insurance.

These initiatives form part of our long-term efforts to make graduate and professional life at Penn second to none, including our productive collaborations with GAPSA (the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly) to advance the interests of graduate and professional students across campus. We encourage you to learn more about all our programs for graduate education at: http://www.upenn.edu/pages/valuing-grad-students. We also invite you, if you have not already, to visit our world-class Graduate Student Center – and, for students with children, the affiliated Family Resource Center – which for many of our students are central to their lives at Penn.

We are, as many of you know, awaiting a decision from the National Labor Relations Board about a potential election in which eligible graduate students would vote on whether or not they want to be represented by GET-UP, a union affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. We will be back in touch with more information as soon as the NLRB issues its decision.

In the meantime, we wish you all a great start to the semester and look forward to seeing many of you in the months ahead.