March 13, 2017

To: All Graduate and Professional Students
From: Vincent Price, Provost; Beth Winkelstein, Vice Provost for Education
Subject: New Initiatives Supporting Graduate Students

We are enormously appreciative of our graduate student community at Penn, particularly our strong working relationships with GAPSA, and we are proud of our long history of tangible initiatives to improve graduate student life.

Since President Gutmann took office in 2004, the minimum PhD stipends have increased by nearly 60%. Funding is typically guaranteed for five years and the University provides a benefits-rich health insurance package to fully funded students. We have implemented significant initiatives to enhance mentoring, work/life balance, and resources for graduate students with children. We believe strongly that these initiatives strengthen graduate and professional education at Penn and provide our students with the resources needed to pursue their outstanding research, teaching, and scholarship.

We are pleased to continue this longtime support of graduate education by announcing three new initiatives beginning in fall 2017.

First, all full-time graduate and professional students will have access to the Pottruck Health & Fitness Center, Sheerr Pool, and Fox Fitness Center included in their general fee. Part-time students, who pay a reduced fee, will have the option to purchase access to these recreational facilities at a reduced cost. Currently, graduate and professional students need to purchase separate memberships to access the University’s fitness facilities.

Second, Penn will commit $1M in annual funding for need-based grants to PhD students in good standing to help defray the costs of extended health insurance, as well as dependent insurance and daycare for PhDs with spouses and children.

Third, the University will subsidize 50% of the cost of Penn Dental insurance for all full-time PhD students as part of their funding packages, which also include scholarship, stipend, and health insurance.

We hope that these initiatives will continue to help our graduate and professional students thrive at Penn. We encourage you to learn more about our initiatives for graduate education at:
http://www.upenn.edu/pages/valuing-grad-students.