A Message to the Penn Community
Responding to the Campus Conversation

From
Amy Gutmann, President
Wendell Pritchett, Provost

We write to follow up on the Campus Conversation that was held on October 30 at the Zellerbach Theater. The Conversation was part of an ongoing effort, which will continue throughout this academic year and beyond, to further strengthen and support the health and wellness of our students.

We are grateful to the several hundred Penn students, faculty and staff who took time that evening to attend the Conversation, hear from experts in the field, and break into smaller groups to share their concerns and suggestions. We have now had an opportunity to digest the comments that grew from the breakout discussions, as well as others that have come in through the Campaign for Community website, and we encourage you to continue to submit your ideas and suggestions on that website.

In response to the Conversation and these comments, we are taking two immediate steps. First, we are committing funds to add five additional full-time staff members at CAPS to enable expansion of hours and a reduction in wait times. The staff at CAPS do an extraordinary job in caring for our students. Yet it was clear from the Campus Conversation that, even with the investments we have made to date, greater access to CAPS services is among the highest priorities for our community. In addition, to optimize the impact of these additional staff members, we will fast-track a CAPS process and operations review to ascertain any further service refinements to support our students. Any resulting recommendations will be promptly implemented.

Second, we are launching a Campaign for Wellness, which will operate under the umbrella of our successful Campaign for Community. The Campaign will follow through on some of the excellent suggestions that arose from the breakout sessions at the Conversation, which were planned to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas, as well as the comments submitted online. It will include additional conversations and dialogue with students throughout the year, developing new programs and initiatives to support an even healthier college experience. These initiatives will include expanded programming in the College Houses and the Division of Recreation, a reinvigorated “take your professor to lunch campaign,” and a comprehensive website of programs, activities, and resources for wellness. At the same time, we are exploring ideas, both big and small, that will help us create a less stressful climate while supporting our goals of academic excellence. We welcome your ideas and plan to take further steps in new directions in the months ahead.

The health and wellness of the Penn community are our highest priorities. The Campus Conversation was merely the start of what we hope will be a comprehensive wellness campaign. We look forward to continuing the conversation to ensure we are doing all that is possible to sustain a community in which everyone can thrive.