Penn Humanities Forum: A Center for New Interactions

Dean Samuel Preston of the School of Arts and Sciences has announced the foundation of the Penn Humanities Forum, a center housed in SAS with a wider mission to collaborate with other schools of the University and with the Philadelphia community in addressing major issues from the humanities perspective.

“The Penn Humanities Forum is the culmination of a long planning process to which Rebecca Bushnell and Gene Narmour made especially important contributions,” said Dean Preston. “The Forum will add coherence and excitement to our magnificent teaching and research programs in the humanities. We especially look forward to engaging the Philadelphia cultural community in this important new endeavor. I am delighted that a scholar with Wendy Steiner’s vision has agreed to lead this effort.”

Along the lines sketched briefly in Penn’s Agenda for Excellence, the Forum will enroll scholars and fellows (including leave fellows), showcase the research of students as well as faculty, and develop new seminars and programs while consolidating existing ones such as the Mellon/PARSS series.

President Judith Rodin applauded the formation of the Forum and the choice of its director. “Through the vision and hard work of many, the Penn Humanities Forum—a critical component of the University’s Agenda for Excellence—is now a reality,” she said. “The humanities are at the very core of Penn’s intellectual life and vitality, and I have no doubt that the Penn Humanities Forum will further strengthen our already extraordinary level of scholarship. I am particularly pleased that Professor Wendy Steiner will be the Forum’s first director. A world-class scholar and highly respected member of our community, she is ideally suited to lead this exciting academic initiative.”

The Forum’s Director: Dr. Wendy Steiner is the Richard L. Fisher Professor and chair of English, and she will continue in the role of departmental chair while directing the Forum.

A graduate of McGill who took her M.A. and Ph. D. from Yale, she is a scholar whose work is also well known to the general public. One recent book, The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism (Chicago) was on the New York Times list of “100 Best Books of 1996,” and in addition to over 50 scholarly articles and reviews she has published over 100 in the general press in the U.S. and England, writing on books, painting, architecture and general culture. She has been on the board of directors of the National Book Critics Circle since 1995, and has also been a consultant to the MacArthur Foundation.

Her latest book, The Fiction of Postmodernity, is volume 8 in The Cambridge History of American Literature, and is to be followed shortly by The Trouble with Beauty: An Essay in Twentieth-Century Aesthetics (from the Free Press and Heinemann). Books issued before Scandal of Pleasure included Pictures of Romance and The Colors of Rhetoric, both from Chicago, and Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein, from Yale. She has edited four other books.

Dr. Steiner taught at Yale and Michigan before joining Penn as assistant professor in 1979. Promoted to associate professor three years later, she was named full professor in 1985 and was awarded the Alan G. Hassenfeld Term Professorship of Humanities in 1988. She has served as Master of the Modern Languages College House, director of the Penn/King’s College Program in London, and chair of the Graduate Group, and Honors Program of the English Department. A winner of Guggenheim, NEH and ACLS awards, she has also given major lectures and held visiting posts in numerous institutions from Berkeley to Tel Aviv.

The Planners: The planning committee that developed the Forum’s design included Dr. Sandra Barnes of Anthropology; Drs. Mary Frances Berry, Nancy Farriss and Lynn Lees of History; Drs. Joan DeJean and Lance Donaldson-Evans of Romance Languages; Dr. Joseph Farrell of Classical Studies; Dr. Elizabeth Johns of History of Art; Dr. Mark Liberman of Linguistics; Drs. Eugene Narmour and Gary Tomlinson of Music; and Drs. Wendy Steiner and Susan Stewart of English. In their report, three roles are outlined for the Forum:

• A role as a center for intellectual exchange—for discussion among humanities scholars; for cooperation between humanities faculty and scholars in the sciences and social sciences; and for exploring connections between these and the professional schools at Penn.

• A role in graduate and undergraduate education, with seminars and workshops on teaching (including the use of new technologies and cross-disciplinary team teaching), and opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students doing research in the humanities to be linked with fellows and affiliated faculty of the Forum, and to present their own research.

• A public role, connecting the faculty’s and students’ work in the humanities with the world at large, through related events and work in Philadelphia cultural and historical institutions, including libraries, museums, galleries, theaters, music and film festivals.

[Ed. Note: See Benchmarks, on the back cover of this issue, for more on the Forum.]

Job Opportunities: Positions—and PCs—are on Market Street

The grand opening* of the new Penn Job Application Center was held September 23, at its new location at 3550 Market Street, marking “one of the new directions Penn has embarked upon to recruit high quality applicants,” said John J. Heuer, Vice President for Human Resources. “As a result of the rapidly changing job market, Penn must join our competitors in aggressively ‘stepping to the plate’ to attract and retain quality employees. We have a record number of open positions.”

The new center has longer hours than it had at 3401 Walnut (it is open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays) and also provides five PC stations with Internet access for browsing the openings and applying on-line—one of the first employers in the area to do so.

The Center also houses skills assessment and training, and is the location of Penn’s “sole source” temporary service with Todays Penn Partnership, which helps University offices locate temporary and part-time help. A TPP group including Lora DiSandro, Michelle Liebowyn and others work with Penn’s Human Resources team of Gary Truhlara, Alicia Brill and teh recruitment staff to fill temporary posts at Penn.
Nominations October 7... Election October 20

To all members of the A-3 Assembly:

We invite any eligible person to nominate one or more A-3s for membership on the Executive Board. You may nominate yourself. There are currently 12 vacancies on the Executive Board.

The Executive Board: Our present Constitution of the A-3 Assembly indicates that the Board may contain up to 20 members, each elected for a two-year term. The Board is the decision-making body of the Assembly.

Who is eligible? Any A-3 University staff member (which is defined as any full-time, weekly-paid employee not covered by a collective bargaining agreement) is eligible to vote and run for office in the Assembly.

A Call for Nominations: You may nominate one or more A-3s or nominate yourself. If you are nominating someone else, your nomination letter should contain a statement that the nominee has agreed to serve if elected. Nomination letters should contain the name and place of work of the person being nominated as well as a brief statement indicating why you think he/she would make a good Board member. In publication, we may edit statements that are substantially longer than 25 words because of space.

Nominations should be sent to Donna M. Arthur, either via e-mail at darthur@auzyx.law or via intramural mail to Law School/6204, no later than Wednesday, October 7, 1998.

Information about the Candidates and the Election: The list of nominees and their information will be published in the October 13 edition of Almanac; it will go out over the listserv and be printed in The Daily Pennsylvanian the same week. Election day is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. The location is yet undetermined and will be included in the publications mentioned above. Voting will be by secret ballot and the results will be published in the October 27 issue of Almanac.

— Donna M. Arthur, Recruitment Manager, Career Planning & Placement, Law School Chair, A-3 Assembly

Public Safety: Domestic Violence Awareness

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and October 1 is the second annual “Work To End Domestic Violence Day.” The University of Pennsylvania is joining employers in Philadelphia and across the country to help work to end domestic violence.

One in three Americans has witnessed an incident of domestic violence, and almost four million women are physically abused by their husbands or boyfriends every year. In 1995-96, nearly 30,000 women asked for help from Philadelphia’s four domestic violence service agencies. The emotional and physical toll of domestic violence on our employees and in communities throughout Philadelphia is tremendous, and we at Penn can make a difference. You can take part in our efforts to put a stop to domestic violence. This month, watch for flyers about specific events, including:

September 28—October 4:

- Book displays, Penn Bookstore and Van Pelt Library

October 1

- 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Lunchtime Resource Table, Faculty Club
- noon-2 p.m. Rally on College Green: Speakers and Resource Tables 1:15-3:15 p.m. Panel on A Practical Approach to Domestic Violence for Clinical and Nonclinical Personnel, with Dr. Janice Asher of Student Health, Dr. Elizabeth Datner of HUP/PER, Paul Bukovec of Menergy, (a treatment group for malebatters) and a representative from Women Against Abuse; Alumni Hall, Maloney Building at HUP, 36th and Spruce Streets

Other things members of the University can do:
- Watch for lunchtime brown-bag seminars.
- Participate in a fundraising drive to help local domestic violence programs.

Take one of the bumper stickers, buttons, or stickers given out October 1, and display it to let the rest of the community know there’s no excuse for domestic violence.

- If you are living with domestic violence, remember that the University has resources that can help. Contact Special Services in Public Safety, 898-4481; Penn Women’s Center, 898-8611; and/or Penn Friends, (employee assistance program) 1-888-321-4433.

There are also other resources in the Philadelphia area staffed with people who want to help you. Any of the above offices can provide you with the agency names and telephone numbers.

— Susan A. Hawkins, Director, Special Services/Division of Public Safety

Speaking Out

'Tough All Over'

In its September 18 issue, The Daily Pennsylvanian reported, based on University tax records, that President Rodin’s salary and benefit package rose 13.7% from FY96 to FY97 and that Vice President Fry’s package increased an astronomical 22.4%. These increases came at a time when the rest of us had to adhere to a policy that called for 3% or 4% if we were lucky. This current year the numbers were reduced to 1% to 3% for a solid performance (see Almanac April 28 for the notice signed by Rodin/Fry).

Our management tells us that things are tough all over, that the University is in serious financial trouble due to the pressures created when tuition couldn’t be raised as much as anticipated, and these are the realities of budget constraints.

Apparently, there are a select few for whom these constraints do not apply. If things are really tough all over, it becomes incumbent upon those in top management to be a partner with everyone else when telling us that our raises will be small until things become better. Participating themselves in the small raise policy would add to their credibility and be a real motivation for them to make things better for all of us. In addition, it would make it easier for us to accept the situation, to feel as though our efforts are still appreciated, and that we are not all replaceable parts. If we all were getting good raises, if things were not “tough all over,” then they would deserve the big increases. But how tough can it be to squeeze the little guy, point to what’s been squeezed, and then get big raises for themselves from that?

Rodin is quoted as saying that her salary package is market driven. This is the same reason that Michael Jordan is worth $40,000,000 per year and a public school teacher is worth $40,000. It may be the way it is, but that doesn’t make it right. But if the University is now going to pay people on market value, are we to believe that only the top university officials should be paid what the market bears? Are the rest of us schlock?

Or do we just not matter to them very much?

Perhaps the most infuriating quote in the piece was from Fry who said “From the pure salary stuff, I don’t think that’s it high. I wish it was. (sic)” Where is he coming from? It’s plenty high in dollars. While he may have deserved his FY96 salary, the disproportionate percentage increase which was reported is out of balance to any sense of fairness and is totally outrageous.

— Rick Wexler
Programmer/Analyst, ISC

Response to Mr. Wexler

As I informed the DP in a letter printed last week (see September 18 issue of The Daily Pennsylvanian), my views were not accurately presented in the DP’s story on University salaries. I am well compensated by Penn and very grateful for it. It is a privilege to work here.

— John A. Fry
Executive Vice President

Speaking Out welcomes reader contributions. Short, timely letters on University issues can be accepted by Thursday at noon for the following Tuesday’s issue, subject to right-of-reply guidelines. Advance notice of intention to submit is appreciated.—Ed.
Personal Financial Planning Seminars: October 6-8

As part of our newly announced Personal Financial Planning Program, we will kick off “Financial Planning Week” on October 6, 7 and 8 with an initial offering of a seminar entitled Achieving Financial Success presented by American Express Financial Advisors in the Club Room of the Faculty Club.

In order to accommodate differing schedules, this seminar will be offered in two sessions, one from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and one from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on all three days. In addition, American Express advisors will be available from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on a walk-in basis to answer your questions. All seminars are free of charge. We invite you to be a participant in planning for your future. Please call 1-800-220-2190, Ext. 303, or e-mail AFEA@erols.com to reserve a place at the session of your choice.

Look for future announcements regarding the next “Financial Planning Week” scheduled for November.

— John J. Heuer, Vice President for Human Resources

The University of Pennsylvania Police Department
Community Crime Report

About the Crime Report: Below are all Crimes Against Persons and Crimes Against Society from the campus report for September 14 through September 20, 1998. Also reported were Crimes Against Property: 20 total thefts & attempts (including 4 burglaries, 1 theft of auto, 7 thefts from auto, 5 thefts of bicycles & parts), 3 incidents of criminal mischief & vandalism, and 1 incident of forgery & fraud. Full reports on the Web (www.upenn.edu/almanac/v45/05/crimes.html). — Ed.

This summary is prepared by the Division of Public Safety and includes all criminal incidents reported and made known to the University Police Department between the dates of September 14 through September 20, 1998. The University Police actively patrols from Market Street to Baltimore Avenue and from the Schuylkill River 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 the Division of Public Safety at 898-4482.

Crimes Against Persons

34th to 38th/Market to Civic Center: Robberies (& attempts)—2; Aggravated assaults—1; Threats & harassment—2
09/14/98 3:54 AM Grad B Tower Harassing calls received
09/15/98 1:00 PM Franklin Bldg Maliciously posed to take complainant’s watch/arrest
09/16/98 12:06 PM Stouffer Triangle Harassing calls received
09/19/98 2:07 AM Gimbels Gym Complainant assaulted with baseball bat/arrest
09/20/98 3:42 AM 3716 Spruce St Complainant reported being robbed of currency

38th to 41st/Market to Baltimore: Robberies (& attempts)—2; Aggravated assaults—1; Threats & harassment—2
09/15/98 3:45 AM 3925 Chestnut St Complainant assaulted/arrest
09/16/98 1:59 PM Wayne Hall Unwanted calls received
09/17/98 3:14 PM Harmswell House Complainant receiving harassing calls/letter/e-mail
09/18/98 12:28 AM 3900 Bk Pine Complainant’s wallet taken by suspect/arrest
09/19/98 12:56 AM 3900 Bk Fels Walk Unknown suspects attempted to rob complainant

30th to 34th/Market to University: Threats & harassment—2
09/15/98 1:53 PM Hill House Obscene calls received
09/18/98 1:16 PM Penn Tower Complainant reports being harassed

Outside 30th - 43rd/Market to Baltimore: Simple assaults—1; Threats & harassment—2
09/14/98 11:29 PM 4400 Bk Osage Complainant reported being assaulted/refused medical
09/16/98 12:31 AM 1901 Walnut St Harassing letters received
09/17/98 4:24 AM 2012 Spruce St Complainant reports being threatened

Crimes Against Society

34th to 38th/Market to Civic Center: Disorderly conduct—1
09/15/98 10:19 AM Van Pelt Library Suspicious male in building/cited for disorderly conduct

30th to 34th/Market to University: Disorderly conduct—1
09/14/98 6:50 AM 34th & Chestnut St Male cited for disorderly conduct

18th District Crimes Against Persons

10 Incidents and 4 Arrests (including 4 robberies and 6 aggravated assaults) were reported between September 14, 1998 and September 20, 1998, by the 18th District, covering the Schuylkill River to 49th Street and Market Street to Woodland Avenue.
09/15/98 3:45 AM 3925 Chestnut Aggravated Assault
09/15/98 1:00 PM 3451 Walnut Robbery/arrest
09/16/98 11:40 AM 5124 Market Aggravated Assault
09/16/98 6:30 AM 233 Buckingham Aggravated Assault/arrest
09/16/98 8:30 AM 5100 Walnut Robbery
09/18/98 12:38 AM 3900 Pine Robbery/arrest
09/19/98 2:04 AM 3700 Walnut Aggravated Assault/arrest
09/20/98 6:00 AM 4941 Chestnut Aggravated Assault
09/20/98 2:16 AM 4600 Sansom Aggravated Assault
09/20/98 3:40 AM 3700 Spruce Robbery

Opportunities at Penn

There are currently over 500 positions open at Penn for qualified applicants in office support, research, computing, professional, and financial areas among others. All open positions are posted on the Human Resources website at www.hr.upenn.edu. Positions are searchable by title, job, school and posting date. Applicants can apply on-line at this site and are encouraged to do so.

Applicants are also welcome to visit the Penn Job Application Center at 3590 Market Street, Suite 110, Philadelphia, PA, where five computer stations are available for you to browse open positions and apply on-line. It is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Todays Penn Partnership (formerly Todays Penn Temporaries) is also at this site, and continues to provide quality office support temps to Penn departments. Applicants interested in temporary office support work, who have at least 3 months office experience and computer proficiency, are encouraged to visit the Application Center.

NOTE: Faculty positions and positions at the Health System are not included in these listings.

— John J. Heuer, Vice President for Human Resources
The creation of the Penn Humanities Forum is a response on the part of the School of Arts and Sciences faculty and the administration to fundamental changes in the nature of humanistic research and general culture. For a long time, the gulf between the ivory tower and “real life” has been an accepted aspect of Western civilization, with academics and nonacademics content to keep their distance. Today, however, the arts and the university are under intense public scrutiny, and there is widespread skepticism abroad as to the value of both a humanistic education and the academic study of culture.

Though Penn has a remarkably vibrant and distinguished humanities faculty, the public questioning of the role of the humanities cannot help but give us pause. It is matched, moreover, by an internal questioning brought on by our own struggles to deal with rapid change in the phenomena we study and in the methods and frames of reference we apply to them. Whereas once national cultures existed relatively independently of each other, globalization, the rise of minorities, and the proliferation of new communication technologies have complicated these cultures. As a result, we are forced to re-examine difference and find ways to describe the hybridization of art and ideas in daily life. In creating experience, visual, aural, and verbal stimuli merge in a media barrage, with the result that the division of the arts into separate university disciplines is proving less and less productive. Humanistic scholars are faced with a new imperative: to explain how ideas and arts—high as well as low—interact in our personal and civic lives, and why they matter.

The organization of humanistic study at Penn, as at most universities, is for the most part an agglomeration of uncoordinated and often competing departments and programs. Despite the unusual amount of interdisciplinary activity here, it is still surprising how little we know about the work going on in our midst. None of us could begin to say what it means to be a “Penn humanist.” Of course, one would never expect a sound-bite characterization, but if we are engaged in a common enterprise, as most of us believe we are, we should welcome the opportunity to inquire as to what it might be.

Responsive to this situation, the Forum aims at nothing less than a shift in the “culture of the humanities” at Penn. It will promote this change through three mechanisms: an interdisciplinary research center, an administrative structure encouraging cooperation across departments and schools, and a liaison between Penn humanists and the City of Philadelphia. These initiatives will be interdependent. When a topic is set for the scholars visiting at the Forum in a given year, that topic can be echoed in a course of lectures open to both students and members of the community and taught by an interdisciplinary group of Penn professors and experts from the city’s cultural institutions. Our think tank will be both a sponge and a sieve. It will promote a model of humanistic exploration in which the University and the city are respectful partners in a conversation extending across the Greater Philadelphia area.

To effect this plan, the Forum will consolidate existing resources and create new ones. SAS already has an endowment from the Mellon Foundation that generates fellowships for young humanists outside of Penn. In the future, they will apply to the Humanities Forum with proposals related to the year’s theme; when funding permits, senior scholars outside Penn will do the same. In addition, Penn humanists will be affiliated with the Forum as leave fellows, receiving a research fund and participating in the Forum’s weekly meetings. The year’s theme (“human nature” is the one scheduled for 1999-2000) would be the subject of a team-taught course for undergraduates and graduate students, and the city’s cultural institutions could reflect it in exhibitions, lectures, and educational programming.

To improve communication across the humanities, the Forum will serve departments and programs as a clearing house for extra-curricular (and occasionally curricular) activities. It will help to publicize lectures and conferences and coordinate their dates and rooms. This administrative convenience should lead to more collaboration among departments, who currently plan their programming with little concern for each other. The ideal would be a single “calendar of the Penn humanities season,” available on the web and advertised across the city and to neighboring colleges. Though this goal is perhaps utopian, even some coordination would be better than the current situation of a thousand flowers blooming in a thousand secret gardens.

The Forum’s outreach would be aimed in three directions: toward nonhumanistic disciplines and professional schools at Penn, toward secondary educators and students in the area, and toward the general audience for cultural activities in Philadelphia. Its purpose is to raise an awareness of the value of humanistic culture in an environment where the ethos tilts toward applied knowledge. We believe that our research and pedagogy have direct bearing on that going on elsewhere in Arts and Sciences as well as in Wharton, Law, Medicine, Engineering, and, obviously, Fine Arts and Communications. Collaboration between humanists and scholars in these schools could produce valuable discoveries on both sides. As for public education, we are concerned at how little benefit the secondary schools derive from the presence of the distinguished humanities faculty at Penn. The Forum would wherever possible open its programs to teachers and strive to introduce secondary students to the pleasures of humanistic learning. It would plan at least one major program per year to involve the general community, with aspects designed specifically for the schools.

For example, in a pilot program (less interdisciplinary than those to follow), the Forum will sponsor a Celebration of Philadelphia Writers, March 26-27, 1999. This event will take place on both the Penn campus and in venues in the City (the Free Library, the Clef Club, the American Philosophical Association, the Library Company, the Rosenbach Rare Book Library, cafes, buses, WHYY, WXPN), and is intended to make Penn and the city aware of the richness of Philadelphia’s current and past literary achievements. An important part of the Celebration will be a competition for the best writing about Philadelphia by high school students, with the winners reading their work along with established writers. We hope as well to encourage teachers to offer a unit on the history of the city’s literature to all their students. Each year, the Forum will design such a program, bringing the humanistic topic set for the year to the attention of the entire community.

The Forum will thus have many beneficiaries. But perhaps most fundamentally, it will provide a situation in which humanities professors and students can put their ideas and values to work. Sharing their research in a rich conversation, learning from those outside their field, translating the life of the mind into benefit for the community: these are possibilities that would turn Penn from one of the strongest humanities groups in the country into a pathbreaking humanistic force. There is no humanities center set up to do what this one will, for the Forum will be reinventing the very meaning of academic humanism.

Dr. Steiner is the Richard L. Fisher Professor and Chair of English in the School of Arts and Sciences and Director of the new Penn Humanities Forum.
Nowhere Railroad, designed by landscap architect Paul Busse, largest 200,000 square foot exhibit of more than 150 railroad buildings, including a large centerpiece replica of In. Revising Charles Brockden Brown; 10 a.m-6 p.m.; Grossman Tumor Symposium; The 5th Annual Albert R. Taxin Brain The 5th Annual Albert R. Taxin Brain meeting. The 5th Annual Albert R. Taxin Brain meeting. The 5th Annual Albert R. Taxin Brain meeting.

Museum Galleries Tour: 20th Century American Photographers; 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Grossman Tumor Symposium; The 5th Annual Albert R. Taxin Brain meeting.

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