Dear Friends,

Welcome to the spring issue of Inspiring Impact!

Once again, this publication has reminded me that the dedication and philanthropy of our global Penn community truly underpins all that we do. From support for the humanities to an exciting future for women’s athletics, from the world’s first queer art history fellowship to a program that increases equitable legal access through technology, this issue showcases just some of the wide-ranging ways Penn donors are making—and can make—a powerful and lasting impact.

On page 13, you’ll also find a recap of the Penn Forward tour, which brought our new President Liz Magill to six of the cities where we have the greatest number of Penn alumni. I am thrilled to share that a record-setting number of our alumni, donors, and friends were able to be there, and our incredible host committees in each city helped make this a wonderful welcome for Liz.

If you attended one of the Penn Forward events, or perhaps read the news in the Gazette or other sources, you may know that the University is currently undergoing a strategic planning process led by John Jackson, our incoming Provost (and outgoing Dean of the Annenberg School for Communications). I look forward to sharing more about this important planning work in the fall edition of this magazine.

I want to leave you with this: springtime on campus is an incredible time—the energy and anticipation is palpable. Students work on capstone projects and final exams, prepare for summer internships, and begin to pursue the many paths that follow graduation. At the same time, the entire Penn community enjoys a vast array of activities including the Penn Relays, Commencement, Alumni Weekend, and more. If you didn’t make it back to campus for any of these recent activities, I hope you can connect with Penn again soon, whether in person, online, or in spirit. In the meantime, as always, please feel free to reach out to me directly—I’d be delighted to hear from you. But now, enjoy diving into these pages!

Warmly,

Bonnie Miao Bandeen
Chair, Trustee Development Committee
bandeen@upenn.edu
Biology and chemistry can tell us how the vast and intricate systems of our bodies work, physics and astronomy can tell us how celestial bodies move through the night sky, and engineering helps us construct buildings that rise into the clouds. But to investigate the question of who we are and why we do things—not what we are or how we work—we must turn to the humanities.

The Wolf Humanities Center at Penn Arts & Sciences is delving into that vital question. Through the Center’s wide array of events and programs, it examines how the humanities speak to the most important issues of the day and reflect who we are as a society.

Professor Jamal J. Elias is the Center’s director. He is also the Walter H. Annenberg Professor of the Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies. His scholarship is focused on Islamic thought, literature, and history in Western, Central, and South Asia, with an emphasis on Sufism and visual culture.

“Our goals are to demonstrate how vital the humanities are to the life of the mind and the health of society. They are fundamentally connected with many areas of urgent inquiry in medicine, law, business, and the sciences. Being able to contextualize information and think beyond immediate problem solving is vital. The humanities allow people to bring together a great deal of knowledge, analyze it, and contextualize it.”

—Jamal J. Elias
Walter H. Annenberg Professor of the Humanities
Professor of Religious Studies
The precursor to the Wolf Humanities Center was called the Penn Humanities Forum, which was founded in 1999. As a direct result of a gift from Noelle and Dick Wolf and support from the School of Arts & Sciences, the Forum was transformed into the Wolf Humanities Center in 2017.

Since that time, it has vastly expanded its activities, serving as Penn’s main hub for interdisciplinary humanities research and public programming. Its growth has been supported by grants from a variety of sources and philanthropy from S.T. Lee and the Hershey Family Foundation. However, the initial gift from the Wolf family and the ongoing commitment from Penn’s School of Arts & Sciences continue to be the core sources of support.

Each year, the Center chooses a theme for its programming. This year, it’s “Heritage.” The events have been diverse: lectures, jazz performances, films, poetry readings, and much more. But whether the subject of an event is an 18th-century Japanese play or a documentary on the lived experiences of Deaf people, they all speak to the questions of history, values, and culture that make up the idea of heritage.

In addition to the Center’s programming, it awards postdoctoral fellowships to five junior scholars and offers support for Penn faculty members and their research, support for faculty members from colleges and universities around Philadelphia, and fellowships for Penn graduate students.

Each year, the Center also selects around a dozen undergraduate students to become fellows in the Undergraduate Humanities Forum. The students become part of the Wolf community and meet regularly in a seminar with the Wolf Faculty Director to share and workshop their research. The students then present their scholarship at the annual Undergraduate Humanities Forum Research Conference, which they also organize.

Roseline Gray, C’23, was an Undergraduate Fellow at the Wolf Humanities Center this year. A double major in international relations and Russian and Eastern European studies, she explores in her research how literary and religious texts from the past have contributed to the myth of Moscow as a “third Rome” and ideas of imperialism in Russia.

Roseline was born in Brussels and lived there her whole life before she came to Penn. She spent her childhood around international students and fellow American expatriates, and, at Penn, she was drawn toward majoring in international relations. But she found her passion in her humanities classes, where she learned about different people and cultures.

Every day when she turns on the news, Roseline sees the relevance of her humanities research. She sees the grim connection between the myths that fed into ideas of Russian imperialism and the ongoing war in Ukraine. And she sees similar resonances in the work of her peers on issues like artifact repatriation in museums or how the legacy of women painters in New York City in the 19th century has been erased.

“In the humanities, we see how we are always grappling with the past in our present moment,” she notes. “Even though there can be the pervasive idea that scientific empiricism is the best way to understand society, often the most honest and raw place to look is the humanities.”

Roseline described her fellowship at the Wolf Humanities Center as a culmination of everything she’s learned at Penn, particularly the University’s culture of valuing work that crosses disciplinary boundaries. The Center is a place where scholars of different perspectives can be in dialogue, and that interaction produces stronger research and more thoughtful scholarship. For Roseline, her experience at the Wolf Humanities Center has served as a perfect encapsulation of her academic journey.

“I want to understand people and how they leave a mark on the world. The humanities are an important way of understanding how people relate to each other and why things happen.”

—Roseline Gray, C’23
At Penn Carey Law, increasing access to justice is a top priority, and the Future of the Profession Initiative is exploring new ways to close the justice gap.

The principle of equal rights is at the bedrock of the American legal system. But equal rights doesn’t mean equal access.

According to the Legal Services Corporation’s 2022 Justice Gap Study, most low-income Americans don’t get any or enough assistance for their civil-legal problems, which are typically related to securing or maintaining basic needs such as housing, education, and health care.

Low-income Americans seek help for only 1 in 4 of their substantial legal problems. Almost half cite the cost as the reason they didn’t seek legal help. And more than half don’t know where they could find a lawyer or if they could even afford one.
One way to make justice more accessible, especially to those who need it most, is through technology. Penn Carey Law’s Miguel Willis is committed to using the power of technology to democratize the law and designing legal solutions for systemic change. Willis is the Innovator in Residence at the Law School’s Future of the Profession Initiative, and he founded the Access to Justice (A2J) Tech Fellowship Program.

The A2J Tech Fellowship Program provides paid, 10-week summer fellowships to law students, who are using technology to design legal empowerment solutions, while interning with a partner legal organization. Past projects have included designing legal information websites, building tools that automate the creation of legal documents, and developing online legal chatbots using artificial intelligence. As of 2023, more than 120 fellows have participated in the program and provided over 36,000 hours of work in 36 different states.

Miguel Willis
Innovator in Residence, Future of the Profession Initiative

“The fellowships serve as both a catalyst for justice innovation and a pipeline for students who wish to embark on transformative public interest careers,” says Willis. “Advancing racial justice is critical to achieving those goals. Since our inception, we have prioritized equitable representation from law students from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Their lived experiences provide vital perspectives and help us build and design new avenues to access justice.”

Willis founded the A2J Tech Fellowship program when he was in his second year of law school at Seattle University School of Law. Driven by his experience growing up in poverty, his passion for social justice, and a keen interest in technological innovation, Willis organized the Social Justice Hackathon, a collaborative that spurred law students, lawyers, and technologists to create innovative solutions to address access to justice issues.

Following the success of the event, he was invited to visit different law schools around the country that were interested in organizing similar events. Noticing a lack of structures in place to provide law students with training using technology to increase access to justice, he was inspired to create the A2J Tech Fellowship in 2017. The program grew over the years, and it found a home at Penn Carey Law when Willis joined the Future of the Profession Initiative in 2020.

Lizzie Shackney, L’24, and Ronni Mok, L’24, WG’24, are two Penn Carey Law students who participated as fellows in the A2J Tech Program last summer. The students’ projects focused on using technology to address housing equity issues.

When a person inherits the house of a deceased relative, the legal process can be complicated. So Shackney, in her work at Community Legal Services (CLS) in Philadelphia, built a system for CLS attorneys that cuts down on the time they need to spend filling out forms, giving them more time to spend directly with their clients. In another project, Shackney worked to analyze data on wholesale homebuyers, to better protect homeowners from predatory practices.

Mok spent her summer at the Legal Services Corporation, analyzing eviction-related data. She was able to use her previous education in statistical science to understand how eviction data can impact tenants, even after their cases are closed.

“Access to legal information continues to be a big hurdle. Even with hours of research, it can be confusing to navigate sites across jurisdictions and understand the actual legal takeaways for a specific issue. We can make change even by just compiling this information and making it more readily available for others.”

– Ronni Mok, L’24, WG’24
Access to Justice Tech Fellow

In addition to pairing fellows with community legal partners, the A2J Tech Fellows program includes an intensive skills training bootcamp, weekly webinars, reflective journaling, and mentors who offer one-on-one support. These activities aim to foster a sense of community, provide continuous learning opportunities, and help participants explore the career pathways that most interest them.

The A2J Tech Fellowship Program is part of Penn Carey Law’s Future of the Profession Initiative—a network of lawyers, legal experts, students, and professionals from other fields who are engaging in interdisciplinary conversations about the future of the legal profession. The Initiative is a top philanthropic priority for the School, aimed at giving future lawyers the skills they need to best advocate for the people they serve.

To support the Access to Justice Tech Fellowship Program and the Future of the Profession Initiative, contact Heather Frattone at frattone@law.upenn.edu or 215.898.4396.
Penn’s female student-athletes are no strangers to success. They are All-Americans and national champions. All-star scholars and community leaders. While here, they learn valuable life skills that translate into real-world advantages: leadership, accountability, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, and more.

“We recently concluded a celebration of 100 years of women's athletics at Penn,” says Alanna Shanahan, C'96, the T. Gibbs Kane, Jr. W'69 Director of Athletics and Recreation and a former Penn women’s lacrosse player. “As we look ahead, the Power the Next 100 initiative will enable the success of our women's teams to continue for the next century and beyond.”

Power the Next 100 is the first-ever division-wide fundraising initiative focused specifically on women's varsity athletics. With a goal of $40 million, it is building a strong financial foundation that will position teams for competitive success and cement Penn’s reputation as a place where student-athletes can thrive.
PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

WOMEN’S VARSITY SPORT OPERATIONAL ENDOWMENTS:
Endowment funds provide crucial revenue each year while also creating financial sustainability for teams in the long term. Matching funds are available for endowment gifts at various levels, with the goal of doubling the endowment for women’s varsity sports.

VARSITY ANNUAL FUNDS:
Annual funds are the lifeblood of Penn women’s sports and help to offset the operational costs of travel, equipment, recruiting, and other core elements of the student-athlete experience.

CAPITAL PROJECTS:
Penn’s women’s teams need support for capital projects that ensure they have modern training and game day facilities.

TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE NEXT 100 YEARS OF WOMEN’S ATHLETICS, contact Tim Folan, Senior Associate Athletic Director, Development & Alumni Relations, at tfolan@upenn.edu or 215.573.0315.

“It has been amazing to witness the strong growth of women’s athletics during my four years at Penn, spearheaded by strong female leadership. As student-athletes, we are taught to champion our lives in every way possible. Through this initiative, we can continue to pursue the best versions of ourselves with access to the best resources possible.”

— Kayla Padilla, W’23
Women’s basketball standout and team captain

Funding priorities include recruiting and retaining world-class coaches, improving training and game day facilities, and offering access to cutting-edge nutritional and mental health expertise, among others.

Kirsten Strausbaugh Becker, C’13, Head Gymnastics Coach, has big dreams for her program.

“Facility improvements, recruiting, nutrition, and team travel are all areas I’d like to focus on in the future. Power the Next 100 is helping us get there.”

— Kirsten Strausbaugh Becker, C’13
Head Gymnastics Coach

Initial support from donors like Stephanie Pottruck Goldman, C’99, and her husband Aaron Goldman, W’99, has given the initiative a strong start. Early on, Pottruck Goldman chose to establish a matching gift designed to inspire others. “We love the idea of ensuring that women have equally engaging and satisfying athletic experiences during their time at Penn,” she says. “There is no better way to encourage financial support than by modeling it.

“Being a student-athlete at Penn is a very special experience, and one that is a quintessential part of who these students become.” Pottruck Goldman continues. “It is a great privilege to help women’s athletics become even better and stronger in the future.”

Learn more about the Power the Next 100 initiative in this 1-minute video. https://pennpri.de/powerthenext100
Early to Rise

With philanthropic support, the Penn Medicine Ability Academy is poised to unlock the potential of young learners with autism.

Parents expect their children to answer when they are called. But when Debbie Anday could not get a response from her two-year-old son Enrique, it was not a case of the silent treatment.

“I knew his hearing was okay; he could recognize his favorite songs,” Anday says. “But he was not responsive when I called his name.”

After four months of seeking answers, Enrique was diagnosed with autism. With the diagnosis came the realization that Enrique’s current day care was unaccommodating to the disability that accompanies autism, including his heightened sensitivity to sensory inputs. A speech therapist suggested that Anday enroll her child in the Penn Medicine Early Childhood Program (ECP) at Hall Mercer.

“It’s been a real help, not only for Enrique, but for me as a parent,” Anday says. “We learned of many tools, like using visual cues, assistive technology like augmentative and alternative communication devices, and scheduling things so he is prepared and comfortable. The chance to socialize with other children and get acclimated to new therapists has been vital to his development.”

The ECP serves two classes of nine children, from ages 3 to 5, per year, but has a waiting list and has observed a substantial need for similar programs in Philadelphia. As Enrique and other ECP graduates prepare to enter kindergarten, Penn Medicine plans to expand the program into an inclusive preschool called the Ability Academy.

When fully operational, the Ability Academy will expand the ECP’s reach to meet the needs of 225 children, including a day-care center for infants and half- and full-day preschool options. The day care will prioritize younger siblings of autistic children, who have a 1 in 5 chance of being autistic themselves. Caregivers and researchers at the Academy, most of whom will be affiliated with the Perelman School of Medicine, will provide early diagnosis and specialized treatment to ease the path to kindergarten and beyond.

“Every minute counts, and Enrique’s experience has shown us that early intervention is a proven path to better outcomes.”

— Debbie Anday

The Ability Academy also will prepare future generations of educators, clinicians, and researchers, drawing from Penn’s undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows. The long-term goal is to train and support Philadelphia School District staff and community-based preschool and day-care providers in effective, inclusive practices, creating a wider network of educators and care providers who are better prepared to serve children with autism.

“We have been providing professional development for teachers in the Philadelphia School District— the nation’s 8th largest—for over 15 years,” says David Mandell, the Kenneth E. Appel Professor of Psychiatry at the Perelman School of Medicine, who is leading efforts to launch the Ability Academy. “With this expansion of our partnership and the model of success we can create, just imagine the impact we will make locally, regionally, and nationwide.”

Generous support from early-stage partners—including Marc, C’94, WG’94, and Marjorie McMorris and Independence Blue Cross—has provided the first steps to bringing the Ability Academy into being. Penn Medicine is targeting a space that will be customized for the vision behind the Academy, including a playground, STEM education room, and teaching kitchen.

The University’s Health System will match gifts up to $10 million to realize this transformative initiative. Visionary donors who believe in the project’s mission and its potentially expansive impact are needed to secure this space and make the promise of the Ability Academy a reality—just as the Academy will unlock the promise of the children it will serve.

“I’m thrilled to know that Penn Medicine is embarking on this initiative,” says Anday. “Every parent wants to provide the best foundation for their children’s lives, and it is especially important for parents of children with autism. Having this preschool will mean the world to families facing the same challenges as ours.”

“The Ability Academy’s commitment to working with the community and bringing evidence-based care to children with autism represents the very best of our institution. For that reason, the University of Pennsylvania Health System is proudly matching donations to help lay the groundwork for this incredible program to thrive for generations to come.”

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CEG, University of Pennsylvania Health System

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Giving Highlights

Philanthropy touches every part of the University. Through the support of our engaged and generous donors, Penn is able to inspire impact locally and globally. Here is a small sample of recent gifts that are fueling the University’s drive to advance knowledge for good.

Faisel H. Khan, C’98, ENG’98, made a $250,000 gift to provide financial support to master’s students in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, with consideration given to students who have prior work experience or attended an undergraduate institution in places considered fragile humanitarian settings. The gift is in honor of his 25th reunion, and he serves as the gift chair of his class.

Dr. Alexandria Carajohn, ENG’13, a former scholarship recipient, and Michael Carajohn, C’13, made a generous gift to endow a Young Alumni scholarship for Penn undergraduates.

Alain M. Levy, WG’72, Jerome P. Levy, WG’99, and Cleo R. Levy, C’21, gave $127,500 to their family scholarship supporting Wharton undergraduates. In addition, Alain and Jerome gave $25,000 to The Wharton Fund.

Emma Jacobs, a PhD candidate in the History of Art, always knew she wanted to pursue her graduate studies at Penn. Her interest grew once she learned that Jonathan Katz, a trailblazing curator and one of the leading scholars in her field, queer art history, was on the faculty. That made Penn the perfect fit for Emma, who plans to pursue curatorial work after completing her doctorate. Emma’s acceptance to Penn’s art history program came with a double dose of good news: She had been awarded the James D. McDonough Fellowship in Queer Art History, which will provide full support (tuition and a stipend) for the first five years of her doctoral studies.

Funded by a $3 million donation from the Alphawood Foundation Chicago, the McDonough Fellowship is the world’s first graduate fellowship in queer art history. Emma is one of three inaugural recipients of the fellowship, which allows graduate students in the History of Art to concentrate on queer art history.

Emma is deeply grateful for the fellowship, which is making her graduate studies possible.

“...no other institution offers a dedicated funding stream for people in queer art history. I’m excited to be one of the first fellows and to help pioneer this new program.”

Emma Jacobs
PhD candidate, History of Art

With an interest in the intersections of feminism and queer theory with art history, Emma plans to use her fellowship to research American lesbian artists from the 1970s through the present, the overlap of art and film, and the interactions between abstraction and visibility, representation, and identity politics.

She will also work together with the two other McDonough Fellows to organize a conference at Penn on queer art history, which will be presented under the banner of the McDonough Fellowship.

The impact of the McDonough Fellowship will extend beyond Emma, the other two inaugural fellows, and even Penn. “This first-of-its-kind fellowship will open doors for scholars at other institutions so queer art history will not be as marginalized as it is now,” Emma explains. “It will allow scholars that come after us to be valued and supported.”

—Emma Jacobs
PhD candidate, History of Art

Pioneering Support

The world’s first graduate queer art history fellowship will advance study and research in underrepresented fields.

PHOTO: Jonathan Katz, pictured inside his West Philadelphia home. CREDIT: Eric Sucar

PHOTO: (From left) Eduardo Carrera, Emma Jacobs, and Nina HoKesh-Hulbert are the inaugural McDonough Fellows, studying the history of art with a concentration in queer art history. CREDIT: Eric Sucar
Serhan, WG’06, and Aysu Seçmen gave $1 million to support Wharton Leadership Ventures, which offers outdoor experiences that facilitate self-discovery, leadership, and character development through the Anne and John McNulty Leadership Program. They also supported The Wharton Fund and The Penn Fund.

Eve Marie Colello-Moltzen made a $5,000 gift to establish the Colello-Moltzen Term Scholarship for Gender Health at SP2, which provides support for MSW students with an interest in gender-affirming health care.

Dana Bork, C’02, through her nonprofit, Change for Change, gave a generous gift to fund SP2’s Philanthropy in the City class, which researches and funds local Philadelphia nonprofits.

William Browne, C’71, and Christopher Browne, C’70, gave $1 million to establish a Men and Women of Pennsylvania Scholarship Challenge Fund to encourage new scholarships for students in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Elie-Antoine Atallah, PAR’20, gave $10,000 to help establish a new Plant Sciences Laboratory at the Morris Arboretum & Gardens.

Alex Yu, C’15, gave $10,000 to support the Penn Dance Fund at the Platt Student Performing Arts House.

Kathleen Stapleton Maycen, CW’69, made a $500,000 gift as part of the Penn Athletics Power the Next 100 initiative to establish the Kathleen Stapleton Maycen, CW’69, Women’s Tennis Student-Athlete Experience Endowment Fund and support the Tennis Varsity Fund.

Samara Cohen, C’93, W’93, and Adam Cohen, C’95, made a generous gift to create a term scholarship at Penn GSE, support programming through the McGraw Center for Educational Leadership, participate in the GSE Annual Fund, and contribute to the group effort to celebrate Dean Grossman’s successful tenure.

Laurie Paravati Phillips, C’81, gave $50,000 to support the Interdisciplinary Child Advocacy Clinic and Transnational Legal Clinic at Penn Carey Law.

The estate of Margy Meyerson, G’93, wife of former University President Martin Meyerson, made a generous bequest to support the Meyerson Professorship in Interdisciplinary Studies, to establish a Philadelphia Art & Architecture fund in the Penn Libraries, and to establish the Benjamin Franklin Distinguished Lecture Series in the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at Penn Arts & Sciences.

A Penn Libraries Board Member gave $300,000 to support the Penn Libraries’ community engagement activities and the Penn Libraries Fund.

Gary Prebula, W’72, and Dawn Prebula donated a collection of more than 80,000 comic books (worth approximately $750,000) to the Penn Libraries.

Betsy Scott Kleblatt, CW’68, gave $20,000 to support the Courbet catalogue for the newest Arthur Ross Gallery exhibition: At the Source: A Courbet Landscape Rediscovered. The gift was made in honor of Professor Andre Dombrowski, who co-curated the exhibition. Kleblatt and Dombrowski are pictured at left.

Randi Roy, C’87, WG’91, PAR’19, and Jeffrey Roy gave $125,000 to create a scholarship in memory of their parents (Robert Roy, W’39, and Ann L. Roy) that will support Penn Nursing graduate students pursuing an interest in nursing and innovation.

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Giving Highlights

An anonymous gift of $100,000 was made to Penn Dental Medicine to provide dental care for veterans who can’t afford it. Lacking coverage from Medicare for dental care, most veterans must pay out of pocket to maintain their oral health; this fund will play a vital role to assist those in greatest need of care.

An anonymous gift of $2 million created the Endowed LGBTQ+ Scholar-in-Residence at Penn’s LGBT Center. The inaugural scholar is ALOK, an internationally acclaimed author, poet, comedian, and public speaker, whose work explores themes of trauma, belonging, and the human condition.

The Howley Foundation made a commitment of up to $7.5 million to launch the ASPIRE Program at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. This program will support local high school students in Philadelphia who have a strong interest in nursing, with a goal of increasing diversity in health care and offering opportunities for economic mobility.

Cultural Crossroads

The new Eastern Mediterranean Gallery has opened at the Penn Museum—the latest step in the transformation and modernization of the 1899 building. Highlighting the creativity of a region that stands at the crossroads of diverse cultures, the new gallery features 400 objects spanning 4,000 years—most discovered during the Museum’s own archaeological expeditions. The Eastern Mediterranean Gallery has been made possible by the lead support of the Giorgi Family Foundation and other generous donors.

Explore this new gallery: www.penn.museum/easternmedgallery

PHOTO: This re-creation of the cargo hold of an ancient ship holds items similar to those that archaeologists have found in actual shipwrecks, from pottery to jewelry to bronze.
CREDIT: Tom Stanley