

# Almanac

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## David Thornburgh: Fels Institute



David Thornburgh

David Thornburgh has been named executive director of the University of Pennsylvania Fels Institute of Government.

In his former position as senior advisor to the Econsult Corporation, a Philadelphia-based regional economic consulting firm, Mr. Thornburgh has been a consultant to nonprofit and for-profit clients on strategic planning, policy and commu-

nications issues.

"I am delighted to announce David's appointment. He comes to Fels with a distinguished record of leadership and entrepreneurship in regional economic development and civic affairs that has earned wide regard in the public and private sectors," said Dr. Rebecca Bushnell, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

Mr. Thornburgh succeeds Dr. Donald Kettl, who will return to full-time research and teaching in the department of political science at Penn and continue to serve on the Fels faculty and academic advisory committee.

Under Dr. Kettl's leadership, Fels improved the performance of government and strengthened its curriculum for preparing future government leaders. In addition, Fels broadened its connections to the Institute's alumni and developed new programs to improve the ability of government officials to meet challenges. The Institute trains current and future leaders for public service in government.

"With his deep and rich background in public finance, David Thornburgh stands in rich tradition of Fels and its 70 years of leadership for results. He's ideally positioned to help the Institute take the next step in its history," Dr. Kettl said.

In 2006-07 Mr. Thornburgh served as CEO of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, a national best-practice network of public- and private-sector leaders committed to building globally competitive regions. He was executive director of the Pennsylvania Economy League in Philadelphia in 1994-2006 and served as director of the Wharton Small Business Development Center at Penn in 1988-1994.

"Fels has built a tremendous legacy of educating effective leaders for public service," Mr. Thornburgh said. "At a time when our economic, environmental and social challenges demand thoughtful and energetic leadership, I expect Fels will play an even greater role in shaping public policy and management at the regional, national and international levels."

Mr. Thornburgh holds a BA from Haverford College and a master of public policy degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He has studied entrepreneurship in Australia and New Zealand as an Eisenhower Fellow. He is a frequent commentator on public policy and regional development issues and has been recognized by Leadership Philadelphia as one of the 101 most trusted and respected civic "connectors" in the Philadelphia area.

## Fay Ajzenberg-Selove: 2007 National Medal of Science



Fay Ajzenberg-Selove

President George W. Bush recently announced that University of Pennsylvania physicist Dr. Fay Ajzenberg-Selove, is among eight recipients of the 2007 National Medal of Science, the Nation's highest honor for science. Dr. Ajzenberg-Selove and her fellow honorees will receive their medals at a White House ceremony on September 29.

Dr. Ajzenberg-Selove, professor emerita of physics, joined Penn in 1970 and made significant advances in the field of nuclear physics for decades. Her principal work on understanding light nuclei, the elements of stars, is considered a global reference for physicists old and new. Her research and experimentation continue to apply to energy fusion, carbon dating and nuclear medicine.

Dr. Ajzenberg-Selove's citation will read, "For her pioneering contributions in nuclear physics that have advanced research into applications including energy generation from fusion, dating from artifacts, and nuclear medicine, her passion for outstanding teaching, and her service to her profession and her country."

A preeminent scientist and researcher, Dr. Ajzenberg-Selove arrived in the United States as a refugee during World War II and became a pioneer in a male-dominated field. Often the only female engineering student in her undergraduate and graduate classes, she became the first female physics student, instructor and researcher most institutions had ever seen, including the California Institute of Technology, Columbia University and Haverford College. Even those institutions that appeared reluctant to hire a woman later awarded her their highest teaching honors.

"Fay Ajzenberg-Selove deserves our most heartfelt congratulations for this national honor," said President Amy Gutmann. "As a researcher, as a teacher and as a pathbreaking woman she has touched the lives of generations and made an indelible mark on the field of physics and on American higher education."

Born of Russian ancestry in Berlin, she and her family fled Europe during World War II, arriving in the United States when she was 15. The daughter of an engineer, she received her bachelor's degree in engineering physics from the University of Michigan in 1946 and her doctorate in physics from the University of Wisconsin in 1952.

Dr. Ajzenberg-Selove, cited more than 6,000 times by the Institute for Scientific Information, has won the Distinguished Alumni Fellow Award from the University of Wisconsin, the 1999 Nicholson Medal for Humanitarian Service from the American Physical Society, honorary doctorates from Haverford College, Michigan State University, and Smith College, and the Christian and Mary Lindback Foundation Award for Distinguished Teaching at Penn in 1991.

Currently a professor emerita at Penn, she served as a chair of the Commission on Nuclear Physics, was a member of the Nuclear Science Advisory Committee of the Department of Energy and National Science Foundation, a member of the Governing Council of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and chair of the Division of Nuclear Physics of the American Physical Society.

An engaging speaker and writer, Dr. Ajzenberg-Selove has authored hundreds of scientific papers, primarily on light nuclei and the way it absorbs and emits energy. Each year, scientists worldwide write over 1,200 scientific papers on these topics. She organized the first ever "Women in Physics" conference for the American Physical Society and in 1994 published an autobiography, *A Matter of Choices: Memoirs of a Female Physicist*.

The National Medal of Science honors individuals for pioneering scientific research in a range of fields, including physical, biological, mathematical, social, behavioral, and engineering sciences, that enhances our understanding of the world and leads to innovations and technologies that give the United States its global economic edge. The National Science Foundation administers the award, which was established by Congress in 1959.



Including the latest laureates, the honor has been conferred on 441 distinguished scientists and engineers, seven from Penn's standing faculty. The first was Dr. Britton Chance, in 1974, followed by Dr. Paul Gyorgy, in 1975, Dr. Mildred Cohn, in 1982, Dr. Robert L. Schrieffer, in 1983, Dr. Ralph Hirschmann, in 2000, and Dr. Raymond Davis, Jr., in 2001.

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Campus Safety and Security:  
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# Death

## Mr. Sheahan, Penn Sophomore

Michael Sheahan, a sophomore pursuing dual degrees in bioengineering at SEAS and business at Wharton, was killed in an automobile accident in Illinois on August 25; he was 20.

A native of Madison, Wisconsin, Mr. Sheahan was a 2007 graduate of James Madison Memorial High School, where he was a National Merit Scholarship Finalist.

At Penn, he was a member of the Ultimate Frisbee team and was involved in the West Philadelphia Tutoring Project and Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Sheahan is survived by his parents, Patrick and Helen; his sister, Julia; and his grandmother, Coletta Sheahan.

Memorials may be made to SEAS, Attn: Ellie Davis, 123 Towne Bldg., 220 S. 33rd St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

The Chaplain's Office is planning a memorial. Details will be published in an upcoming issue.

## To Report A Death

*Almanac* appreciates being informed of the deaths of current and former faculty and staff members, students and other members of the University community. Contact (215) 898-5274 or [almanac@upenn.edu](mailto:almanac@upenn.edu).

## College House Celebration of RAs and GAs: Here's To You!

In celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the College House system at Penn, we raise a glass to those who have served as undergraduate Resident Advisors (RAs) and Graduate Associates (GAs). A festive reception will be held during Homecoming 2008, *Saturday, November 1, 5-7 p.m.* in the Woodlands Ballroom at the Inn at Penn.

All current and former RAs, GAs, and senior College House staff are invited—not just from the past ten years, but from all classes pre-dating the College House system. We are especially interested in hearing from Penn faculty and staff who once served as RAs and GAs at Penn (contact Sue Smith at [suesmith@upenn.edu](mailto:suesmith@upenn.edu)). Come share your memories, swap stories and reunite with old Housemates! Registration is required through the 2008 Homecoming web site at [www.alumni.upenn.edu/homecoming2008/](http://www.alumni.upenn.edu/homecoming2008/).

—The Office of College Houses and Academic Services

## New PASEF Executive Committee

The recently-elected new members for the Executive Committee of the Penn Association of Senior and Emeritus Faculty (PASEF) are: President-Elect: *Neville Strumpf* (Nursing) Members-at-large:

*Jamshed Ghandhi* (Wharton)  
*Lee Peachey* (SAS)  
*Sheldon Steinberg* (Vet. Med.)

The membership of the PASEF Executive Committee for 2008-2009 also includes:

President: *Gerald Porter*  
Past President: *Walter Wales*  
Secretary-Treasurer: *Samuel Klausner*

Members-at-large:  
*Roger Allen*  
*Howard Arnold*  
*James Davis*  
*Renee Fox*  
*Elsa Ramsden*  
*Curtis Reitz*  
*Jerry Rosenbloom*

Ex-Officio:  
ASEF (Medicine): *James Saunders*  
Faculty Senate Rep.: *Sohrab Rabii*

Committee Chairs:  
Communication: *Alan Myers*  
Program: *Nicholas Kefalides*  
Retiree Benefits: *Gerald Porter*  
For more info see [www.upenn.edu/emeritus](http://www.upenn.edu/emeritus).

## Alumni Reunion Gifts 2008

Thirteen reunion classes and the Class of 2008 presented checks during Alumni Weekend in May. Fundraising records were broken across all classes. Total Penn Fund (TPF) pledges include gifts to The Penn Fund Unrestricted Fund, class projects, and individual endowed scholarships. The Total University pledges include all gifts made to Penn by members of the class during their reunion year. For information on the Penn Fund see their web site at [www.alumni.upenn.edu/pennfund/](http://www.alumni.upenn.edu/pennfund/).

Class	Reunion	TPF Donors	TPF Pledges	Total University	Gifts to Individual Endowed Scholarship Funds	Fundraising Priorities
2008	Senior Class	1,565*	\$58,229	-	-	The Penn Fund
2003	5th	521	\$259,005	\$746,659*	1	The Penn Fund
1998	10th	501	\$1,817,978*	\$2,224,388*	5	The Penn Fund
1993	15th	529	\$3,002,784*	\$3,012,284	19	The Penn Fund
1988	20th	585	\$4,104,317*	\$5,661,327	11	The Penn Fund
1983	25th	747	\$12,343,673*	\$20,720,195*	28	The Penn Fund, Class of 1983 Scholarship and Group Study, Weigle Information Commons in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library
1978	30th	618	\$1,895,173	\$6,584,268*	11	The Penn Fund, Class of 1978 Scholarship
1973	35th	473	\$1,958,080*	\$5,794,954*	9	The Penn Fund, Group Study Banquettes in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library and the Class of 1973 Scholarship
1968	40th	455	\$1,872,355*	\$3,962,245	10	The Penn Fund, Hamilton Village Games and Class of 1968 Scholarship
1963	45th	367	\$717,831	\$1,606,075	3	The Penn Fund, Class of 1963 Term Chair in the Humanities and Individual Study Area in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library
1958	50th	371	\$896,067	\$1,808,437	3	The Penn Fund, Listening and Editing Alcove in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library and the Class of 1958 Scholarship
1953	55th	320	\$1,526,346*	\$73,873,744*	4	The Penn Fund, Class of 1953 Scholarship
1948	60th	247	\$180,193	\$627,093	1	The Penn Fund, Class of 1948 Scholarship in Memory of Anthony "Skip" Minisi
1943	65th	179*	\$559,830*	\$992,274	1	The Penn Fund, Class of 1943 Scholarship
<b>Totals</b>		<b>5,913</b>	<b>\$31,133,632</b>	<b>\$127,601,443</b>	<b>106</b>	

\*Records

- 16 records have been broken across all classes, plus 1998 had a \$1million scholarship gift, the first seven-figure gift for a 10th reunion campaign.
- The Class of 2008 set a new record for a Senior Class Gift with 1,565 donors.
- 1943 set a new donor participation record with 179 donors. The previous 65th reunion record was 135 donors from the class of 1942.
- Eight classes established a new TPF record for pledges to class goals: 1998 (10th), 1993 (15th), 1988 (20th), 1983 (25th), 1973 (35th), 1968 (40th), 1953 (55th), and 1943 (65th).
- Six classes have broken University class achievement records: 2003 (5th), 1998 (10th), 1983 (25th), 1978 (30th), 1978 (35th), 1953 (55th).
- \$24,160,624 raised from 106 gifts to individual endowed scholarship funds from all reunion classes combined.

## CEET Pilot Project Grants: October 15

The Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology (CEET) announces the availability of pilot project grants for partial support for unfunded research in environmental health or toxicology. Awards of up to \$25,000 will be made. Any member of the standing faculty or research track faculty in the 12 professional schools at the University of Pennsylvania, or affiliates (CHOP and Monell) will be eligible to apply for Pilot Project Grant support provided that the project is related to either environmental health or toxicology research or the community outreach and education mission of the Center. The research being proposed cannot be funded by an external funding agency. Projects that focus on oxidative stress and oxidative stress injury, genes and the environment, reproduction and endocrine disrupting chemicals, or lung and airway diseases are encouraged. Projects that have a translational component to human disease, patient-oriented research or human populations will be reviewed favorably.

Preference will be given to first-time applicants that are junior faculty. Senior or established faculty will also be eligible to apply provided that the research they propose is unfunded and fits into the mission of the Center. Preference will also be given to senior faculty who wish to embrace environmental health or toxicology research as a new direction. Ap-

plications that support collaborative research that may be used to gather pilot data for a multi-investigator award will also be considered. If funded, a progress report is required at the end of the funding period and awardees must present their findings at a CEET Chalk Talk. The Center grant must be acknowledged on all publications resulting from the supported research.

The following should be submitted for the internal review by *October 15, 2008*.

- Title of application;
- Personnel information, name, position, title, and contact information;
- 2-page NIH Biosketch;
- List of current and pending grant support;
- An abstract;
- A statement to indicate how this project would lead to extramural funding;
- Specific aims;
- Significance which must state relevance to environmental health or toxicological research;
- Preliminary studies;
- Methods;
- References;
- Budget—can range from \$8–\$25K. Items that can be requested include salary of support personnel, supplies and minor equipment. Investigators cannot claim salary support for themselves.

The entire application should not exceed 10 pages. Please e-mail completed applications to [webster@upenn.edu](mailto:webster@upenn.edu). All applications will be reviewed by a committee of senior faculty and external experts and recipients will be notified by December 1.

—Mary E. Webster, Administrative Director,  
Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology

## Tina Skov Cowan, Director of Development for the Penn Libraries



Tina Skov Cowan

The Penn Libraries announce the appointment of Tina Skov Cowan to the position of Director of Development for the Penn Libraries, effective August 4.

Ms. Cowan served as a member of Penn's Development and Alumni Relations Major Gifts Team for over seven years. She was instrumental in building an administrative framework for that program, in addition to serving as a major gift officer. She worked to promote collaboration and transparency by creating new prospect management tools and building strong relationships with colleagues across Development and Alumni Relations.

As a fundraiser, Ms. Cowan reenergized Major Gifts' activities in the DC region and was the key staff person responsible for the successful \$7.5 million Mid-Atlantic Regional Advisory Board Scholarship Initiative. She used her fundraising, organizational, and managerial expertise to mentor new major gift officers and provide guidance and fundraising support to new priority initiatives, such as the Civic Scholars Program.

As Director of Development for the Penn Libraries, Ms. Cowan will be responsible for leading the Libraries' campaign effort, designed to raise \$47 million for endowment and facilities. She will work with the Libraries' senior administrative and volunteer leadership to carry the campaign plans forward, and with School and Center colleagues who have library expansion plans within their campaigns. Additionally, Ms. Cowan will develop new fundraising constituencies for the Libraries.

"We are thrilled to have Tina join us," Carton Rogers, Vice Provost and Director of Libraries, said. "Her knowledge of development activity at Penn and her fundraising skills are exactly what the Libraries need to ensure our success in meeting our strategic goals."

Ms. Cowan received an MLA from Penn and a BA in psychology from Hiram College in Ohio.

## Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Call for Proposals: November 14

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholars Program at the University of Pennsylvania (RWJF H&SSP at Penn) has set aside a Competitive Research and Education Fund to promote interdisciplinary research and education in population health at Penn. We expect that most of these funds will be used by Penn faculty to develop pilot projects which will attract external support for larger-scale studies, to fund small-scale projects, or to develop enduring educational materials that will advance teaching and training in population health concepts or methods within the University. The deadline for applications is *November 14, 2008*. Please visit [www.upenn.edu/rwjhssp](http://www.upenn.edu/rwjhssp) for more information and further details.

—Melissa Kulynych  
Program Coordinator,  
RWJ Health & Society Scholars  
Program at Penn

## Almanac On-the-Go: RSS Feeds

Almanac provides links to select stories each week there is an issue. Visit Almanac's website, [www.upenn.edu/almanac](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac) for instructions on how to subscribe to the Almanac RSS Feed.

## Penn Genome Frontiers Institute Grants: November 1

PGFI is pleased to announce a new series of funding opportunities for Fall 2008. Researchers from any Penn-associated school are invited to submit proposals in three areas: development of optical sensors and their biological application, development and analysis of high throughput sequencing methods, and development of genomic and small molecule assays. Depending on the type of proposal, awards may be up to \$120,000 over two years.

All proposals are due by *November 1, 2008*. These materials should be sent to Joyce Donnelly ([joyced@upenn.edu](mailto:joyced@upenn.edu)) in electronic format. Please see the PGFI web site for specific application requirements and award details ([www.genomics.upenn.edu](http://www.genomics.upenn.edu)).

### Synthesis of Novel Biologically Useful Optical Sensors

Detection and quantification of *in vivo* cellular processes requires sensitive detectors. While many chemical (e.g. fluorescein, etc.) and biological (e.g. GFP) fluorophores have been developed over the last several years, additional fluorophores and other optical sensors are needed. Ideally these new sensors would be more sensitive, have a longer half-life, be less biologically toxic and would be usable, simultaneously, with multiple other optical sensors. Applications are encouraged for novel chemical or biological fluorophore development as well as other types of optical sensors.

Awardees will receive up to \$120,000 over two years in research funding to be spent on development of optical sensors and their biological application. Applicants from any Penn-associated school are encouraged to apply. Applications should consist of a research proposal (≤ 5 pages), investigators' biosketches (NIH-format) and a one-page budget request.

### High Throughput Sequencing Use and Analysis

To stimulate the development and application of high throughput sequencing and analysis methods, the Penn Genome Frontiers Institute announces a collaborative RFA for biologists and computational scientists. Awardees will receive up to \$120,000 over two years in research funding to be spent on novel algorithmic development and biological application.

Applicants from any Penn-associated school are encouraged to apply through a co-investor mechanism consisting of at least one biologist and at least one computational scientist. Applications should consist of a research proposal (≤ 5 pages), investigators' biosketches (NIH-format) and a one-page budget request.

### Cell-based Screening Assay Development

To stimulate the development and application of high throughput cell-based screening, the Penn Genome Frontiers Institute announces an RFA for genomic and small molecule assay development.

Awardees will receive up to \$30,000 in funding to be spent on personnel and reagents for cell-based screening assay development projects that can be completed within one year. Applicants from any Penn-associated school are encouraged to apply. Applications should consist of a research proposal (≤ 3 pages), investigators' biosketches (NIH-format) and a one-page budget request.

# Convocation 2008

*Below is the Convocation Address given by President Amy Gutmann to the Class of 2012 on a summery evening outdoors on Blanche P. Levy Park, College Hall Green, September 2, 2008. The Penn Band, the Penny Loafers and the Glee Club performed. Chaplain Charles Howard gave the invocation and Associate Secretary Eric Kaplan presented the Class of 2012. Lee Spelman Doty, W'76, president of the Penn Alumni, also gave remarks.*

## Traveling Unconventional Paths

*by Amy Gutmann*

My warmest welcome to the great Class of 2012!

I extend equally warm greetings to our transfers from other colleges and universities. Transfers? Smart move!

It also gives me enormous pleasure to welcome a Pennsylvanian whose name adorns one of our great College Houses, Riepe House—the Chairman of Penn's Board, Jim Riepe.

All of you join the most talented and diverse mix of students we have ever enrolled. Seated among you are classmates from Puerto Rico... the US Virgin Islands... and all 50 of the United States—from the Golden State of California... to the Lone Star State of Texas... to the Keystone State of Pennsylvania!

Among you are also 331 classmates from 62 countries, from Albania and Australia... the Bahamas and Bahrain... to Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

If you did not graduate first in your class or ace every important exam, and therefore worry that we might have blundered into admitting you to Penn, I offer three words of advice: Get over it! We turned away 55% of the Valedictorians who applied precisely because grades are not all that matters. We chose you for your intellectual creativity and curiosity and your leadership potential.

So here you are, about to face your first challenging semester, full of potential and faced with so many choices about how to fulfill it: literally hundreds of courses and co-curricular activities to choose from, thousands of people to meet, a dynamic campus and American city to explore... yet so little time to get ready for the "real world."

You may find it daunting to have so many choices so quickly thrust upon you. And you may be asking what so many Penn students have so often asked me:

Can I really risk taking some ridiculously hard course that intrigues me? Can I afford to immerse myself in a very demanding extracurricular activity just because I love it? If I'm really as smart as Penn and my parents thought I was to get admitted, shouldn't I use my years at Penn prudently to chart a fail-safe, straight-A path to career success beyond graduation? If there's another way to success in life, why is it so hard to find and why can't I stop obsessing about my future career path?

Here's what my first-hand experience and observation can offer you by way of a response. First, it is as normal as can be to fret about your future. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. And it is perfectly rational to prepare yourselves for a career, or job, or grad school while you are at Penn.

*But*—and the real test of whether you realize your potential at Penn is the extent you can guide yourself by this *But*: It is not smart to focus exclusively on career goals. In fact, I would go as far as to say it is foolish. Letting your worries about job security get the best of you is just about the most wasteful thing a talented Penn student can do.

For a start, more often than not, it's counterproductive: The best professional schools, the best graduate schools, and the most innovative businesses all prefer broadly educated students who have developed their creativity and leadership potential in unconventional ways. So, this is not the time to measure yourselves for corner offices, white coats, or pin-striped suits. This is a time for unleashing your creative energies and stretching your aesthetic, moral, scientific, and humanistic understandings.

I remember two college classmates who went out on a blind date to the movies early in their first year. It was 1967—decades before computer dating, Facebook, and YouTube. You know from Neil Shubin: the late Devonian Period, more commonly known as the age of the Beatles, Dylan, and the Grateful Dead.

On the subway ride downtown, the young man asked his date what she wanted to do after graduating. "I'd like to teach high school math," she replied. Not exactly a great conversation starter. But who could blame her? She had chosen to major in math because she had excelled in math and science.

"What about you?" she asked.

The young man replied, without missing a beat: "I want to be the Chief Theater Critic for the *New York Times*."

And what became of that math major?

You're looking at her!

I still enjoy solving math puzzles in my spare time, but had I not challenged myself as a freshman by taking an advanced Spanish lit course and a challenging political philosophy course, along with physics and math, I would never have published a prize-winning research paper or found the courage to switch to an interdisciplinary Social Science major. Had I not switched majors, I would not have found my true calling—to be a University professor, a scholar of democracy and education, and President of Penn.

On the road to Commencement, many of you will switch majors—and perhaps like me, also undergo a major academic conversion. But even if you are among the few, like my blind date, who actually wind up achieving your original goals, you will excel to the extent that you do not stick to the prevailing script. Those who reach the summit of their chosen callings travel unconventional paths. My blind date did not major in theater, he majored in history and literature.

As a rule, the most successful Penn students diversify their undergraduate portfolios in unusual and risky ways.

Like the recent College graduate who majored in health and societies, took up Italian for the first time, fell under Dante's spell, and developed a deep interest in bio-informatics and anthropology. He just started medical school.

Or the Wharton student who was so inspired by an advanced global health course in medicine and nursing that she founded Wharton's Social Impact Consulting Group. She is now a rising star at Google.

Or the management and technology major who helped bring safe drinking water to a village in Honduras. He came back to launch a company that is developing sustainable solutions for delivering drinkable water to the developing world.

Or the eight Nursing students who went to Botswana to fulfill their community health clinical requirements. They are seeing first-hand the critical link between nursing science and the well-being of the world.

Ask yourselves: What do all of these Penn students share in common besides success? They manifest two characteristics of successful and happy people: Integrity and Courage.

They have the integrity to heed their inner voices to pursue what brings them the greatest joy and satisfaction.

They have the courage and integrity to steer clear of what sociologist David Reisman called *The Lonely Crowd*—the mass of other-directed people who take all their cues from outside pressures.

Inner-directed students show the courage of test pilots by pushing the envelope of learning as far as they can.

Flying at high speed is more daunting than walking or even running—but it's also much more exhilarating and rewarding. You are not just covering a lot of well-charted territory. You are taking off to become the leaders and visionaries that our world most needs.

By the time you land, you will have discovered who you really are and what you're really made of.

Ben Franklin said "there are three things extremely hard: steel, diamonds and to know oneself." In order to master the art of knowing yourself, you need to make the most of Franklin's University—where academic integrity is always the rule and audacious intellectual inquiry is always in season.

Yes, you will become the best class ever to enter Penn—not because of your grades or your high SAT scores, or your impressive GPAs, but by virtue of *your* integrity and your courage. We see in you distinctively talented, inner-directed individuals who have the right stuff to learn and to lead, not to yield to the crowd. *That* is why we admitted you to Penn.

Four years from now, when you gather again as an entire class for your graduation, I hope you will look back on this Convocation as the moment when your inner pilot flashed the thumbs-up sign. For me, this will be the moment when I gave all you clearance to take your first test flights.

Members of the great Class of 2012: Enjoy the view and welcome to Penn.

*(Provost Ron Daniels' remarks are on page 5, past insert)*

*Below are the remarks given by Provost Ronald J. Daniels to the Class of 2012 on September 2, 2008.*

## Risking Imagination

*by Ron Daniels*

Thank you, Dr. Gutmann, and, welcome to the great Class of 2012!

By the accident of your birth, you are entering college in an extraordinarily pivotal year in American history.

As you embark upon the next four years of your life, this country is gearing up for the presidential election that will shape the next four years of *its* life. Many of you will be participating in the democratic process for the first time, and—if the polls hold true—in much greater numbers than ever before.

You are now—in the eyes of the state at least—adults. For many of you, who still vividly remember your first day of kindergarten, this may come as something of a shock.

And understandably so, for the larger transition you're making, in our intellectual community and beyond, is both gradual and somewhat nerve-wracking—but I hope you'll trust me that it's going to be immensely rewarding.

In the first line of *Metamorphosis*, the Roman poet Ovid declares his intention to "speak about bodies changed into new forms." Throughout his narrative, which invokes classical myths to tell the story of humankind, Ovid frequently acknowledges the "uncertainty" that accompanies transformation.

I suspect many of you are experiencing that kind of uncertainty this very moment. What will I major in? Who will I become close to? How will I change and what will I become?

But rather than let your anxiety consume you, I invite you to sit back and *revel* a bit. There is no need to rush. Allow yourself to stretch out your process of transformation over the course of the next four years—at least. Think of college as the time designated for your own personal metamorphosis—a phase that is uncertain, yes, but also filled with the exhilaration of confronting the unplanned, the unpredictable, and the unknown.

I am confident that my faculty colleagues will back me up.

They know first-hand that perplexity is often, indeed almost always, a prerequisite for creative insight and understanding.

As scholars, they are prone to challenge, to agonize, to investigate, and, if they are lucky, through this process, to discover and learn. But only in an environment of open-mindedness and risk can new knowledge truly be created.

Take, for example, Political Science Professor Diana Mutz, who recently found that the "in-your-face" nature of cable news reporting reinforces a polarization of public opinion.

Or what about Nursing Professor Linda Aiken, who more than ten years ago discovered that decentralized, nurse-friendly hospitals have significantly lower mortality rates!

Then there's the Wharton faculty, who recently produced a special report on the subprime lending crisis that reviewed our current economic situation with a mind to preventing future meltdowns.

And in SEAS, there's our new Penn Integrates Knowledge recruit, Robert Ghrist, a mathematician and engineer who has pioneered innovative tools to find and remedy gaping holes in seemingly impregnable security networks.

Without a willingness to look at problems anew, without the commitment to ask hard, unsettling questions, and without the courage to take calculated risks, none of these advances would have been possible.

So take a page from your professors, and join with us on a journey of sometimes terrifying, sometimes exhilarating discovery.

In many ways, I believe that you are better prepared for this enterprise than your parents and teachers were.

You have come of age in an era in which it is possible to take extraordinary imaginative leaps every day, just by logging on to your computer. A page posted by a friend on Facebook can link you to a blog post about oil prices, which can in turn link you to an important new book about alternate sources of energy, which, in turn, can lead you to undertake advocacy in support of the truths and ideals that you have come to value. The world of knowledge, and the power that it unleashes, has been literally at your fingertips ever since you learned to type.

But for all its infinite possibilities, we know that access to the Internet can also make us lazy and complacent. Too often, we find ourselves relying on

the standard portals. We go to Wikipedia more than we should, and we fail to explore other, less accessible, but ultimately more authoritative sources.

And, of course, included in these alternative sources of ideas are your two best sets of study aids—your faculty and your fellow students.

You came to Penn because of them. And for good reason.

Your professors are distinguished experts in everything from robotics to the psychology of ethnic conflict. Your classmates are artists, athletes, and activists. Your expansive curricular requirements and diverse College House communities—now celebrating their tenth anniversary year—will immerse you in a life of intellectual challenge. By engaging regularly with so many different disciplines and people, and by feeding off the creative energy in the air, I wager you'll be tempted, more than once, to press vigorously outside your comfort zone.

Class of 2012: give in to that temptation!

Rally yourselves to take economics or philosophy or art history for the first time, to travel abroad for the first time, and yes, to vote for the first time. Each will require confidence and a leap of faith—and each carries a certain degree of risk.

In the nineteenth century, the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson urged young intellectuals to give themselves over to the risk of imagination. When we do, he wrote, "new passages are open to us in nature, the mind flows into and through things hardest and highest, and the metamorphosis is possible."

As you embark on these next four years, I hope you will keep these words in mind. Let Penn be the site of your metamorphosis. Surrender yourself to new passages—to uncertainty—and you'll find there's no limit to your potential, no end to what you can accomplish. Bon voyage.

*Below are excerpts of remarks given by GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp, at the Reception for Graduate and Professional Students, on September 3, 2008.*

### Bridging Gaps

As your university-wide student government, GAPSA sponsors academic and social/networking events, provides funding for individual student grants and student groups, and represents your collective concerns to the trustees, faculty, administrators and staff.

We have a 12-member executive board and we have about a 50-member general assembly with representatives from all 12 Penn schools. Together we provide a voice for the more than 12,000 graduate and professional students on campus. We narrowly outnumber the undergrads here! So once again, welcome!

You are now a part of that very important population of seasoned students who play an integral role in shaping and holding together our University and West Philadelphia community. Together we graduate and professional students bridge an intellectual and generational gap between the faculty and the undergraduates, and a residential gap between campus and the rest of Philadelphia in every direction!

As a group we are cool enough to connect with the undergrads and yet experienced and learned enough to engage Penn's brilliant world-class faculty. We are culturally savvy enough and daring enough to enjoy life both on campus and out in the city around us. We are therefore in the enviable position to teach and to learn from both faculty and freshmen, from both lecturers and locals.

Don't neglect your student peers. It is perhaps these individuals from whom you will learn the most during the upcoming years.

Take advantage of the many resources offered by the University including the Graduate Student Center, GAPSA, your school-specific student governments and the many centers. Make the most of your Penn education by taking every opportunity to think critically and collaboratively, across disciplines and across stereotypic boundaries.

I'd like to introduce you to the President Amy Gutmann, who has been a leader in removing boundaries, making graduate and professional education at Penn more accessible, more intellectually integrated, and more collaborative than ever.

## Twentieth Annual Academic Career Conference for PhD Students and Postdocs

Since the first Academic Career Conference 20 years ago, more than 80 faculty members and administrators from Penn and area institutions, have participated in it or in its spring component, Faculty Conversations on the Academic Job Search and Academic Life. Penn graduate students and postdoctoral fellows benefit from faculty, administrators and advanced doctoral students who share their time and advice on preparing for academic careers. The Academic Career Conference will include a variety of programs and workshops for those whose career goal is a faculty position.

The Twentieth Annual Academic Career Conference for PhD Students and Postdocs—Fall 2008 is co-sponsored by Career Services and the Associate Provost for Education.

### Going on the Academic Job Market: Advice from Faculty Members

Penn faculty members discuss applying for positions, preparing for interviews and understanding what search committees do.

*Humanities and Social Sciences*, Friday, September 19, noon-1:15 p.m., Ben Franklin Room, Houston Hall

- Susan Yoon, assistant professor of education, University of Pennsylvania
- Jessica Goldberg, assistant professor of history, University of Pennsylvania

*Science and Engineering*, Monday, September 22, 4-5:15 p.m., Golkin Room, Houston Hall

- Shu Yang, Skirkanich Assistant Professor, Materials Science and Engineering, University of Pennsylvania
- Charles Branas, associate professor of epidemiology, department of biostatistics and epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania

### The Insider's Guide to Graduate Education: A Program for First- and Second-Year PhD Students

Tuesday, October 14, 5:30-6:45 p.m. (reception begins at 5 p.m.), Ben Franklin Room, Houston Hall

- Andrew Binns, associate provost for education, University of Pennsylvania, will introduce and moderate a panel of five advanced doctoral students/recent PhDs who will give first-hand advice on being a successful graduate student, including getting off to a good start, choosing a committee, staying on track and completing one's program.

### Outcomes Assessment: National Context and the Future of College Teaching

Monday, November 3, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Ben Franklin Room, Houston Hall

- Robert Nelson, associate director, Provost's Office, University of Pennsylvania

### Teaching Careers in Different Kinds of Institutions

Thursday, November 20, 4:30-5:45 p.m., Ben Franklin Room, Houston Hall

- Benjamin Olshin, assistant professor of philosophy, history, and history of science, The University of the Arts
- Jamie Taylor, assistant professor of English, Bryn Mawr College
- Scott Van Bramer, professor and chair of Chemistry, Widener University

Please RSVP for speaker programs to Emily Rollins at [rollins@upenn.edu](mailto:rollins@upenn.edu).

### Workshops by Career Services Staff

- *Preparing Written Materials for the Academic Job Search*; Monday, September 15, noon-

1 p.m., Graduate Student Center, Room 305

- *Talking About Your Research*; Monday, October 6, noon-1 p.m., Graduate Student Center, Room 305

- *Talking About Your Teaching*; Tuesday, October 7, noon-1 p.m., McNeil 97

- *Finding the Right Postdoc for You: Advice from Current Postdocs*; Thursday, November 13, noon-1 p.m., Location: TBA

- *Preparing for Conference/Convention Interviews*; Tuesday, December 2, noon-1 p.m., McNeil 97

—Julie Miller Vick,  
Senior Associate Director, Career Services

## Heart Health

Keeping your heart fit is one of the most important things you can do to improve your chances of good health throughout your life. These workshops, led by physicians and health experts from the University of Pennsylvania Health System, will cover the facts and answer your questions about maintaining a heart-healthy lifestyle. This special fall series is sponsored by Human Resources. Pre-registration is required. You are welcome to bring a brown bag lunch to the sessions.

For more information and to register, visit [www.hr.upenn.edu](http://www.hr.upenn.edu) (click on "Course Catalog" at the top of the screen, then select "Health Promotions" from the "Browse by Category" menu) or contact Human Resources at [suz.smith@upenn.edu](mailto:suz.smith@upenn.edu) or (215) 898-5116.

*How to Recognize a Heart Attack: You'd Be Surprised*; September 16; noon-1 p.m.; free. The signs and symptoms of a heart attack are sometimes far from clear and obvious. This workshop will help give you the skills and knowledge you need to be able to recognize some of the lesser known signs of a heart attack. You should leave the workshop with vital health information and know-how for you and/or your family members. This workshop is sponsored by Human Resources and will be led by Dr. Joseph Carver, a cardiologist from the Abramson Cancer Center.

—Division of Human Resources

## One Step Ahead

Security & Privacy  
Made Simple

Another tip in a series provided by the  
Offices of Information Systems & Computing  
and Audit, Compliance & Privacy.

### Computrace Best Practices

In recent years, the use of mobile computing devices, including laptop computers, has increased dramatically. Because such devices can easily be lost or stolen—putting both the device itself and data stored on it at risk—there has been a corresponding increase in adoption of security measures. At Penn, one security measure that is commonly used, and in some cases is required, is installation of Computrace software ("Computrace") on laptops.

Computrace software has two major features. First, it allows authorized individuals to track the location of the laptop (or other mobile computing device) by causing the device to "call in" via the Internet at periodic intervals. With assistance from law enforcement officials, the information "called in" can often be used to find the location of the stolen device. In addition, Computrace offers a feature that can enable remote wiping of sensitive data if a device is lost or stolen. This capability can often protect the privacy of confidential data stored on such devices.

Best Practices have recently been developed to promote efficient and effective use of Computrace by Penn constituents. These recommendations can be viewed at [www.upenn.edu/privacy](http://www.upenn.edu/privacy), click on Computrace Best Practices.

To receive weekly OneStepAhead tips via e-mail, send e-mail to [listserv@lists.upenn.edu](mailto:listserv@lists.upenn.edu) with the following text in the body of the message: sub one-step-ahead <your name>.

For additional tips, see the One Step Ahead link on the Information Security website: [www.upenn.edu/computing/security/](http://www.upenn.edu/computing/security/).

The following is a traffic advisory from the University's Division of Public Safety.

### PGW Construction along 3500 Block of Spruce Street

Starting on Tuesday, September 9, 2008, and continuing for approximately two weeks, PGW will be laying piping down from the 3500 block of Spruce Street in front of Houston Hall to 36th Street. Therefore the north side of Spruce (heading westbound) from Houston Hall (3500 block) to 36th Street will be restricted. Construction staff will be assisting traffic in an alternating pattern through this area. Construction will be occurring from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. **Note:** 36th Street will not be affected.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Dear Penn Community,

Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. We look forward to our continued work together as we partner with our neighbors in the surrounding community.

Thank you for your support in our efforts to perform community service. To volunteer, contact me at (215) 898-2020 or send an e-mail to [sammapp@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:sammapp@pobox.upenn.edu).

—Isabel Mapp, Penn VIPS, Netter Center for Community Partnerships

**Join the Penn WorkPlace Mentoring Program:** Middle school students visit campus once a month to gain exposure to college life and careers. Volunteer to mentor a local youth in this on-campus mentoring program. Program runs September-May. Training provided.

**Volunteers Needed: Campaign for Working Families**, a non-profit agency in Philadelphia that assists low-income working families through free tax preparation needs volunteers. Many members of the Penn community have found volunteering with them a rewarding experience in the past and they look forward to connecting with more people during the coming tax season (January to April). Contact: Elly Porter-Webb, Campaign for Working Families, 1207 Chestnut St. 5th Fl., Philadelphia, PA 19107, [epwebb@gpuac.org](mailto:epwebb@gpuac.org), (215) 851-1759.

## Celebration Marking 100 Years of Social Work Education at Penn

The School of Social Policy & Practice's Centennial Celebration begins with a convocation on *Thursday, September 25* at 3 p.m. at the Zellerbach Theatre in the Annenberg Center.

Ralph Nader will deliver the keynote address, *Social Justice in the Post-Bush Era*. Mr. Nader has spent 40 years advocating for change, exposing problems and helping create several public-interest agencies. He is a world-renowned author, consumer advocate, and political activist. In 1965, he published *Unsafe at Any Speed*, a best-selling book that demonstrated unsafe engineering of many American automobiles, especially the Chevrolet Corvair produced by General Motors. Mr. Nader is widely recognized as the founder of the consumer rights movement. He played a key role in the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, the Freedom of Information Act and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Mr. Nader ran for president of the United States three times (1996, 2000 and 2004). He has also authored, co-authored, and edited dozens of books on an array of public interest topics, including *Crashing the Party*, *The Good Fight*, and, most recently, *The Seventeen Traditions*.

"For 100 years, the School of Social Policy & Practice has produced a generation of 'thought leaders'—clinicians, agency leaders and policymakers," Dr. Richard J. Gelles, dean, said. "Ralph Nader is an effective social-change agent—and we are able to create social change because of the commitment of our students and our faculty, programs and research."

Following the keynote address, there will be an alumni panel discussion, *Achieving Social Justice*, as well as a reception with light fare at 5 p.m. Panel moderator, Dr. Carol Wilson Spigner, is the Kenneth L.M. Pray Distinguished Professor at the School of Social Policy & Practice. From 1994 to 1999, she was Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services, where she

was responsible for the administration of federal child welfare programs. She has been a senior associate at the Center for the Study of Social Policy and a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (where she directed the National Child Welfare Leadership Center) and the University of California, Los Angeles. She began her career working for the Los Angeles County Departments of Adoption and Probation.

### Distinguished Alumni Panelists

**David G. Gil**, MSW 1958, DSW 1963, professor of social policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University since 1964. Born in Vienna, Austria, he left as a refugee after the 1938 German occupation and has lived and worked in Sweden, Palestine/Israel and the USA. Writings include: *Violence Against Children* (1970), *Unravelling Social Policy* (1973), *The Challenge of Social Equality* (1976), *Beyond the Jungle* (1979), and *Confronting Injustice and Oppression* (1998). He is also a social and political activist, co-chair of the Socialist Party USA, 1995-1999 and president, Association for Humanist Sociology, 1981.

**William Johnston-Walsh**, MSW 1989, deputy secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Aging. He has wide ranging experience with issues that affect older Pennsylvanians: National Legislative Representative for Pennsylvania AARP, Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, responsible for consumer fraud education and the protection of elderly consumers.

**Darlene C. Marshall-Lee**, MSW 2005, corporate director of North Philadelphia Health Systems Social Service Department. Her lifetime dream is to create and become the executive director of "WHOW" (Women Helping Other Women). She is also an addiction survivor.

**Jenna Mehnert**, MSW 1995, advocate, executive director, Pennsylvania chapter of the NASW. She was instrumental in the passage of House Bill 1693, signed into law by the Governor of Pennsylvania that creates "title" protection for individuals with social work degrees.

## Teaching with New Media

On Friday, September 26, Penn faculty, instructors, and graduate students are invited to a symposium on *Teaching with New Media*, at Weigle Information Commons in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library. Find out how new media can enhance student learning. Discover new media through faculty insights, hands-on exploration of four technologies and an overview of trends.

9:30 a.m.—*Hands-on Session 1: (Pick one)*

• *Mashup Movies (iMovie)*

Jacqui Sadashige, Critical Writing Program

• *Creating Web Resources (PennTags)*

Peter Decherney, English & Cinema Studies

10:45 a.m.—*Hands-on Session 2: (Pick one)*

• *Visual Literacy and Posters (PhotoShop and PowerPoint)*

Andrew Lamas, Urban Studies

• *Comic Books and Graphics (Comic Life)*

Louise Krasniewicz, Penn Museum

Noon—luncheon speaker:

• *Stretching the Limits: New Media and Today's Undergraduate*, Pat Aufderheide, Center for Social Media, American University

Register online at [www.library.upenn.edu/forms/wic/newmediasymposium.html](http://www.library.upenn.edu/forms/wic/newmediasymposium.html)

## CLASSIFIEDS—UNIVERSITY

### RESEARCH

The UPHS/Division of Endocrinology seeks **women at least 60 years of age** who have been told they need treatment for osteoporosis or who have had a bone fracture from osteoporosis for a research study. Women who are interested will be evaluated by bone densitometry and MRI. Women who qualify will receive treatment with an osteoporosis medication for two years and compensation for travel. Please call Terry Scattergood RN, MSN at (215) 898-5664 for more information.

For information call (215) 898-5274 or visit

[www.upenn.edu/almanac/faqs.html#ad](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/faqs.html#ad).

Almanac is not responsible for contents of classified ad material.

**Deadline:** Submissions for the Update are due every Monday for the following Tuesday's issue. The deadline for the October AT PENN calendar is *Tuesday, September 16*. For information see [www.upenn.edu/almanac/calendar/calddead-real.html](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/calendar/calddead-real.html).

## 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 **August 25-31, 2008**. Also reported were 22 crimes against property (including 19 thefts and 3 burglaries). Full reports are available at: [www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v55/n03/crreport.html](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v55/n03/crreport.html). Prior weeks' reports are also online. —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 **August 25-31, 2008**. The University Police actively patrol 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 (215) 898-4482.

08/25/08	5:00 PM	3401 Spruce St	Offenders issued city code violation for skateboarding on private property
08/26/08	7:28 PM	4100 Walnut St	Complainant robbed by 2 unknown males
08/28/08	7:05 AM	400 University Ave	Offender cited for disorderly conduct
08/29/08	4:10 PM	200 40th St	Male wanted on warrant/Arrest
08/29/08	11:30 PM	228A S 41st St	Male cited for public urination
08/30/08	1:20 AM	221 41st St	Male cited for public urination
08/30/08	7:12 PM	3900 Spruce St	Male wanted on warrant/Arrest
08/31/08	1:46 AM	3817 Spruce St	Male cited for disorderly conduct

### 18th District Report

9 incidents with 3 arrests (including 4 aggravated assaults and 5 robberies) were reported between **August 25-31, 2008** by the 18th District covering the Schuylkill River to 49th St. & Market St. to Woodland Ave.

08/26/08	7:17 PM	4111 Walnut St	Robbery
08/27/08	3:30 PM	4814 Market St	Robbery/Arrest
08/28/08	12:50 AM	4700 Springfield Ave	Robbery/Arrest
08/29/08	4:15 PM	4834 Spruce St	Aggravated Assault
08/30/08	5:08 PM	100 47th St	Robbery
08/30/08	6:14 PM	4931 Catherine St	Aggravated Assault
08/30/08	6:40 PM	4300 Chester Ave	Aggravated Assault
08/30/08	10:00 PM	5006 Spruce St	Aggravated Assault/Arrest
08/31/08	12:06 AM	4420 Larchwood Ave	Robbery



*Almanac*

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The University of Pennsylvania's journal of record, opinion and news is published Tuesdays during the academic year, and as needed during summer and holiday breaks. Its electronic editions on the Internet (accessible through the PennWeb) include HTML and Acrobat versions of the print edition, and interim information may be posted in electronic-only form. Guidelines for readers and contributors are available on request and online.

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The University of Pennsylvania values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam Era Veteran or disabled veteran in the administration of educational policies, programs or activities; admissions policies; scholarship and loan awards; athletic, or other University administered programs or employment. Questions or complaints regarding this policy should be directed to the Executive Director, Office of Affirmative Action, 3600 Chestnut Street, 2nd floor, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6106 or (215) 898-6993 (Voice) or (215) 898-7803 (TDD).

## Much Ado About Nothing—Or Something? Using Technology in Your Teaching

Zachary Lesser

This past spring I had the opportunity to teach a large lecture course on Shakespeare, while also taking the Teaching with Technology seminar run by the Center for Teaching and Learning. I had never used much technology in my classrooms and was hoping to incorporate more of it, whatever “it” was. What became quickly apparent was that the key questions for me would have comparatively little to do with how to get up and running with the technology, since it’s relatively easy to use the various tools and the instructional technology staff at Penn are happy to help. Instead, the key question for me became how to use pedagogical technology not merely for the sake of doing so, but to advance the particular goals of an English class. I went into the Teaching with Technology seminar looking to incorporate more technology into my pedagogy, but I came away thinking far more about pedagogy than about technology.

Most English classes are built around discussion and the close analysis of texts, and in this format it can be difficult to find room for technology. In a typical class, I stand at the front of the room with the book in my hand, directing the students to the relevant passage, and they follow along in their own books as I lead discussions about Shakespeare’s use of language, his plotting, his use of generic conventions, and so forth. I have a general outline of the issues I want to cover, but the class is also guided by the path the discussion takes, which varies each time I teach and so precludes having a set sequence of PowerPoint slides.

Attempting to teach with technology merely because it seems like the thing to do can lead to disappointing results. A few years ago, I tried to implement Blackboard discussions into my courses, thinking that this was an ideal way to keep students thinking about the texts throughout the week. But the discussion threads quickly petered out, and I realized the problem: I had never really determined why I wanted students to continue the discussion on their own time and how that discussion would relate to the classroom. I hadn’t integrated the online discussions into the true goals of the course, instead merely requiring that the students post something online each week. Without a clear sense of the purpose of the assignment, students quickly realized—more quickly than I did—that there wasn’t much point to it.

Teaching Shakespeare in lecture rather than seminar format did mean that, for very pragmatic reasons, I would need to rely on PowerPoint. For one thing, students at the back of the room would have a difficult time reading my writing on the board. For another, without discussion, I figured that the students would need something other than the sound of my voice to keep them focused. And since I knew exactly where the lecture was going, it was relatively easy to design a PowerPoint presentation for each class that outlined the key issues I’d be raising and drew students’ attention to particular passages in the plays. But beyond the pragmatics of students’ eyesight or my own class prep, did pedagogical technology really have a substantive role to play in my teaching?

I quickly realized that PowerPoint is the perfect medium for introducing students to the relationship between literature, painting, sculpture, and other forms of culture—connections that work very well with Shakespeare because so many of the relevant cultural issues and traditions alive in the assigned texts have vivid analogues in Renaissance visual arts. As I saw how well this approach meshed with PowerPoint, I soon began to prepare each lecture by looking for visual parallels to the plays. When teach-

ing *The Tempest*, for instance, I discuss Prospero’s accusation that Caliban tried to rape Miranda in relation to other representations of rape as foundational to empire: showing students Nicolas Poussin’s painting, *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, productively reframes the question of Caliban’s supposed “barbarism” by introducing the history of rape underlying the supposed “civilization” of Rome. The ability of PowerPoint to seamlessly integrate text and image allowed me to take a much more interdisciplinary approach to Shakespeare and his culture.

As you can see from this example, the technology I used was not very sophisticated. Part of what I learned over the course of the semester, however, was that the most basic technological tools remained the most central and effective. I found that avoiding the temptation to add a lot of bells and whistles and, instead, sticking with the simple, keeps the technology subordinate to the actual work of the course, even as it expands the course’s possibilities (and saves the hours that can be wasted playing around with PowerPoint’s fancier features).

Since I did nearly all of the talking in lecture, I also wanted my TAs to use Blackboard discussion groups, but this time in ways more organically connected to the underlying goals of the course. By having one student post a couple questions to guide the week’s recitation, for example, my TAs could get a sense relatively early in the week of what the students were interested in and what needed further explanation. My TAs planned their recitations around the Blackboard postings, finding ways to guide discussion toward the topics that they felt needed to be covered while rooting that discussion in the students’ questions. As a result, the discussions broadened and deepened the students’ engagement with the texts and with each others’ ideas.

My TAs also discovered more innovative ways to use the online discussion: they had students post images of how Othello has been costumed over the centuries; they asked students to comment on YouTube clips of different productions of a scene from *Merchant of Venice*; they had students compare divergent reviews of a film of *Hamlet* from the online archives of various newspapers and comment on the unarticulated values or expectations that underwrote these different judgments. Such creative assignments helped to fulfill one of the course’s goals: getting students to think about how performance choices can create interpretations of the plays. In lecture, I found little time for performance histories; Blackboard allowed students do some of that work themselves and bring what they had learned to the discussion. Later in the semester, students staged a scene themselves—implementing their own directorial interpretations—and some chose to film their productions and post them on Blackboard for their classmates to analyze.

In these ways, the technology ultimately disappeared into the work of the course, and that was the key to its success. When the students—or, perhaps more importantly, their professor—are paying attention to the technology itself, it’s usually a sign that I haven’t given enough thought to why I want to use it, to why it’s really an advance over the tried-and-true forms of pedagogy that are still the vast majority of what I do in class. And it’s usually a good indication that the students won’t get very engaged with the assignment, which could perfectly well be done the old-fashioned way. In the end, I do use more technology in my classroom, but if things are going well, you wouldn’t know it.

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Dr. Zachary Lesser is an assistant professor of English.

*This essay continues the series that began in the fall of 1994 as the joint creation of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Lindback Society for Distinguished Teaching.*

*See [www.upenn.edu/almanac/teach/teachall.html](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/teach/teachall.html) for the previous essays.*