

***A Message to the Penn Community***

from

Amy Gutmann, President

Wendell Pritchett, Provost

At Penn, we are strongly committed to ensuring the success of our students on campus and beyond. To advance this mission for our undergraduate community – and after robust consultations with student leaders, College House faculty and staff, undergraduate deans, trustees, student advisors, and other campus partners – we are pleased to announce the creation and implementation of a new Second Year Experience Program.

This year, the Program will begin to offer expanded programming and new events designed specifically for second-year students, both across campus and in individual College Houses. Starting with the incoming Class of 2024, the Program will house all Penn sophomores in a two-year College House system. Just as the opening of the Quad more than a century ago profoundly and positively impacted our University, the Second Year Experience Program will help shape the social, intellectual, and cultural connections that will distinguish the Penn undergraduate experience for generations of students to come.

We believe that a two-year College House system will measurably strengthen the sense of community among our first- and second-year students – promoting students' achievement and well-being, enhancing support for students' academic and social lives, and increasing opportunities to engage with diverse programs and viewpoints. Housing all sophomores on campus also will eliminate a major source of stress and anxiety for first-year students, who have told us that they feel pressured to consider second-year housing options during their first semester as Penn students.

Our new Second Year Experience will include special programs designed specifically to address the unique needs of second-year students. These programs will encompass not only successful ongoing programs such as the Majors and More Dinners and the Wharton Sophomore Experience but also sophomore-specific courses, celebrations, and social events, such as the new Sophomore Day that was held just a few weeks ago.

Penn's ability to support a full two-year College House system will be made possible with the opening of New College House West in fall 2021, which will increase capacity for an additional 450 upperclass students on campus. In addition to New College House West, we will continue making major investments in Penn's existing College Houses in the years ahead.

Penn's 12 College Houses, each with its own focus and traditions, offer vibrant opportunities for self-discovery and enrichment. As living and learning communities of undergraduates, faculty, staff and graduate students, they help bridge the academic life of the classroom with our living spaces. There is evidence that students engaged in College House-type programs adjust better to college life, develop healthier habits, engage in fewer high-risk behaviors, and perform better academically than their peers living off-campus. The 2017 Task Force on a Safe and Responsible Campus Community outlined these and related opportunities to better support student wellness and augment campus living and learning. A structured, community-oriented residential experience helps students develop smart, sound habits that will serve them well long after graduation.

In the months ahead, we look forward to sharing more details about our new Second Year Experience Program and Penn's transition to a two-year College House system. We are confident that these initiatives will further Penn's commitment to helping all students thrive as members of our Penn community and in their lives after graduation.

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