



**Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community**  
**Final Report**

For Interim President J. Larry Jameson  
May 30, 2024

## Table of Contents

Section I: Introduction .....	1
Section II: Preamble.....	1
Section III: Understanding Our Community.....	4
Section IV: Recommendations.....	7
A. Defining and Identifying Core Penn Values .....	8
A Pilot Values Statement for Penn .....	8
Recommendations.....	11
B. Education and Research .....	12
Recommendations.....	13
C. Community and Dialogue .....	15
Recommendations.....	15
D. Broad Recommendations .....	18
Recommendations.....	18
Section V: Conclusion.....	19
Appendices.....	21
Appendix A: Charge .....	21
Appendix B: Commission Membership.....	22
Appendix C: Experts Who Met with the Commission.....	24
Appendix D: Listening Sessions.....	25
Appendix E: Emergent Themes from Listening Sessions and Survey Responses .....	26
Appendix F: Values .....	27
Appendix G: Open Expression Brochure.....	40

## Section I: Introduction

The Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community was convened and charged on December 20, 2023, by Interim President J. Larry Jameson to address bias, discrimination, and hate on campus as Penn strives to be a community that leads with care and compassion.

The formation of this Commission was catalyzed by events (and responses to those events) that occurred both on and off campus during the Fall 2023 semester. These events include the 2023 Palestine Writes Festival, a literary festival that took place on Penn's campus in September, the Hamas terror attack on Israel on October 7, and Israel's military response against Hamas in Gaza, all of which has resulted in the senseless deaths of innocent Palestinian and Israeli citizens. The on-campus responses to these events have included controversy, protests, accusations, counteraccusations, and, this spring, encampments and their removal by the police, culminating in widespread concern for the well-being and cohesion of the Penn community. Time has played a magnified and often unhelpful role in moving the status quo simultaneously in two directions, sharpening differences in our community. Ultimately, the University's ability to carry out its primary mission—the pursuit, creation, and dissemination of knowledge—has been questioned.

In response to this unfolding of events, the Commission was charged to:

- *Listen and Understand*: Engage broadly and deeply to better understand how Penn students, staff, and faculty experience hate and discrimination and how they believe Penn can move towards being a broadly inclusive community.
- *Consider What it Means to be a Penn Citizen*: Examine what it means to be a responsible and engaged Penn Citizen and recommend strategies for how to foster such behaviors and norms.
- *Recommend Strategies to Build and Strengthen Community*: Recommend strategies about how to reinforce and strengthen Penn's sense of community through education and engagement.
- *Recommend Strategies to Address and Counter Hate*: Recommend strategies about how to support Penn community members who have been impacted by hate and how best to counter hate on campus.

The full charge can be found in Appendix A.

The Commission is co-chaired by Vijay Kumar, Nemirovsky Family Dean and Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics for Penn Engineering, and Katharine Strunk, Dean and George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education for the Graduate School of Education. The Commission consists of nineteen members, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and Trustees, and two ex-officio members. A full list of the Commission's membership can be found in Appendix B.

## Section II: Preamble

The Commission began our work in earnest in January of 2024, addressing the first and second elements of the charge: 1) to listen to members of the Penn community in order to better understand the ways in which hate may have impacted their experiences at Penn, and 2) to assess their

perspectives of what it means to be a Penn citizen, including gaining an understanding of the values the University should hold as core to its mission and operation, and exploring ideas to help Penn foster the kinds of practices and knowledge critical to ensuring the ideal Penn community and experience.



Figure 1: The Work of the Commission

To do this, the Commission asked experts from across campus to speak with us on topics ranging from community wellness, religious life, experiences of diversity and inclusion, safety, open expression, and education (see Appendix C for the list of campus experts who spoke with the Commission). We also held nineteen listening sessions, both with representatives and leaders from various campus groups and open sessions made available to students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and faculty (see Appendix D for the list of groups with whom the Commission met). We also welcomed written comments from community members through both an email address and a survey instrument.

While the Commission was formed largely in response to the serious divisions that emerged among members of the Penn community over the conflict between Israel and Hamas and the immediate need to address concerns related to antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Muslim hate, the University’s administration also recognized that over the years, society and campus have been impacted by other forms of hate as well. Therefore, the Commission was charged with addressing hate and intolerance more broadly, and the Commission’s deliberations focused on recommendations that could overcome bias, discrimination, and hate to further strengthen the Penn community. This does not discount the evolving and increasingly tense environment on campus during the 2024 school year, which has caused immense pain and anguish to members of Penn’s Palestinian, Israeli, Jewish, and Muslim communities. Events continued to unfold that escalated and sharpened divisions on campus as we were trying to hear people out. While we recognized that responses to issues could calcify by not being addressed when they occurred, the Commission’s charge was more expansive than the current conflict, encompassing the ways in which hate has impacted members of the Penn community over the years and ways we can build a better future for Penn.

Although the Commission’s charge was relatively broad, there were limits to our remit. Perhaps most importantly, the Commission was *not* tasked with recommending substantial revisions to the University’s open expression and/or disciplinary policies, nor with taking on the specifics of antisemitism on campus apart from considering it as one of several forms of hate and intolerance

that have no home at Penn. We are aware of and look forward to the reports and recommendations of other groups convened to address these issues, and we hope that the values we have surfaced as fundamental to Penn’s culture are reflected in their deliberations.

The Commission met together for approximately four hours each week, discussing what we learned and thinking deeply about how these early learnings should inform our recommendations to Interim President Jameson. Throughout our deliberations, we kept in mind the University’s new strategic vision, *In Principle and Practice*, which envisions Penn as an anchored, interwoven, inventive, and engaged university—a place that values and relies on the diversity of our community to cultivate thinkers and leaders who push boundaries in pursuit of excellence, and importantly, in service of the betterment of society—local, national, and global. We split into subcommittees to develop recommendations in four major areas: education and training, research, open expression, and values and community. The subcommittees regularly presented their work to the full Commission, leading conversation and receiving feedback. Throughout the four months, Commission members engaged in robust discussion and debate, always centering the need for productive civil discourse that allowed for the expression of differences of opinion and respectful and open listening in order to learn from and hear others with different perspectives. While not all members of the Commission agreed on every point, we were able to reach consensus on the recommendations that follow in Section IV of this report.

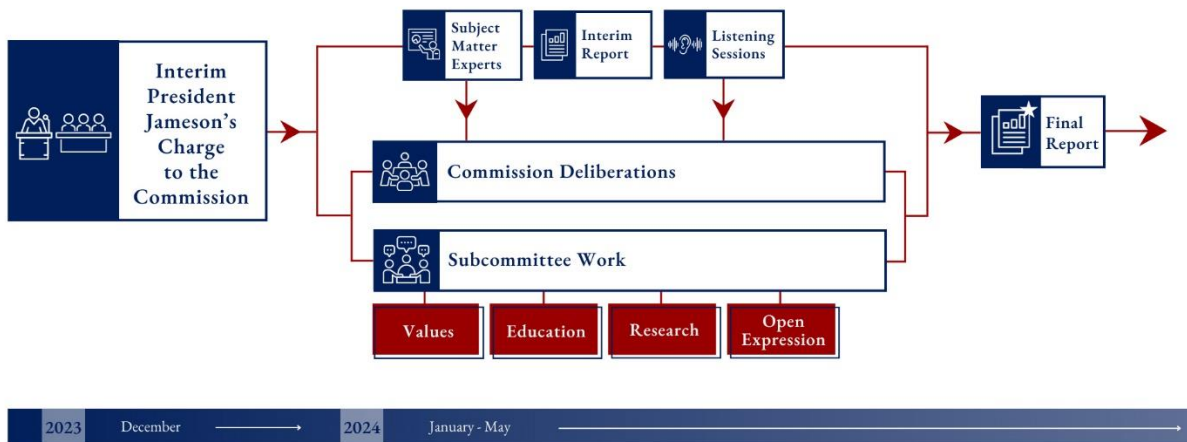


Figure 2: The Workflow

As we will discuss more fully below, the Commission believes that the way to counter hate and build community is first to identify and define what we as a community value, and then develop curricular and extracurricular mechanisms through which to teach, share, and reinforce these values. These mechanisms include educative opportunities, rigorous and engaged research, and initiatives that build belonging and a sense of Penn-wide community. Through these means, Penn can intentionally break down the silos that separate members of the community by school, role, and identity. In addition, we believe that attention must be paid to shifting current structures at Penn that may unintentionally foster division and make it more challenging to build a community, and to embrace transparency and nuance in the University’s communications.

While we believe that moving on the recommendations discussed below will help rebuild Penn's community, and in so doing, counter the harming effects of hate, we must acknowledge the deep fissures at Penn that have resulted from substantial differences of opinion on topics related to the ongoing war in the Middle East and the University's response. At times this meant we were developing recommendations that were not always in sync with what was happening on the ground. Fissures also developed, more generally, to questions about open expression. These questions include: where the line may be drawn and who draws that line between open expression and hate speech, appropriate responses to actions and speech that may be viewed as crossing that line, and the resulting perceptions of safety for various groups and individual members of the Penn community. Vigorous debate about these and other controversial topics is a fact of university life, and perhaps even *the point* of higher education. It is our hope that, by acting on the recommendations herein, the Penn community can engage in these kinds of debates and disagreements with respect, care, and a true desire to understand and learn from one another.

### Section III: Understanding Our Community

The Commission's charge challenged us to "engage broadly and deeply to better understand how Penn students, staff, and faculty experience hate and discrimination and how they believe Penn can move towards being a broadly inclusive community."<sup>1</sup> The Commission embraced this element of the charge, viewing it as critical that we listen to and understand the perspectives of all members of our community as we make recommendations for its betterment. Our recommendations are therefore grounded in our learnings from our conversations with and responses from the Penn community.

The Commission conducted nineteen invited and open listening sessions with community members between February 13 and April 16, 2024. This included individual sessions with students, staff, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, Trustees, alumni, Penn leadership, and emeriti and retired faculty. In total, approximately 250 members of the Penn community attended at least one listening session.

The Commission also sought input from the community in written form, through both a survey and through the [presidential-commission@upenn.edu](mailto:presidential-commission@upenn.edu) email address. The written survey delivered 231 responses. Responses were submitted by members from all groups of the Penn community invited to participate, though the number of responses from these groups did not reflect their proportionality of the University's community. Staff submitted approximately half ( $n = 116$ ) of the responses collected, followed by standing faculty ( $n = 54$ ), and then non-standing faculty and master's degree students. The smallest numbers of responses were submitted by doctoral students, postdoctoral scholars, and undergraduates.

Though our data do not enable us to make a determinative conclusion, the relatively low and uneven participation rates may indicate that many Penn community members are not concerned about issues of countering hate and building community, are fearful of speaking about them, are unconvinced that speaking out will make a difference, do not have the time to participate, or some

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<sup>1</sup> This original charge did not specify the need to engage with postdoctoral scholars, who number over 1,200 at Penn. We recognize that this was an omission, not only in the charge, but also because there is no representative from this group on the Commission. We worked to include perspectives from the postdoctoral community on campus by hosting a listening session with leadership from the Penn Postdoc Association as well as an open listening session just for postdoctoral scholars. However, in what follows, we are unable to provide much specificity from the perspective of postdoctoral scholars at Penn given their low participation rate in listening sessions, even those that were geared specifically to enable the Commission to hear from them. This may point to a greater sense of disenfranchisement from this important group of Penn citizens.

combination of these reasons. We also note that both co-chairs had several informal one-on-one and group conversations and obtained feedback from several hundred community members that is not reflected in this analysis. While the participation of those who attended the listening sessions, responded to the survey, and otherwise contributed perspectives to the Commission's deliberations was very helpful to the Commission, it should be noted that their views cannot be assumed to fully represent the views of the entire Penn community. We met with groups that officially represent various Penn constituencies (e.g., the Undergraduate Assembly, the Faculty Senate, and the Penn Professional Staff Assembly), as well as with many participants who self-selected into our input process.

Both the listening sessions and the survey instrument focused on four specific sets of questions:

1. What values do you think Penn must uphold to ensure every member of our community feels a sense of belonging? In other words, what should be Penn's core values?
2. What makes you feel part of the Penn community? What has made you feel included? Has anything made you feel excluded or like you did not belong at Penn?
3. If Penn were to be the ideal place to be, what would it look like?
4. What can constituents do on this campus and beyond to help move Penn towards this vision?

The Commission engaged a Penn-affiliated researcher with expertise in qualitative data analysis to read the notes taken at all the listening sessions and the written survey responses, first inductively and then deductively coding these texts to develop themes to answer two questions:

1. How do members of the University's community perceive and experience hate, discrimination, and bias on campus, and what strategies do they believe are effective in fostering a more inclusive and compassionate community?
2. How do members describe the ideal Penn core values for ensuring every member of the community feels a sense of belonging?

The researcher then presented the consolidated themes to the Commission, leading the Commission through a discussion of the overall trends, as well as the themes sorted by intensity of responses (those that were mentioned more frequently and/or more strenuously) and by affiliation (student, staff, and faculty). As noted above, it is important to recognize that these themes provide valuable insights into the experiences of members of the Penn community but may not be generalizable to the full campus population.

Overall, eleven themes emerged from this analysis. Appendix E provides a list of these themes with brief definitions and shows their groupings in terms of intensity and affiliation. The themes reflected a mix of positive and negative feelings, experiences, and views about Penn's community, along with strong and constructive discussions about how to move forward together to build on Penn's strengths and overcome some of the problems that currently exist. In what follows, we briefly summarize what we learned from the community participants who attended the listening sessions and responded to the survey. We first highlight the themes that focus on the main concerns expressed by participants, followed by the themes that relate to key areas for focus moving forward.



### ***A Campus Culture That Does Not Always Foster Community***

The listening sessions and survey responses paint the picture of a university with a thriving and vibrant intellectual and social community, but also with structures and systems that sometimes impede rather than facilitate the full realization of its potential. A frequently mentioned reason for this is Penn's siloed nature. Respondents described disconnects across Penn's twelve schools and even across departments within individual schools. They gave multiple examples of the ways that Penn's decentralization unintentionally creates barriers to building community and to learning: for example, seemingly basic operations such as registering for classes in different schools or reserving space for meetings in different buildings on campus can be overly difficult given the downstream effects of decentralization. Moreover, members from every respondent group—students, staff, and faculty alike—reported that this very high level of decentralization makes it difficult to feel a part of a single Penn community with a consistent set of values.

Another commonly expressed concern is the existence of a clear hierarchy among community members on Penn's campus, resulting in some individuals feeling there are groups of "haves" and "have-nots." Respondents report that many voices—particularly those of staff, non-standing faculty, and faculty and students who teach and are enrolled in some of the less wealthy or smaller schools at Penn—are unheard or undervalued. Respondents believe that those "at the bottom" of the hierarchy are forced to assume greater risk during conflicts, as they lack the protection or value afforded to those "at the top" of the hierarchy. Perhaps somewhat related, we also heard from members of the Penn community about the University's culture of intense competition, which further contributes to a sense of hierarchy at Penn and creates barriers to feelings of community and belonging.

In addition, we heard salient concerns directly tied to perceptions of fear and safety; many participants in our sessions and survey often reported feeling fearful or unsafe at Penn. While some mentioned physical safety as a concern, many students, faculty, and staff more often expressed that their fears relate to their psychological safety. In particular, they are fearful of bullying, doxing, and potential job loss due to expressing their beliefs and opinions. Many reported self-censoring and refraining from conversations pertaining to controversial topics to avoid these outcomes, which is antithetical to a campus community that encourages and benefits from freedom of expression. Indeed, community members expressed a desire to engage in difficult conversations on campus without fear of negative consequences from their peers, colleagues, or the University's administration. Many participants believe that the University does not value or facilitate this kind of free speech and open discourse, and that there is an outsized influence of external voices, including donors and politicians. It was widely implied that each time external voices like donors, alumni, or politicians suggested that Penn patrol the speech of faculty or students, limit their action, or instate punitive measures against them, it threw into question the University's support for open expression and academic freedom.

### ***There Is a Strong Desire to Build Community and a Sense of Belonging***

Participants described inspiring aspirations for Penn as a place with a strong community that fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion, grounded in a set of clear and consistent values—key among them open expression. For each concern recounted above, they offered suggestions to overcome these issues and build "a better Penn." Importantly, participants repeatedly proposed that the University should facilitate more opportunities for scaffolded dialogue across differences and for



educating students as well as the wider community about multiple perspectives on complex issues. To build community, many also suggested that Penn should offer more campus-wide events that create interpersonal connections outside of academic and intellectual activities. In addition, while recognizing that many members of our listening sessions noted the beauty and convenience of Penn's urban campus, including how its relatively compact nature fosters interdisciplinary and cross-group collaboration, some expressed the need for more and better physical spaces for the community to meet and come together. Some participants felt strongly that, to counter the hierarchical culture at Penn, the University should provide greater financial and job-related protections to those who currently feel less secure.

Reflecting a key component of Penn's new strategic vision, *In Principle and Practice*, many respondents reflected on Penn's privileged place in Philadelphia and suggested that we might strengthen our Penn community by enhancing our investments in our local community outside of Penn's campus. They also expressed a desire to see more diversity of perspectives—including ideological and political perspectives—and greater diversity of lived experiences in Penn's leadership, enabling more diverse voices in decision-making about Penn's future and potentially leading to greater inclusivity.

Last, we heard a loud call for more nuanced and direct communication from the University, which many believe will foster a stronger sense of community based in trust and transparency. Notably, many respondents did not feel a need to hear more frequently from Penn's leadership (indeed, they often felt that communications have been sent too frequently in the last year). Rather, they want more transparent, nuanced, and balanced communications that are aimed at all members of the Penn community. Along this same line, respondents expressed a desire for clear, consistent, and well-communicated definitions of key terms that are used to express Penn's values, such as freedom of expression and belonging.

As we look forward, the Commission is heartened by the true affection for Penn expressed by many of the individuals and groups from which we heard. Across students, staff, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, alumni, Trustees, and campus leaders, we consistently heard the strong belief that Penn is a place that can not only overcome current challenges, but also lead the way forward as an exemplar to other institutions of higher education. It is with these learnings in mind that we turn next to the Commission's recommendations for action, with a focus on concrete solutions that can help the University to look forward and foster a stronger Penn community for the future.

## Section IV: Recommendations

The Commission met fifteen times as a group and over fifty times as subcommittees during the months of January through April 2024. We reviewed the learnings from the community and from subject matter experts, and engaged in robust discussions to arrive at recommendations in three areas, as detailed in the sections below:

- Defining and identifying core Penn values, or what we as the Penn community value;
- Education and research; and
- Community, dialogue, and open expression.

We also make broad, cross-cutting recommendations for the University to consider that relate to structural/organization changes or enhancements that can lead to building community. Finally, we

highlight Launch Priorities in each section, which we define as those recommendations that can be acted upon immediately.

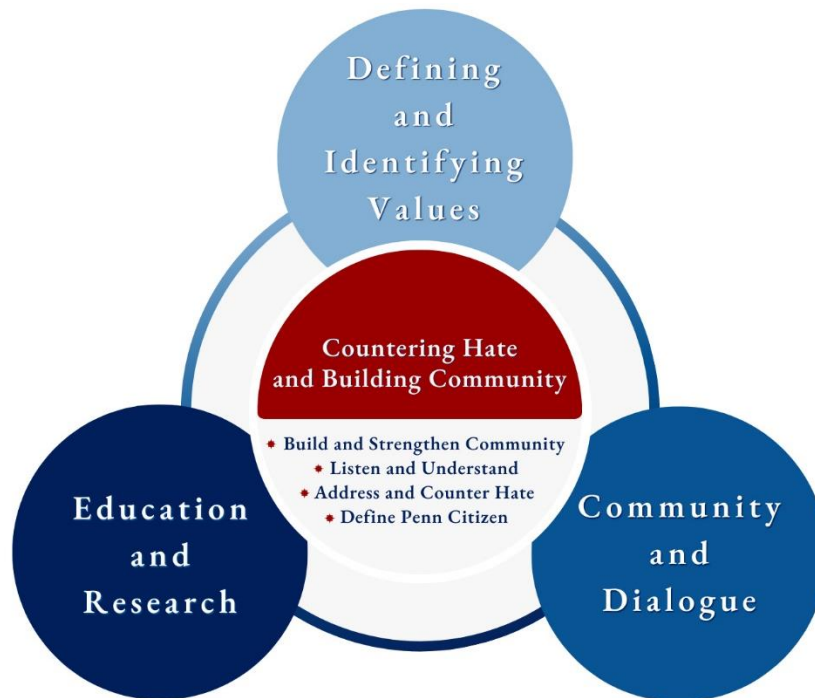


Figure 3: Interconnectedness of Recommendations

**A. Defining and Identifying Core Penn Values**

***A Pilot Values Statement for Penn***

The process of engaging the Penn community on values is itself worthwhile. Because the University needs to balance the centralizing and decentralizing impulses key to its operation, creating a values statement can help remake the siloes necessary for optimum organization into permeable structures, membranes rather than walls.

We envision a Penn values statement drawing from Interim President Jameson’s metaphor of a tree and its branches. The tree trunk reflects the University’s core values, optimally designed to guide action, while its branches reflect individual Penn entities, where schools, departments, facilities, and services weigh in on what those values mean, inviting new reflection in their specific values statements. We envision a plan that can adopt and implement these values throughout the University’s structure, ensuring repeated and continuous engagement with Penn’s values. As one faculty member notes, “values statements are only useful if they are actionable, if [they] can be implemented.”



Figure 4: Penn Values Structure

If a Penn values statement is to be consonant with community members, it should rest on a broad commitment to open expression and academic freedom, which we hold as central in bringing us together and sustaining our commonality. Though open expression and academic freedom tend to be discussed when they are being contested, upholding them as central pillars is an inviolate principle at Penn. As Benjamin Franklin noted early on, writing as Silence Dogood, “Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom—and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech” (1722). We thus suggest the three pairs of values listed below. In each case, the pair’s first term, drawing from Franklin and Penn’s foundation, leads to the pair’s second term, which reflects its contemporary salience. Each pair also builds in concentric circles on the pair preceding it, expanding the sphere of the University’s activity from the individual, to the community, to the world:

**Curiosity and Belonging:** This first possible pair of Penn values primarily operates in individuals. “Curiosity” is the state of being genuinely inquisitive—both about ideas and about who others are, what they believe, do, and prioritize, and why. “Belonging” is what ensues when different community members feel similarly welcomed, valued, or accepted and connotes a supportive state of involvement with others that gives individuals the sense that they fit in equitably. Because social curiosity stimulates the desire to associate with others, belonging is what comes of being curious. “We need to bring groups together in wonder, not just in protest and learning,” says one faculty member. Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of

Penn's regard for academic freedom and open expression. For these reasons, Franklin extolled its virtues, seeing curiosity as central to reducing what he called "an unaccountable Prejudice in favour of Ancient Customs and Habitues" (1749). One community member voices hope that "curiosity can balance with an intentionality to be humble and listen to communities that don't have our privilege." Put differently, curiosity and belonging may be what is needed to sustain Penn as a community that not only engages with ideas that challenge us but anticipates and shapes challenging circumstances as well.

**Dignity and Engagement:** This second possible pair of Penn values operates predominantly across the community. "Dignity" is the state of being valued or worthy of respect, and it draws from one's identity, background, experiences, beliefs, and ideas. "Engagement" responds to the dignity of others by involving them voluntarily in community, optimally offering them mutual benefit by connecting over shared aims. In Franklin's words, "search others for their virtues, thy self for thy vices" (1738), and he saw value even in one's adversary, counseling the public to "love your Enemies, for they tell you your Faults" (1756). Both dignity and engagement sustain community, where its members can engage in disagreement without diminishing commonality or producing a culture of silence and self-censorship. Both values can be useful in the University's statements, helping to facilitate a sense of fairness, clarity, and transparency. In one undergraduate's words, we should be able "to talk about hard things."

**Practicality and Service:** This third possible pair of Penn values orients to the world, articulating the worth of applying knowledge to its betterment. "Practicality" refers to the usefulness of grounding knowledge in tangible action. "Service" references actions that help others or are designed to work to their benefit. Together, these values outline how making knowledge usable can help improve the world. Both were uppermost for Franklin. One of his most-cited aphorisms, "well done is better than well said" (1737), reflected his thoughts on the University serving the public good: "we should be glad of an Opportunity to serve others by any Invention of ours, and this we should do freely and generously" (1749). For Franklin, Penn was built to serve the common good. As one community member notes, "we should all be working for the betterment of humanity."

Reflecting on this legacy has produced a possible motto that captures the substance and style of the Penn community:

*Educating, inspiring, and empowering to improve the world with curiosity and belonging, dignity and engagement, practicality and service.*

**Recommendations:****Launch Priorities:**

- Create a values statement for the Penn community
- Develop a clear plan for adopting, sharing, and implementing this values statement

1. We recommend **creating a values statement** for the Penn community. This will require a dedicated process to identify core values defining Penn as an institution, rooted in our history, and resonant with this moment:
  - a. Identify and enlist a team of experts external to Penn who can lead the process of designing and implementing a plan for creating a shared Penn values statement.
  - b. Identify an appropriate group of the University's leaders who can take the efforts of this Commission forward to work together with outside experts in creating a values statement.
  - c. Continue listening sessions where Penn community members can give input on Penn values through a variety of opportunities, such as group discussions, written questionnaires, continuous access to Google forms, and other feedback modalities.
  - d. Craft a values statement that is clear, concise, and widely shareable. It should adjust to ongoing dynamics and accommodate the discomfort often accompanying disagreement.
2. We recommend **developing a clear plan for adopting, sharing, and implementing this values statement** across the Penn community in conjunction with a team of external experts:
  - a. Introduce a Penn values statement to prospective and new students, prospective and new staff and faculty, and to current students, staff, faculty, and alumni.
  - b. Commit senior leadership to messaging in ways that affirm these values and expect faculty, staff, students, postdoctoral scholars, and alumni to uphold them throughout their association with the University. Develop initiatives to implement these values. Community members should engage productively when conflicts occur over the understanding or expression of our values.
  - c. Design clear and centralized options to report concerns. Reports should be considered through an educational and restorative process, rather than punitive. Transparency should be upheld. In cases where this is not possible, the Penn community should be informed.
  - d. Strengthen, develop, and make visible resources reflective and inclusive of Penn community members in mediating and supporting them through conflict, such as Restorative Practices, the Ombuds Office, and the SNF Paideia Program.
3. We recommend **developing initiatives to protect and nourish shared values** at Penn. With an eye to nuance, empathy, and restorative action, these initiatives will help rebuild and sustain trust for all members of the Penn community while maintaining maximum transparency:

- a. Prioritize listening to community members in an ongoing fashion. Aiming to break down siloes and promote regular and widespread access to conversational opportunities between community members and the University's leaders, this should include developing an ongoing community survey through a variety of modalities.
- b. Develop and make available open, transparent, and clear strategies to support community members impacted by hate, and create physical spaces and opportunities to accommodate continuous open discussion across different kinds of community members.
- c. Recognizing the absence of inclusive spaces that serve specific members of the Penn community, create a Middle East and North Africa cultural space, while also evaluating existing physical spaces and adding new ones as deemed necessary.
- d. Reassess campus safety, discipline, and well-being by identifying ways to help our community feel safe, reviewing the Division of Public Safety's consultation process, reexamining existing disciplinary cases as appropriate, addressing competition and isolation in student culture, and reviewing the University's structures and hierarchies that have organizational justifications but may obstruct inclusion and understanding across different members of the Penn community.

Full data collection and analysis, implemented by the Values Subcommittee, can be found in Appendix F. This work was conducted over a brief period and, as noted above, with largely unrepresentative sectors of Penn's community, underscoring the need for further study of the issues raised here. However, its insights and recommendations point in the direction of values that are both evergreen and responsive to campus change. They also demonstrate the desirability and viability of designing, implementing, and sustaining a stronger Penn.

## **B. Education and Research**

The Commission views educational and research initiatives as centrally important for addressing hate and building community at Penn. The educational initiatives proposed here are intended to strengthen Penn's learning opportunities for undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents, while emphasizing the need for multiple approaches, repeated learning opportunities, and sustained efforts over time. These educational initiatives aim to address three sets of objectives, separately or in combination: increasing skills (e.g., around productive dialogue, critical thinking, recognizing bias, handling disagreement); building knowledge (e.g., of substantive contemporary issues); and raising awareness (e.g., of Penn's values, norms, and expectations). The proposed research initiatives focus on building the University's capabilities for developing new knowledge, insight, and understanding that can further Penn's educational mission.



**Recommendations:****Launch Priorities:**

- Design new incoming orientations for students, faculty, and staff
- Develop new required and elective courses
- Establish a Center for the Study of Hate and Intolerance

1. **Design new incoming orientations.** We recommend that the University systematically reviews the structure and content of the New Student Orientation for incoming undergraduates, with a view to increasing its emphasis on topics including: becoming a Penn citizen and understanding our shared values; Penn's open expression policies, what they mean, and why they are critical to the University; skill-building for engaging in productive dialogue across differences; and navigating digital media. This orientation might also include a new Penn Reading Project connected to Penn values, or assignment of shorter articles, films, or other content, with associated small group meetings. Separate but aligned orientation modules should be developed and customized as appropriate for second-year undergraduates and incoming graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents.
2. **Develop new required and elective courses.** We recommend the following new courses:
  - a. As a requirement for all undergraduates: **a 1 CU seminar course focusing on a challenging topic and emphasizing productive dialogue**; students to choose one from a curated set of seminar offerings (topic examples include: war ethics, reproductive rights, free speech). This requirement could be designed for first-year students as a First-Year Seminar, or alternatively to be taken by students in any year. It could fulfill a general education credit, rather than become an additional requirement. Faculty would need to apply to teach these seminars and undergo training on how to moderate difficult conversations and help students learn to talk across differences.
  - b. As an additional or alternative requirement for all undergraduates: **a 1 CU SNF Paideia-enhanced course**, to be taken in any year and fulfill an existing school credit. These courses would be offered within each school and might be newly created, or existing courses could be enhanced by a focus on informed discourse and deliberation. To enact this recommendation, the SNF Paideia Program would need additional resources to increase its capacity in order to provide this scale of faculty training and course certification.
  - c. As an elective (or possibly required) course for undergraduates: **a large-scale 1 CU course titled *Historical Legacies and Current Controversies***. This course would provide historical context for understanding critical current international, national, and local issues, and feature two or more leading Penn faculty experts each week lecturing on different topics, with related small-group discussion sections (topic examples include:



- Holocaust, Nakba, and Israel/Palestine; Communist Revolution and China/Taiwan; Slavery, Affirmative Action, and Black Lives Matter). While undergraduates could take this course in person for credit, with small-group sections, its lectures could be made available online for additional audiences, including graduate students, faculty, staff, alumni, and potentially beyond, including in the format of a massive online open course (MOOC).
3. **Training.** Educational initiatives should also include broader instructor training and leadership training for students, staff, and faculty. In turn, these will require investments in “training the trainers.”
    - a. **For instructors:** Penn instructors need knowledge and skills to facilitate productive dialogue in their classrooms, as well as appropriate encouragement, support, and familiarity with Penn’s values and open expression policies. We therefore recommend that Penn require training in these areas for all new teaching faculty, postdoctoral scholars, doctoral students, teaching assistants, and learning assistants. This training might also be made optionally available for current instructors.
    - b. **For leaders:** To build such knowledge and skills more broadly throughout our community, we recommend the development of leadership workshops and/or modules to help train faculty, staff, and student leaders (e.g., in clubs, athletics teams, residential houses, Greek life) in talking and leading across differences, recognizing and addressing bias, Penn values, etc.
  4. **Centers.** Because the foundations of a robust education rely on rigorous and innovative scholarship, we propose two sets of initiatives to strengthen the research capabilities of the University as they relate to the focus of this Commission.
    - a. Establish a **Center for the Study of Hate and Intolerance**. This Center should build on Penn’s legacy of interdisciplinary research to become the first comprehensively interdisciplinary research center focused on the causes and consequences of hate and intolerance. It should draw from multiple disciplinary perspectives in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, including (but not limited to) research on behavioral psychology, criminology, communication, linguistics, literature, sociology, political science, and neuroscience. The Center should be inclusive across different kinds of hate and intolerance. It should be housed under the Provost’s Office to enable it to serve as a hub for both integrating and strengthening existing expertise from schools across Penn, including by running grant programs that span schools, coordinating cross-disciplinary research projects, and hosting multidisciplinary conferences. The Center should not only generate new knowledge, but also translate existing knowledge into practice by orienting some of its activities towards outreach to the public, policy makers, government, and law enforcement. It should aim to become a globally renowned center for scholarly inquiry, teaching, research, and public outreach on issues related to hate and intolerance.
    - b. Establish **Regional Research Centers (RRCs)**. Currently Penn has several Title VI centers as well as other region- and country-specific centers. We recommend that we establish new and enhance existing regional resource centers to fulfill important research, education, and programming functions, while serving as anchors and partners to existing cultural centers for Penn’s students and faculty who are directly or indirectly associated with different parts of the world. RRCs can also play especially critical roles in educating and supporting the Penn community in times of international turmoil. Creating and

enhancing RRCs will require a variety of initiatives, including coordinating hiring to address gaps and weaknesses in regional expertise and to increase the coverage and impact of these centers, offering more opportunities and scholarships for education focused on regional languages and cultures, establishing fellowships and postdoctoral fellowships to bring in expertise and build Penn's prestige in these research areas, and working together with Perry World House to act as first responders in response to disruptive world events. We also recognize the challenges of operating these centers within a specific school or relying on funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI program, and recommend the University consider placement of these RRCs in the Provost's Office. The University should coordinate its efforts to ensure the financial health of all RRCs and to identify key sources of funding to support this, such as grants and/or donors.

### C. Community and Dialogue

As we addressed the interconnectedness of antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate, discrimination, and bias on campus, and the need to develop explicit strategies to build community, we recognized the need to create opportunities that encourage community members to speak openly and honestly across differences and nurture a culture of open communication. We are a community that values open communication and the rigorous exchange of diverse views, and it is important that we have robust guidelines and policies for open expression. Accordingly, we share two sets of recommendations below.

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **Launch Priorities:**

- Launch Penn-wide events focused on "Conversations Across Differences"
- Develop programming to support Penn Spirit Days
- Strengthen and align open expression policies and procedures

1. **Develop community-based programming to counter hate.**
  - a. We recommend developing an interdisciplinary center focusing on the causes and consequences of hate and intolerance, as proposed in Section IV, Recommendations B: Education and Research. In addition, Penn could develop **dialogue-focused programming** that facilitates and models difficult conversations. We propose the launch of a high-profile series of **Penn-wide guest speaker events focused on "Conversations Across Differences."** As an example, these events could feature two experts with different perspectives on the same topics engaging in a public conversation that showcases civil dialogue. Penn could also begin a **Distinguished Visiting Professors**

- Program** focused on talking across differences (e.g., an Israeli and a Palestinian/Arab for Fall 2024, another pair for Spring 2025). Penn can also bring valuable educational opportunities to wider audiences in other ways and formats, including through Perry World House initiatives.
- b. As discussed in Section IV, Recommendations A: Defining and Identifying Core Penn Values, it is also important to create **physical spaces to facilitate open discussion**. A first step would naturally entail the evaluation of existing physical spaces that may already exist in intercultural centers, but we may also need new spaces, in particular to support dialogues and conversations for Middle Eastern and North African culture.
  - c. We recommend programming to support a series of **Penn Spirit Days** that bring together students, staff, and faculty across schools and years to help build a shared sense of community and values. Examples of spirit day activities might include: team scavenger hunts with teams assigned to encourage the mixing of students from across the University; volunteer opportunities with groups of students assigned to different service activities intended to support our larger community within and outside of campus; and viewing or reading similar content aligned to Penn's values and providing forums for discussion and learning.
2. **Strengthen and align open expression policies and procedures** to increase coordination, consistency, transparency, and accountability.
- a. As noted earlier in this report, it is outside the scope of this Commission to recommend changes to the open expression rules and processes at Penn. However, we feel strongly that, in order to build community at Penn, **the University should publicly and broadly reaffirm and re-emphasize its long-standing and firm commitment to its Guidelines on Open Expression**:
    - i. Penn is a community that affirms, supports, and cherishes the concepts of freedom of thought, inquiry, speech, and lawful assembly; the freedom to experiment, to present, and examine alternative data and theories; the freedom to hear, express, and debate various views; and the freedom to voice criticism of existing practices and values.
    - ii. Penn affirms that the substance or the nature of the views expressed is not an appropriate basis for any restriction.
    - iii. Penn also affirms the right of all to pursue their normal activities within the University and to be protected from physical injury and property damage.
  - b. The University should **clarify to its many constituents several important components of the Guidelines on Open Expression, and these should be succinctly laid out in this new, accessible version of the Guidelines on Open Expression** and related materials. It is worth emphasizing that:
    - i. The Guidelines on Open Expression are in accordance with existing laws as well as with policies related to academic freedom.
    - ii. The Guidelines on Open Expression protect the expression of ideas and statements that can be uncomfortable or even offensive to different members and groups within the Penn community.
    - iii. The Guidelines on Open Expression and the Committee on Open Expression play a key role in the larger ecosystem of learning at Penn. This is reflected in the Guidelines on Open Expression themselves, as well as in the Pennbook, where the

values of open expression and free inquiry, inclusion, dialogue, and listening are all central.

- c. The University should **circulate an accessible version** of the Guidelines on Open Expression to explain the connection and relationship of the Guidelines with other Penn policies, underscoring their significance as an important tool (see Appendix G for an existing brochure) for orientation and education. The current process of student referral for the potential breaching of Penn’s Guidelines on Open Expression is described in the flowchart below. The processes for addressing similar concerns with the faculty are described in the [Faculty Handbook](#). Similarly, concerns with staff are addressed by Human Resources at Penn.

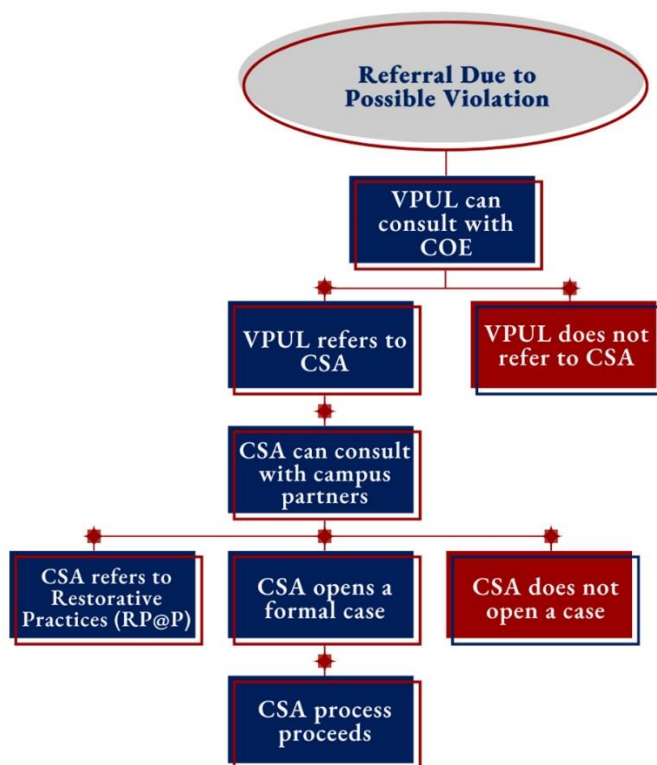


Figure 5: The current process. When a student may have violated the Guidelines, they are referred to the Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL). VPUL may consult with the Committee on Open Expression (COE) as they reach a decision on whether to refer the student to the Center for Community Standards and Accountability (CSA, an organization that is independent of the VPUL) for possible conduct violation. There are times when consultation with COE is not feasible given the nature of the demonstration.

- d. To ensure continued, consistent application of the Guidelines, we recommend **clarifying the procedural roles** played by the [Committee on Open Expression](#), the [Center for Community Standards and Accountability](#) (which includes Restorative Practices@Penn), the [Senate Committee on Academic Freedom](#), as well as relevant bodies within the different schools.
- e. In order to create more opportunities for having open dialogues across differences, as recommended above, we recommend the University considers **augmenting the resources for the Open Expression Delegate program**.

- f. To ensure transparency and accountability, we recommend that these entities listed in recommendation d above report annually on speech-related cases to the Committee on Open Expression, and it will be the Committee's responsibility to consider whether open expression is properly protected and to assess based on these reports whether the cases adjudicated by those entities are addressed in a fair, content-neutral, and consistent manner. The Committee will report its findings to University Council and recommend any steps that need to be taken if either of these considerations (speech protection and consistency) require strengthening.

## **D. Broad Recommendations**

In addition to the recommendations presented within each of the three key areas above, the Commission also identified several recurring themes that cut across these areas. We describe the resulting broad recommendations below, recognizing that some of them appear in more detail in the previous sections of this report.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **Launch Priorities:**

- Provide continued engagement to increase trust
- Increase transparency and communication

1. **Continuously engage to increase trust and build mutual understanding between the University's leadership and the Penn community.** It is worth highlighting the deep appreciation of the groups and stakeholders who attended the Commission's listening sessions. Many remarked that this is the first time that there was a concerted, University-level effort to reach out to the community at large with the goal of listening and understanding the needs of the community. This Commission believes that an ongoing mechanism to continue to engage in similar listening sessions will go a long way in increasing trust within the University. Such listening sessions will also help foster mutual understanding as the University's administrators are given an opportunity to hear directly from the broader Penn community about their perspectives, and the community is able to ask and receive answers from the University's leaders.
2. **Increase transparency and communication.** Nearly every listening session emphasized the need for transparency and communication. While there are different interpretations of what transparency means, a few common themes emerged:
  - a. *Open and forthright communication:* The Commission believes that effective communication is paramount to establishing a culture of transparency. However, many in our community do not feel that the University's leadership is forthright in its communications. Communicating clearly and with transparency is key to building trust with the larger Penn community. By committing to open and timely communications that provide information, the University's leadership will provide the community with a deeper

- understanding of the University's actions and intentions, thus in effect holding itself accountable to its constituents.
- b. *Articulating and reaffirming Penn's values*: As noted frequently in this report, it is necessary to define and articulate Penn's core values. It is also necessary to regularly affirm these values and ensure that messages and actions from Penn's leaders model them. The University's administration should host a public website that catalogs not only all Penn communications on key issues, but the actions it takes and the status of any activities intended to address concerns related to the University's values.
  - c. *Increasing awareness of resources*: The University should consider an information and communication campaign to enhance the Penn community's awareness of the vast and widely decentralized array of resources and services available to students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and staff, as well as the many opportunities for education, research, dialogue, and community engagement (e.g., for wellness, campus life, guidelines for conduct, restorative practices, and campus safety).
3. **Address challenges stemming from the University's decentralized system and culture.** The decentralized nature of Penn's administrative structure has many organizational and financial benefits but may also have unintended consequences in terms of creating siloes and hierarchies that negatively impact Penn's community and culture. The Commission recommends that the University examine these structures for potential opportunities for improvement, with a particular lens towards:
- a. *Equitably supporting students, staff, postdoctoral scholars and faculty*: The administrative structure should be reevaluated to assess how it impacts the culture of "haves" and "have nots" at the University. Throughout listening sessions with all members of the Penn community, individuals shared that there are schools known to have more resources for students, staff, and faculty than others, and more generally, schools that have more opportunities for growth than others. Equitably supporting success for students, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and staff should be a top priority.
  - b. *Improving coordination across schools*: While each school implements tailored programs to support community members' success and increase access for those with diverse lived experiences at Penn, the University would benefit from greater centralized, University-wide coordination. It is vital moving forward that we assess each school's efforts in these areas. Doing so would identify gaps, and leverage school-based assets so that best practices and opportunities can be scaled across schools and centers, capitalizing on synergies across schools for centralized implementation. It is also important to evaluate and remove financial barriers to working across schools, particularly to provide undergraduate students with opportunities to take courses in any school.

## Section V: Conclusion

The members of the Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the Commission and to make recommendations for this critical topic. As a group of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and Trustees, we came together from across the University with different perspectives, experiences, and expertise. Through our conversations, our learning, and our debates, we have come to share the same conviction: our commitment is to create a stronger Penn and these recommendations reflect our aspiration to begin

this hard work now. This report is our attempt to reimagine what we could be as a community, at the same time as we know that things are in flux. We recognize that our recommendations alone cannot create change. That power belongs to all of us, the Penn community itself. We encourage and challenge all of us in the Penn community to uphold our values and drive the University to be one that leads with intellect, care, and compassion.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Charge

#### Presidential Commission on Countering Hate and Building Community

##### Charge to the Commission / December 20, 2023

Reporting directly to the President and chaired by Vijay Kumar, Nemirovsky Family Dean of Penn Engineering, and Katharine Strunk, Dean of the Graduate School of Education and George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education, the Presidential Commission will address bias, discrimination and hate on campus as we strive to be a community that leads with care and compassion. Recent events have revealed challenges with Antisemitism and Islamophobia, but the Commission will address the interconnectedness of all forms of hate and bias.

The Presidential Commission will provide critical feedback that will shape Penn's ongoing efforts, and it is charged to:

- *Listen and Understand*: Engage broadly and deeply to better understand how Penn students, staff and faculty experience hate and discrimination and how they believe Penn can move towards being a broadly inclusive community.
- *Consider What it Means to be a Penn Citizen*: Examine what it means to be a responsible and engaged Penn Citizen and recommend strategies for how to foster such behaviors and norms.
- *Recommend Strategies to Build and Strengthen Community*: Recommend strategies about how to reinforce and strengthen Penn's sense of community through education and engagement.
- *Recommend Strategies to Address and Counter Hate*: Recommend strategies about how to support Penn community members who have been impacted by hate and how best to counter hate on campus.

In forming these recommendations, the Presidential Commission will consult with campus leaders and local, regional, and national subject matter experts. The Presidential Commission will also be expected to serve as a resource for other campus leaders, including those who are advancing key tenets of Penn's Action Plan to Combat Antisemitism.

In beginning its work, the Presidential Commission should develop a workplan that operationalizes the above charge. The Presidential Commission will be expected to submit an interim report with recommendations no later than February 15, 2024. Following submission of this interim report, the President will consult with Deans Kumar and Strunk to determine an appropriate date to submit a final set of recommendations. Rapid response recommendations on issues or items assessed to be urgent are welcome and may be made through the Chairs.

Finally, members of the Presidential Commission are expected to serve as Penn citizens—to consult broadly; to engage in respectful, meaningful, and substantive dialogue; and to strive for common ground and consensus in the face of disagreement.

## Appendix B: Commission Membership

### **Co-chairs**

#### **Vijay Kumar**

*Nemirovsky Family Dean and Professor in Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics, School of Engineering and Applied Science*

#### **Katharine Strunk**

*Dean and George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education*

### **Faculty and Staff**

#### **Sigal Ben-Porath**

*Faculty Director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Paideia Program and MRMJJ Presidential Professor at the Graduate School of Education*

#### **Tonya Bennett**

*Director of Educational Technology at the School of Veterinary Medicine*

#### **Joretha (Jerri) Bourjolly**

*Associate Dean for Inclusion and Associate Professor/Clinical Educator at the School of Social Policy & Practice*

#### **Ezekiel J. Emanuel**

*Diane v.S. Levy and Robert M. Levy University Professor, Vice Provost for Global Initiatives, and Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor at the Perelman School of Medicine and the Wharton School*

#### **Martine Haas**

*Anthony L. Davis Director of the Joseph H. Lauder Institute for Management & International Studies, and the Lauder Chair Professor and Professor of Management at the Wharton School*

#### **Sara Jacoby**

*Associate Professor in the Department of Family and Community Health and Clavin Bland Faculty Fellow at the Penn School of Nursing*

#### **Fariha Khan**

*Co-director of the Asian American Studies program at the School of Arts & Sciences*

#### **Steve Kocher**

*Senior Associate Chaplain and Director of the Spiritual and Religious Life Center*

#### **Hikaru Kozuma**

*Vice Provost for University Life*

#### **Harun Küçük**

*Associate Professor of History and Sociology of Science at the School of Arts & Sciences*

#### **Joseph E. Lowry**

*Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the School of Arts & Sciences*

#### **Joann Mitchell**

*Senior Vice President for Institutional Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer*

**Josephine Park**

*President's Distinguished Professor of English at the School of Arts & Sciences*

**Barbie Zelizer**

*Director of the Center for Media at Risk and the Raymond Williams Professor of Communication at the Annenberg School for Communication*

**Student Representatives**

**Ranim Albarkawi**

*Vice President of the Undergraduate Assembly, fourth-year student at the School of Arts & Sciences*

**Adina Goldstein, Ed.D.**

*Candidate in the Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education Division at the Graduate School of Education*

**Alumni and Trustee Representatives**

**Osagie Imasogie**

*Member of the Board of Trustees, Chair of the Penn Carey Law Board of Advisors, and Penn Carey Law School alumnus*

**Joan Lau**

*Member of the Board of Trustees and a School of Engineering and Applied Science and Wharton alumna*

**Harlan Stone**

*Member of the Board of Trustees and a College of Arts and Sciences alumnus*

**Ex-Officio**

**Wendy White**

*Senior Vice President and General Counsel*

**Mark Wolff**

*Morton Amsterdam Dean of the School of Dental Medicine and Chair of the Antisemitism Task Force*

**Staff to the Commission**

**Jennifer Bieter**

*Director of Fiscal Operations, Office of the Executive Vice President*

**Rebecca Hayward**

*Executive Director of Penn Engineering Online, School of Engineering and Applied Science*

### Appendix C: Experts Who Met with the Commission

The Commission spent significant time learning about Penn's policies and procedures and gathering information on the wealth of services provided to the Penn community. Experts who presented to the Commission include:

- **Lisa Bellini**, *Chair of the Committee on Open Expression; Senior Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine*
- **Sigal Ben-Porath**, *MRMJJ Presidential Professor at the Graduate School of Education; faculty director of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Paideia Program*
- **Karen Detlefsen**, *Vice Provost for Education and Professor of Philosophy and Education*
- **Benoit Dubé**, *Chief Wellness Officer*
- **Rabbi Gabe Greenberg**, *Executive Director, Penn Hillel*
- **Steve Kocher**, *Senior Associate Chaplain and Director of the Spiritual and Religious Life Center*
- **Karu Kozuma**, *Vice Provost for University Life*
- **Joann Mitchell**, *Senior Vice President for Institutional Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer*
- **Julie Nettleton**, *Executive Director of the Center for Community Standards and Accountability (CSA)*
- **Laura Perna**, *Vice Provost for Faculty and Centennial Presidential Professor of Education*
- **Kathleen Shields Anderson**, *Vice President for Public Safety*
- **Kenneth Stern**, *author, attorney, and Director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate*
- **Wendy White**, *Senior Vice President and General Counsel*
- **Mark Wolff**, *Chair of the University Task Force on Antisemitism and Morton Amsterdam Dean of the School of Dental Medicine*

### Appendix D: Listening Sessions

The Commission held nineteen listening sessions with both established Penn groups and sessions open to members of the Penn community. The groups included in listening sessions are detailed below:

#### **Community Groups:**

- Alumni Board
- American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
- Association of Senior and Emeritus Faculty at PSOM (ASEF)
- Board of Trustees
- Council of Deans
- Faculty Senate
- Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA)
- Penn Association of Senior and Emeritus Faculty (PASEF)
- Penn Professional Staff Assembly
- Penn Postdoc Association
- Undergraduate Assembly Steering (UA Steering)

#### **Open Listening Sessions:**

- Faculty
- Faculty
- Postdoctoral Scholars and Researchers
- Staff
- Staff
- Students
- Students
- All groups: Faculty, Postdoctoral Scholars, Staff, and Students

Appendix E: Emergent Themes from Listening Sessions and Survey Responses

The themes marked as prominent for each subgroup are those that were mentioned in the top three themes for that group.

	Theme	Definition	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni	Trustees
High Intensity	<b>Fear and Safety</b>	Feeling unsafe, whether they identify with a side in a conflict or are onlookers. Fear of bullying, doxing, and job loss due to expression of views.	✓	✓	✓		
	<b>Hierarchy</b>	Belief that Penn’s hierarchical structure negatively impacts belonging and inclusivity.			✓		
	<b>Nuanced and Direct Communication</b>	Belief that the University’s communications lack nuance, are sent too frequently, and are overly directed at external audiences.	✓		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Silos</b>	Concern about the siloed nature of the Penn community, with disconnects across schools and departments that create barriers for community and learning.	✓		✓		
Medium Intensity	<b>Community</b>	Calls for attention to the creation of a broader and more inclusive Penn community.	✓		✓		✓
	<b>Free Speech</b>	Desire for Penn to facilitate and encourage discussions about difficult topics without fear of reprisal.		✓		✓	
	<b>Identifying Influence</b>	Fear that donors exert outsized influence on Penn, negatively impacting the University. Desire for transparency about events from fall 2023.	✓	✓			
	<b>Local Investment</b>	Belief that greater investment in and focus on local communities can build bridges and community.					
Low Intensity	<b>Clarifying Definitions</b>	Desire for clear, agreed-upon definitions of Penn’s values. Belief that establishing these definitions will facilitate open expression at Penn.					
	<b>Competitive Stress</b>	Concern that Penn’s culture of intense competition is a barrier to creating a feeling of belonging.					
	<b>Diversifying Leadership</b>	Desire for more diverse Penn leadership, which could foster more inclusive values.					

## Appendix F: Values

### ***Early Learnings from Historical and Current Records about Penn and Peer Institutions***

Assessing the desirability and viability of introducing a values statement at Penn requires establishing historical and current contexts. Early learnings were culled from historical records about Penn, including writings by its founder, Benjamin Franklin, current documents at Penn, and values statements across Penn and at other peer institutions.

In the exploration of values for Penn, the particulars of this moment challenge the larger and storied history of the University. Founded in 1740 for the pursuit of knowledge, the University of Pennsylvania stands on a wealth of expertise, eminence, and goodwill. While current global and national conflicts in a rapidly changing world are forcing our community to re-evaluate the core of what and who is Penn, we recognize that long-standing values have always helped us weather challenges. We need values to survive change and evolve with the times. Neither reactive nor transactional, Penn's values reflect a deep commitment to respect, civility, and integrity, and a belief that values can be shared while making us unique.

Values are critical for building community and countering hate. The values we hold at Penn come not from a place of hate or fear but from the recognition that certain principles have always reflected who we are and will continue to be. Values articulate what it means to be a responsible and engaged Penn citizen, informing all we do in research, teaching, and service.

Values center the Penn community and instill in its members a sense of belonging, unity, and responsibility to one another. They help us distinguish between what fosters debate and discussion and what shuts them down. They illuminate our nonsectarian core, tracing back to Benjamin Franklin, to demonstrate the importance of nuance in our dealings with one another. They encourage us to embrace and articulate the discomfort that may arise when we engage with difference and empower us to speak and listen with intentionality. In keeping with Franklin's vision that the University teach "*every Thing* that is useful, and *every Thing* that is ornamental" (1749), values necessarily shift to accommodate the always-evolving nature of the Penn community that may at times need no more than its members agreeing to disagree.

Values remind us of the twinning of theory and practice in Penn's beginnings, and they aid us in responding to the challenges of disagreement in our current moment, helping us recognize that even though hateful speech may be legally protected, our value-driven standards and norms reject it and educate against it. In President Emerita Judith Rodin's words, "we must *censure* speech, but never *cancel* speakers" (1/17/1995). More recently President Emerita Amy Gutmann reminded us that "hatred has no place on our campus or in our world. It is inimical to our values, and it is time for all of us to stand up to the hatred and to speak out against the prejudice that infects too much of society" (Gutmann et al, 2021).

Most members of the Penn community can point readily to values they assume are shared with others, and most of them are useful antidotes to hate. A capacious list would include dignity, transparency, open expression and academic freedom, diversity, individual and community learning, mutual understanding, responsiveness to real issues (particularly those of last fall), community, open inquiry, inquisitiveness, privacy, integrity, freedom from harassment, inclusion, being moral and just, eminence, equity, liberatory teaching and learning, support of conceptual thinking, doing good in our community, non-violence, tolerance, mutual respect, collaboration, independence and freedom



from orthodoxy, discovery, and purpose for the common good. The University's statements regularly refer to institutional or shared values: "In putting the creation of robust discourse *at the center of our institutional values at universities*, we would demonstrate ... that we cannot legislate away bad behavior and incivility with codes or policies or regulations" (Rodin, 12/1997); "As a university, we support free expression, along with a commitment to the safety and security of our community and *the values we share and work to advance*" (Magill, 10/18/2023); "There are times when leaders should weigh in on *the values and principles that guide and define an institution*" (Jameson, 2/4/2024).

The University's statements also reference values in negation, deeming particular behaviors as inconsistent with them: "We unequivocally—and emphatically—condemn antisemitism as *antithetical to our institutional values*" (Magill, 9/12/2023), "the interconnectedness of antisemitism and other forms of hate, including Islamophobia, also demands our attention and action" (Magill, 11/1/23), or "This is not the first time (nor will it likely be the last) when student groups espouse positions that run counter to *our institutional values and beliefs*" (Gutmann, 2/1/2012). While referring to shared values has clear resonance, the values being referenced tend not to be explicitly named, identified, or defined. The University's statements tend to focus more on what we are not than clarify what we are. And yet, "shared values" is a powerful phrase, and many of us believe we know what we mean when we use it.

Values statements are often tempered or limited by systemic inequalities, persistent divides, or unexpected circumstances. These include intimidation and harassment, different beliefs or abilities, dissimilar backgrounds or experiences, uneven barriers to opportunity, power and resource imbalances, unclear expectations, unintended effects, systemic failures, or even boundaries between disciplines. Yet values statements continue to surface as a productive means of charting a community's key principles. Many universities developed their statements over the last decade, and they resonate with the efforts of other kinds of institutions invested in articulating commonality.

There is overlap and similarity in the values statements created by peer institutions, and they express values in distinct ways that nonetheless underscore a shared objective of creating commonality. Mutual "respect" is mentioned by Columbia, Dartmouth, Duke, Harvard, MIT, and Yale, while "inclusion" is noted by Brown, Duke, and Stanford. "Innovation" is referenced by Brown and Princeton, "excellence" by Dartmouth, Duke, Harvard, MIT, and Princeton. "Belonging" or "community" appears in the statements of Cornell, MIT, and Princeton. "Collaboration" is included by Brown and Dartmouth. Other values include accountability, transparency, curiosity, discovery, diversity, empathy, equity, ethics, exploration, freedom, honesty, integrity, openness, opportunity, public engagement, and trust.

While a Penn values statement may express similar ideas to those of our peers, it should also draw on our unique history, the principles of our founder, the lived experience of our community in Philadelphia, the expressions of our values over the centuries, as well as more recent institutional reflections and responses to challenging circumstances. Several Penn schools and departments have created values statements, often offered alongside mission and vision statements that are in keeping with Penn's decentralized organizational structure. Penn Engineering points towards scholarship, creativity, and curiosity; integrity and character; diverse people and perspectives. Penn Medicine highlights excellence, integrity, diversity, professionalism, individual opportunity (equal opportunity and individual creativity and innovation), teamwork and collaboration, and tradition. Penn Dental looks to legacy, empowerment, aspiration, discovery, and social consciousness; Penn Vet to

excellence, innovation, discovery, accountability, and compassion. Penn Design embraces respect, inclusion, belonging, support, courage, collegiality, transparency, and justice. Penn GSE points towards access and inclusion, practical knowledge, powerful partnerships, and innovation for impact. SP2 is committed to inclusion, excellence, and impact, while Penn Nursing emphasizes care and service excellence, educational pre-eminence, knowledge and innovation, and leadership. In an undergraduate student-driven initiative, Wharton underscores ambition, community, diversity and inclusion, exploration, integrity, and positive impact.

Values statements also help drive many of the divisions and operations that keep Penn functioning smoothly across its twelve schools. Penn's Business Services emphasizes accountability, skills development, collaboration, adaptability, diversity, sustainability, and responsiveness. Information Systems and Computing (ISC) strives for innovation, integrity, reliability, respect, and teamwork. Penn Facilities and Real-Estate Services (FRES) embraces collaboration and sustainability, while the Office of Audit, Compliance and Privacy (OCAP) orients towards anticipating and managing risk, accountability, and integrity. Penn Finance aims to provide stewardship, leadership, and service, and Penn Wellness compassion, accessibility, respect, and empowerment.

At the heart of all these values statements is a hope for community-building that has driven Penn's identity since the University's inception. Franklin's original vision for education saw "an Inclination joined with an Ability to serve Mankind" as "the great Aim and End of all Learning" (1749). Former President Gaylord P. Harnwell looked to connecting "our diverse faculties and our cosmopolitan student body into a more closely knit community, wielding a 'multi-versity' into a true university—capable of responding as one, great organism to society's needs" (1966). More recently, Penn's *In Principle and Practice* (11/30/2023) notes that "our exceptional and diverse people, communities, and campus are our anchor, the foundation of all we do, and they guide and propel Penn."

The need to clarify values crystallizes when unexpected challenges rattle the ongoing operation of the University. Sparked by the controversy over the Palestine Writes Festival, the events of October 7, 2023, and the ensuing Israel-Gaza war have thrown campus life into multiple rounds of precarity and uncertainty. On all levels of the Penn community, questions remain about open expression and academic freedom that complicate decisions about how to differentiate hate speech from instances of expression asserted to be hate speech or even if the drawing of such a line can and should be attempted. Differing assessments of who might draw the line for whom still reverberate. So do questions about punitive action and its chilling effect. And yet, arguments about where to draw the line are a fact of campus life, and they need to occur regularly if Penn is to survive as a space for intellectual curiosity. As Franklin (1789) reminded us, the University thrives when it embraces curiosity, not only about ideas but about each other too.

There is great merit in articulating values even if numerous obstacles stand in the way, particularly at a point in which community-building is a necessary counter to hate. While we see a values statement as an animate object whose principles will often be in tension with one another, we believe that creating one is necessary because it will help illuminate the strength of history and purpose that drives the Penn community. In grounding us as a community, a values statement lives on beyond any moment of strife and offsets the general institutional tendency to respond reactively to crises and conflicts as they emerge. Equally important, it can be an instrumental tool for building and sustaining Penn and its community that we all want to proudly inhabit.

### ***Preliminary Analysis of Historical Documents, Listening Sessions, and Survey***

This preliminary analysis sets the stage to consider the design and implementation of a values statement at Penn. It involved surveying and analyzing four sources of documentation: historical records about Penn, including writings by its founder; current documents at Penn; values statements across Penn and at other peer institutions; and analysis of comments made by Penn community members in listening sessions and a survey.

The Commission conducted nineteen listening sessions with community members between February 13 and April 17, 2024. This included individual sessions with deans, faculty, students, staff, postdoctoral scholars, Trustees, alumni, and emeriti and retired professors. Some of the sessions delivered less participation than others, with low numbers of participants in at least one session each with postdoctoral scholars, students, and faculty.

The Penn survey delivered 231 responses. These were unevenly split; staff submitted approximately half ( $n = 116$ ) of the surveys collected. Next were standing faculty ( $n = 54$ ), and then non-standing faculty and master's students. The smallest numbers of responses were submitted by doctoral students, postdoctoral scholars, and undergraduates. Though it is too early to determine conclusively, the uneven response rate may indicate that other than staff, Penn community members by and large fearful of speaking about it, are unconvinced that speaking out will make a difference, or some combination of the two.

Regardless of response rate, the survey and listening sessions show similar data. There is a concern across the board with building better community and sustaining open expression and academic freedom. Though in need of confirmation by additional listening sessions, the current data display a patterned engagement across members of the Penn community with a cluster of values that, on the one hand, inspire behavior that might draw community members towards commonality, and, on the other, reflect concerns about the viability of community-building. Values differ slightly across community members.

The data from the listening sessions give more detail than those obtained by the survey. Community members are by and large supportive of efforts to identify Penn values, but there are qualifications: one faculty member says that “values are not enough. We have values but we don't have rules,” while another suggests that values are “only useful if they are actionable.” Though every community member supports free speech and open expression, there are qualifications here too. “Penn should offer a generous but not infinite amount of free speech,” says one faculty member, while a staff member is more pointed: “when someone uses free speech that endorses or incites genocide, what is the University's response? How do we get to ‘we believe in free speech,’ but when that free speech calls for eradication based on culture, religion, ethnicity, and incites violence—what is the values statement around that?”

Across both the listening sessions and survey, Penn community members appear to see **inclusiveness** and **belonging** as central to fostering a sense of community. Often used interchangeably, they have different meanings for different community members: students ask for inclusive classrooms, spaces, and communities, noting that security and safety come from belonging; staff request inclusive decision-making and processes; faculty note that “one of our values is to be with the community, not just in it.” Multiple variables in the University's environment are thought to have impact. Factors that detract from a sense of inclusiveness and belonging include Penn's hierarchical and decentralized structure, its competitive ethos (what one student

framed as “an ethos of working until you are dead”), undue influence from donors, and, for undergraduates, the exclusive club culture. Factors that could enhance a sense of belonging and inclusiveness include more Penn-wide events, more programming designed to bring together people with different backgrounds and beliefs, investing more efforts locally, more gathering spaces (mentioned repeatedly by students), leadership reflecting the community, and a leadership style that is not primarily ideological. An uneven sense of inclusiveness and belonging could be further resolved by ensuring fair repercussions are applied consistently across community members, by enhancing centralization and reducing siloes, by lowering or eliminating the cost of renting spaces across buildings, by utilizing PIK professors and other existent structures to enhance commonality, or even by introducing a “Day of Belonging” each semester for undergraduates to highlight discussions about emotional health. Much mention is made, particularly by staff and students, of the value in developing more of a campus culture at Penn—introducing a holiday market, more campus hot spots, a student pub, or vendors and food trucks on campus. At particular risk here are staff, who often feel limited to and isolated in one school, and master’s students, professional students, and postdoctoral scholars, who feel there is no community for them and no attempt by the University to build one.

Community members’ discussions of values tend to position them as enhancing or detracting from inclusiveness and belonging. This may draw partly from the prompts individuals were given during the listening sessions, but it nonetheless offers a clear way to discuss the salience of specific values. Values mentioned repeatedly by members of the Penn community include dignity, civility, curiosity, transparency, collaboration, autonomy, equity, tolerance, and accountability, though concerns about them are mentioned across the board. Two related issues that detract from the ability to act upon these values are concerns about physical and psychological safety and the fear these concerns generate. Though by some accounts not all of these qualify as values, they are mentioned here alphabetically to reflect more fully the broad canvas of what appears to be, at least in a preliminary sense, on the community’s mind:

**Accountability** seems to feature centrally in comments by community members. One staff member notes that “actions should come with accountability.” Another community member offers that “accountability fosters personal investment and contributes to transparency and to trust in decision-making. Its absence leads to distrust.” Following that logic, one respondent to the survey suggests limiting donors from setting the University’s policies, curricula, or research. Another calls for “mechanisms for support of all students ... Protection from doxing is important for campus to figure out how to manage.” While one postdoctoral scholar suggests holding people accountable for respectful behavior to others, many community members mention the need for better outreach to the West Philadelphia community: “we need to focus outward,” says one postdoctoral scholar.

**Autonomy** also appears to surface repeatedly across the survey and listening groups. In the survey, both students and faculty admit feeling troubled by outside influence, specifically that of donors. Noting that the constitution of advisory boards is typically not diverse, one respondent to the survey says their identity—largely white, wealthy, and from Wharton—conflicts with Penn’s inclusiveness. A graduate student underscores the concern in a listening session by asking, “who is actually in charge of the University?” The notion that the University’s administrators/leaders can’t help students if donors can remove them because of their beliefs is exacerbated by a “big distrust” of donors and Trustees who “do not understand that the things they do really impact actual students.”

**Civility** is a value that also appears to be widely invoked across the community. A faculty member says, “we need to foster civil discourse—talking groups, help people to talk across differences, have conversations.” One alumnus notes that “we can lead the charge around civil discourse—we don’t all have to agree, we should have a diversity of thought, but we need to respect and be able to listen to each other.” Another suggests, “there should be consequences for the failure to be civil.” Survey respondents call on Penn to “put work into being nuanced” and stress “things not being black and white.” The “last few months,” says one, “have revealed that too many members of our community don’t share the focus on complexity and nuance that ought to be a hallmark of an elite university.” Students echo these concerns. In multiple students’ view: “We don’t do a good job of diversity of opinion/thought, not just among students but also among faculty and leaders,” but there is a “need to respect people’s opinions and feel there is a safe space to share thoughts.” One student calls for the introduction of classes on “how to have hard conversations.”

**Collaboration** seems to receive frequent mention by the Penn community, drawing partly from the University’s long-standing regard for interdisciplinarity. Many students voice the desire for a close-knit, collaborative community, one that could produce “a sense of community across all the schools.” As one graduate student notes in a discussion on inclusivity and diversity, “‘No one left behind’ would be an appropriate motto.” One staff member heralds the consultation with others that “allows you to leverage their expertise.” Yet, both students and staff are troubled by arrangements, like siloes, that impede collaboration, and their reduction or elimination is seen as central to inspiring a sense of belonging. Fixes for collaboration include more opportunities to engage beyond one’s own department, school, or identity in campus-wide programming that stresses the dynamics of reaching out.

**Curiosity** also seems to be mentioned frequently at Penn, often in line with Franklin’s oft-cited thoughts on its necessary presence in both learning and life. Staff, students, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and Trustees all commend its relevance. Defining it as “a desire to know oneself through one’s environment,” one faculty member sees curiosity as central to building relationships at Penn, where it introduces “the knowledge that you are not alone, you are part of something.” For one staff member, curiosity is an antidote to defensiveness, for another, it is the gate to accepting different kinds of diversity. Trustees underscore the need to embrace curiosity over reticence. One staff member asks, “what if we said understanding hate” instead of countering it, while a community member illustrates what that would look like: “People need to know more, learn more, hear more ... Teach where a conflict or hate exists, and why ... People only know what they know, and most of what they know is what they’ve grown up hearing ... The hate comes from that limited knowledge.” A faculty member shares that “along with curiosity comes respect for the act of being curious.”

**Dignity** also seems to be valued by the Penn community. “What does it look like to be in a space that might feel uncomfortable?” asks one faculty member. But many struggle to feel the dignity that they seek. Students feel sidelined by Penn’s siloes, its decentralization, and a communicative style they characterize as “speaking past the students.” What is difficult for Penn undergraduates writ large appears to be even more the case for international, first-generation, and nontraditional students, who at times feel unseen. Staff members also share feeling undervalued, overlooked, and sometimes dispensable. One faculty member mentions needing to sometimes “fight for staff to be seen as individuals, whole people, with families, who have their value and are not just there to do faculty’s bidding.” Feelings of devaluation among staff were exacerbated in the fall, when they received the University’s relays simultaneous to their public circulation, which left them little time to figure out

how to accommodate the University's changing priorities. In repeated comments, staff members describe themselves as the ones responsible for interpreting messages and dealing with their effects and consequences, but add they were not apprised of changes until they had already been announced. Faculty admit it can be hard to be allies to staff, especially during a crisis, and training is needed on when to speak up. Donor interference is also seen by some as undermining the dignity of community members who can speak with more proximity about what is happening on campus. And yet, as one alumnus notes, the Penn community should be about "assuming the best intentions of people, and assuming that others will provide you with the same grace."

**Engagement** seems to receive many mentions by community members. One staff member credits engagement with helping to foster a sense of community, while another hopes for "engagement everywhere for everyone." Noting that engagement needs to involve respect, empathy, and collaboration, a community member considers it important. Praising the various ways in which Penn has allowed alumni to stay engaged, one alumnus lauds the "energy that you get when you are on campus, being around students and faculty, educators that all have a shared vision of trying to be the best at what they do." Multiple alumni share the idea of "paying it forward," i.e., "you had mentors, you need to pay it forward and be a mentor."

**Equity** appears to be mentioned widely among community members. Though one alumnus says promisingly that "all of us have a voice at the University—no one is more primary or secondary than the other," experience provides a different picture. Trustees say that equity is not distributed fairly and not every voice is heard. Much of equity's discussion focuses on staff members, who share repeatedly that they were left in the fall interpreting the University's decisions without sufficient guidance. They admit that their concerns are often overlooked, and in the survey, they point to hierarchical arrangements as a partial cause. One faculty member summarizes these sentiments, noting, "we need to advocate for staff, who do a lot of the heavy lifting for us." Staff members share that since the fall, "the impact on staff has been huge—there is a brand-new administrative asset who has to answer angry phone calls; the admins take the hit." The staff involved with Student Health, teaching, and CAPS are mentioned as needing more support than others. Graduate students also note multiple sources of inequity. Postdoctoral scholars and master's students report feeling undervalued due to their marginal status, while master's students feel under-resourced relative to both undergraduates and doctoral students. One postdoctoral scholar points to the lack of women's restrooms in whole floors and departments. Religious students do not all experience equal space and resources, while disabled students list inaccessible or broken walkways and ramps. Doctoral and professional students point to both a perceived inequity across graduate schools and insufficient institutional support. Suggested fixes to the lack of equity among staff include the introduction of continuing education courses, ethics classes for staff (a request also made by students), and floating holidays to be taken in lieu of sick days. For students, fixes might include support in forming social groups, making health insurance available to professional students and reducing their unpaid internships, improving medical and psychological support, and enhancing ADA compliance in old buildings. As one graduate student notes, "the institution needs to show that it cares about everyone."

**Practicality** also appears to surface explicitly and implicitly across Penn community responses. Practicality refers to a sense of usefulness that puts knowledge to use by applying it to the resolution of concrete problems. Often called common sense or "street smarts," practicality is mentioned across all sectors of the Penn community. Aptly reflected in the University's many



practical schools, many of which lead in their respective fields, practicality is seen as a virtue by graduate students, who hold that being “pragmatic, practical” is at the heart of Penn’s charter. One staff member recalls Franklin’s nod to “the useful” and says, “we should think about practical aspects” of Penn’s mission, another that Penn should be a model for other institutions: “we need to stay highly regarded [in the broader West Philadelphia] community, understand the community of which we are a part.” An alumnus observes that Penn needs to teach “beyond what is included in our disciplines, we need to teach citizenship to students,” while another says Penn undergraduates need to be given “life skills.”

**Service** appears to be mentioned often, though it is understood in different ways. For some, service means volunteering, where “we should be engaging locally in really practical ways” and modeling such action for staff, faculty, and students. One Trustee mentions the need to integrate with the West Philadelphia community more than we do at present, while a staff member points to the importance of volunteerism and “a desire to help for the betterment of others.” But challenges remain. One postdoctoral scholar says questions remain about how Penn can build community with West Philadelphia, another notes that “when people speak about Philadelphia, they engender fear, which then shapes where postdocs live, who they interact with, how far away from campus they are willing to go.” For others, it means developing across community members the tools to effect change. One faculty member includes innovation as part of a service framework, a “curiosity-driven version of innovation.” Another community member reflects that “if every graduate came out of the University with the skillset to help people communicate with each other better, especially where there are contradictory points of view, then we could really change the world.” For others, it connotes action to enhance the public good. One faculty member mentions Penn’s “great value of service” that is “both Philadelphia-oriented but also global,” pointing to how the “way we want to influence medicine” comes from Benjamin Franklin—useful knowledge, translating to the practical.” As another community member notes, “we should all be working for the betterment of humanity.”

**Tolerance** appears to surface frequently in the data. Staff members have much to say on this. Some note that “different conversations are allowed in different settings” and that self-censoring undercuts “conversations about issues on which you don’t agree.” But tolerance has different meanings for community members, reflecting the power dynamics that underscore who can decide to tolerate versus who is being tolerated. While one staff member notes that “universities are safe spaces for free speech ... this is the whole point of a college campus,” others share that political conservatives and moderates feel “ostracized and marginalized” and that religious individuals of all faiths are a devalued minority. One graduate student desires institutional neutrality and for Penn to avoid getting involved in political issues. One faculty member calls tolerance of hate speech exclusionary, while another expresses shock it is tolerated at all. A community member reflects these views when saying that “political conservatives need to feel that they belong. Stop advocacy for one side or the other ... Penn should stay out of the values business.” The spread of responses to the value of tolerance has impact for the community. As one student reflects, “I’m leaving Penn without learning necessarily how to [speak across the aisle].” One fix mentioned repeatedly is to introduce classes on citizenship, ethics, civil discourse, and active listening.

**Transparency** appears high in the priorities of Penn community members. One staff member phrases it well: “Penn should be a place that fails big and owns it and is open about challenges and things that haven’t gone according to plan.” Yet a lack of transparency exists in multiple places: a Trustee points to its absence when big decisions are being made, a staff member to its absence in



messaging, particularly from last fall. Transparency, says another staff member, needs to uphold ethics across the board, “from the way you deal with students to the way staff are treated.” Faculty members voice similar sentiments, noting, “we should be clear about facts and consequences,” and that a lack of transparency and sense of secrecy emboldens students to interpret without basis. In the survey, both students and staff take issue with transparency, as it reflects the imprecise nature of the University’s statements and an official communicative style that doesn’t clearly delineate terms like freedom of speech, hate speech, diversity, antisemitism, or Zionism. One staff member notes that “though we do a lot of things well, we don’t communicate clearly.” The lack of clear communication can diminish the value of those left out of the circle, prompting comments like the request of one staff member to “stop treating us like children. Stop withholding information.” Students feel similarly, asking for transparency about the University’s decision-making “around what happened in the fall.” Some students also expressed concerns of a perceived inequity in addressing Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students throughout communication in the fall. One student remarks that Penn could become known as a place that has monthly conversations on hard topics, even after a particular issue dies down. Another student underscores what happens without transparency: “there is a loss of knowledge from not talking.”

A concern for **safety** and the **fear** this concern causes is widely noted in both the survey and listening sessions by students, faculty, staff, and postdoctoral scholars. But it appears to mean different things to members of the community and is attributed to various dimensions of campus life. While a concern for safety is associated with the possibility of physical, psychological, and emotional harm to oneself and others, it also means, in one staff member’s view, having “transparent and open conversations without fear of retribution.” Students, faculty, and staff each mention the fear of being able to speak their mind freely, with one staff member sharing that staff worry about being canceled if they say the wrong thing and a faculty member admitting that “people are just staying out of the tough conversations.” Another faculty member goes so far as to characterize Penn as “a culture of fear,” adding that some faculty “are afraid of speaking with students before or after class.” Staff members admit that “staff don’t necessarily feel safe putting their thoughts forward the same way students and faculty do,” and they point to a hierarchy concerning harm: “Faculty on the top (especially tenured faculty), then students, and staff are at the bottom. When harm occurs, it depends on who committed the harm and to whom. The outcome is different depending on whether it is a staff member or a faculty member who committed harm to a student.” Fear also comes from other sources. One survey respondent says that “donors making destabilizing decisions and getting the largest say have made me feel excluded and fearful,” while another shares, “I have felt excluded and at risk as a result of peaceful pro-Palestinian activism at Penn.” Postdoctoral scholars in listening sessions point to bullying behavior or poor treatment by their PIs or sponsors, with no way to report it effectively.

The analysis of these discussions is at best preliminary and needs confirmation by additional data, specifically to be collected at future listening sessions with Penn community members. Yet it seems clear, at least for now, that the exercise of crafting a values statement for Penn is a timely endeavor that may help clarify Penn’s way forward towards building community.

### ***A Pilot Values Statement***

Universities can be relevant when they recognize, contemplate, and accommodate change. This makes any values statement contingent and necessitates its repeated and continuous updating in accordance with the ongoing work of values clarification still to come. Although values statements

necessarily elide completion, the process of engaging the Penn community in addressing values is worthwhile in and of itself. And because the University needs to balance the centralizing and decentralizing impulses essential to its operation, creating a values statement can help remake the siloes necessary for optimum organization into permeable structures, membranes rather than walls.

With these caveats in mind, we envision a Penn values statement drawing from Interim President Jameson's metaphor of a tree and its branches. The tree trunk reflects the core values of the University, optimally designed to guide action, while the branches reflect individual entities around Penn's campus, where schools, departments, facilities, and services weigh in on what those values mean to them, informing and inviting new reflection on their existing values statements. We envision a University plan that can adopt and implement these values throughout the University's structure, ensuring repeated and continuous engagement with Penn's values. As one faculty member notes, "values statements are only useful if they are actionable, if [they] can be implemented."

If a Penn values statement is to be consonant with Penn community members, it needs to rest on a broad commitment to open expression and academic freedom, which the Penn community holds as central in bringing the community together and sustaining its commonality. Though open expression and academic freedom tend to be discussed most when they are being contested or violated, upholding them as central pillars is an inviolate principle at Penn. As Franklin noted early on, when he wrote under the guise of Silence Dogood, "Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom—and no such thing as public liberty without freedom of speech" (1722). In this context, we suggest the following three pairs of values. In each case, the pair's first term, drawing from Franklin and Penn's foundation, leads to the pair's second term, which reflects its contemporary salience. Each pair of values also builds in concentric circles on the pair that precedes it, expanding the sphere of the University's activity from the individual, to the community, to the world:

**Curiosity and Belonging:** This first possible pair of Penn values primarily operates in the individual realm. "Curiosity" is the state of being genuinely inquisitive—both about ideas and about who others are, what they believe, do, and prioritize, and why. "Belonging" is what ensues when different community members feel similarly welcomed, valued, or accepted by the community. Belonging refers to a state of involvement with others that is supportive and gives individuals the sense that they fit in equitably. Because social curiosity stimulates the desire to associate with others, belonging is what comes of being curious. "We need to bring groups together in wonder, not just in protest and learning," says one faculty member. Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of the University's regard for academic freedom and open expression. For these reasons, Franklin extolled its virtues, seeing curiosity as central to the diminution of what he called "an unaccountable Prejudice in favour of Ancient Customs and Habitudes" (1749). One community member voices hope that "curiosity can balance with an intentionality to be humble and listen to communities that don't have our privilege." Put differently, curiosity and belonging may be what is needed to sustain Penn as a community that not only engages with ideas that challenge us but anticipates and shapes challenging circumstances as well.

**Dignity and Engagement:** This second possible pair of Penn values operates predominantly across the community. "Dignity" is the state of being valued or worthy of respect, and it draws from one's identity, background, experiences, beliefs, and ideas. "Engagement" responds to the dignity of others by involving them voluntarily in community, optimally offering them mutual benefit by connecting over shared aims. In Franklin's words, "search others for their virtues, thy self for thy vices" (1738), and he saw value even in one's adversary, counseling the public to "love your Enemies, for they tell

you your Faults” (1756). Both dignity and engagement sustain community, where community members can engage in disagreement without diminishing commonality or producing a culture of silence and self-censorship. Both values can be particularly useful in the University’s statements, where they can help facilitate a sense of fairness, clarity, and transparency. In one undergraduate student’s words, we should be able “to talk about hard things.”

**Practicality and Service:** This third possible pair of Penn values articulates the worth of applying knowledge to the world’s betterment. “Practicality” refers to the usefulness of grounding knowledge in tangible action. “Service” references actions that help others or are designed to work to their benefit. Together, these values outline how making knowledge usable can help improve the world. Both were uppermost for Franklin. One of his most cited aphorisms was “well done is better than well said” (1737), a sentiment he invoked in his writings on the University serving the public good: “we should be glad of an Opportunity to serve others by any Invention of ours, and this we should do freely and generously” (1749). For Franklin, Penn was built to serve the common good. As one community member notes, “we should all be working for the betterment of humanity.”

Reflecting on this legacy has produced a possible motto that captures the substance and style of the Penn community:

*Educating, inspiring, and empowering to improve the world with curiosity and belonging, dignity and engagement, practicality and service.*

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

1. We recommend the **creation of a values statement** for members of the Penn community. Creating a values statement for the entire University will require a dedicated process to identify core values that define Penn as an institution, rooted in our history, and resonant with our current moment. We envisage the creation of any values statement as an exercise perpetually in formation, reshaped continuously by dynamic circumstances and necessarily accommodating ongoing change. We envision that this process would require the following:
  - a. Identify and enlist a team of experts external to Penn who can lead the process of designing and implementing a plan for creating a shared Penn values statement.
  - b. Identify an appropriate group of the University’s leaders who can take the efforts of this Commission forward to work in conjunction with outside experts in creating a values statement.
  - c. Continue listening sessions where Penn community members can give input on Penn values, through a variety of opportunities, such as group discussions, written questionnaires, continuous access to Google forms, and other feedback modalities.
  - d. Craft a values statement that is clear, concise, and shareable across multiple media. As a living document, it should adjust to ongoing dynamics and accommodate the discomfort often accompanying disagreement. Worth further contemplation in listening sessions is how to capture missing voices, how to protect the privacy of those taking part, and how to accommodate those who resist conversation, despite efforts to encourage it.
2. We recommend developing a **clear plan for adopting, sharing, and implementing this values statement** across the Penn community in conjunction with a team of experts external to Penn. We see this involving the following:
  - a. Introduce a Penn values statement to prospective and new students during the admission and orientation processes, to prospective and new staff and faculty during the

- hiring processes, and to current students, staff, faculty, and alumni, and incorporate values discussions in curricular, co-curricular, and student-life programs, handbooks, College Houses, Penn Alumni information, and other relevant student, staff, and faculty trainings and workshop processes. Groups in our increasingly diverse community that do not fall easily into existing categories but warrant attention are postdoctoral scholars and master's students.
- b. Commit senior leadership to structuring messaging in ways that consistently raise up and affirm these values as central to the University's community and expect Penn community members (faculty, staff, students, postdoctoral scholars, and alumni) to uphold these values for the duration of their association with the University. Penn should also prepare community members to engage productively when conflicts occur over the understanding or expression of our values.
  - c. Design clear and centralized options to report concerns. There is an expectation that such reports would be considered through a process that is educational and restorative, rather than punitive. Transparency should be upheld whenever possible, and in cases where it is not possible, the Penn community should be informed.
  - d. Strengthen, develop, and make visible resources that are reflective and inclusive of Penn community members in mediating and supporting them through conflict, such as restorative practices, the Ombuds Office, and the SNF Paideia Program.
3. We recommend the **development of initiatives to protect/nourish shared values** at Penn. If the shared values we identify are to prevail, we will need to develop initiatives to protect and nourish them. With an eye to nuance, empathy, and restorative action, we recommend the development of a set of initiatives that will help rebuild and sustain trust for all members of the Penn community while maintaining maximum transparency. We envision these initiatives including the following:
- a. Design a set of mechanisms that prioritize listening to community members in an ongoing fashion. With the dual aim of breaking down siloes and promoting regular and widespread access to conversational opportunities between community members and the University's leaders, this would include developing an ongoing community survey through a variety of modalities. Other possible mechanisms might include regular, open meetings and/or a continuous listening group or groups that bring leadership together with the Penn community on a scheduled and ongoing basis.
  - b. Develop and make available open, transparent, and clear strategies to support Penn community members who have been impacted by hate and create physical spaces/opportunities that accommodate continuous, open discussion across different groups of community members. Because the absence of inclusive spaces is a repeated theme in discussions with undergraduates, its rectification can be accomplished by evaluating existing physical spaces and adding new ones.
  - c. a) Reassess campus safety, discipline, and well-being by considering the expansion of restorative practices, identifying ways to help students, staff, and faculty feel safe, reviewing the Division of Public Safety's consultation process, reexamining existing disciplinary cases as appropriate, addressing competition and isolation in student culture and student organizations, and reviewing the University's structures and hierarchies that are important for organization and implementation but may obstruct inclusion and understanding across different members of the Penn community.

It is useful to remember that all the data shared here were collected and analyzed over a brief period and with largely unrepresentative sectors of Penn's community, pointing to the need for further study of the issues this report raises. Nonetheless, its insights and recommendations point in the direction of values that are both evergreen and responsive to changing circumstances on Penn's campus. More importantly, they underscore both the desirability and viability of designing, implementing, and sustaining a Penn values statement that is reflective of the Penn community.



Appendix G: Open Expression Brochure

What is the Committee on Open Expression?

The Committee on Open Expression is a standing committee of the University Council with faculty, student, administration and staff representation. Members mediate conflicts during campus incidents and disturbances to prevent violations of the Open Expression Guidelines, advise Delegates at the scene on issues concerning the Guidelines, and interpret the Guidelines at the request of any member of the University community.

The Committee on Open Expression (Office of the Secretary) | (215) 898-7005

How is the Vice Provost for University Life involved in open expression issues?

The Open Expression Guidelines specify that responsibilities for protecting and maintaining the right of open expression lie with the Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL). The Vice Provost's primary responsibility is to enforce the Guidelines and the Vice Provost may choose to delegate this responsibility. This delegate then has full authority to act in the name of the VPUL under the Guidelines.

The Office of the Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL) | (215) 898-6081

To learn more about Open Expression at Penn or to request a Delegate at an upcoming event, please visit:

https://osa.university.life.upenn.edu/oe/



Non-discrimination Policy Statement

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, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender, identity, religion, creed, national or ethnic origin, citizenship status, age, disability, veteran status or any other legally protected class status under the administration of its admissions, financial aid, educational or athletic programs, or other University administered programs or in its employment practices.

GUIDELINES ON OPEN EXPRESSION for Students, Faculty, and Staff

What is open expression?

The University of Pennsylvania, as a community of scholars, affirms, supports and cherishes the concepts of freedom of thought, inquiry, speech, and lawful assembly. The freedom to experiment, to present and examine alternative data and theories; the freedom to hear, express, and debate various views; and the freedom to voice criticism of existing practices and values are fundamental rights that must be upheld and practiced by the University in a free society.

The University shall be vigilant to ensure the continuing openness and effectiveness of channels of communication among members of the University community on questions of common interest. To further this purpose, a Committee on Open Expression has been established as a standing committee on University Council.



### What are the Open Expression Guidelines?

The Guidelines support the right to speech by Penn community members and specify certain conduct that is impermissible regardless of where a meeting or demonstration of open expression is held. Such conduct includes:

- ▶ unreasonably interfering with activities of other persons. Unreasonable interference depends on the time of day, size, noise level\* and general tenor of a meeting, event or demonstration
- ▶ causing injury to persons or property, or threatening to cause such injury
- ▶ holding meetings, events or demonstrations under circumstances where health and safety is endangered
- ▶ interfering with unimpeded movement in and out of buildings and rooms and through all passageways

### Are any campus locations off-limits for demonstrations where meetings or events are taking place?

Unless designated as public, "meetings" are considered private. Unless designated otherwise, campus "events" are generally open to the public. "Demonstrations" refer to the presence of one or more people with the intent to express a particular point of view in a manner that attracts attention, such as protest, rally, sit-in, or vigil. Under the Guidelines, certain campus locations are off-limits for demonstrations where meetings or events are taking place. These include:

- ▶ private offices, research laboratories and associated facilities, and computer centers
- ▶ offices, museums, libraries, and other facilities that normally contain valuable or sensitive materials, collections, equipment, or records protected by law or by existing University policy
- ▶ classrooms, seminar rooms, auditoriums or meeting rooms in which classes are being held or immediately scheduled
- ▶ hospitals, emergency facilities, facilities containing communication systems, utilities, or other facilities or services vital to the continual functioning of the University

### What happens when an individual(s) violates the Open Expression Guidelines?

- ▶ Cases involving undergraduate students are referred by the Vice Provost for University Life or a designee to the Center for Community Standards and Accountability, which investigates and decides what, if any, disciplinary action to pursue.
- ▶ Cases involving graduate or professional students are referred by the Vice Provost for University Life to the Center for Community Standards and Accountability or to the established disciplinary body of the student's school.
- ▶ Cases involving faculty are referred to the appropriate Dean or to the Provost.
- ▶ Cases involving University staff or administrators are referred to that individual's supervisor or any other person above that individual in the supervisory line.

#### How do the VPUL, CSA, and the COE work together?

The Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL), Center for Community Standards and Accountability (CSA), and Committee on Open Expression (COE) are separate entities with distinct roles in guiding, responding to, and adjudicating issues of Open Expression. The VPUL mediates and endorses guidance as written, the CSA investigates and adjudicates concerns based on the Guidelines, and the COE provides interpretation and stewardship of the Guidelines.

\*It has been found that an "unreasonably" loud noise level occurs above 85 decibels, measured with a calibrated sound level meter on "A" weighting, on "slow response" 10 feet away from road directly in front of an amplifier when the amplifier is within 50 feet of building used for academic, residential or administrative purposes. (See the Report on Tests on Noise Levels ... June 22, 1992, Committee on Open Expression)  
Note: Special permission to exceed the 85dB-A level at particular places on occasions such as Spring Fling, Hiy Day, Alumni Day, Commencement, etc. may be obtained from Penn University Life.

### Who are VPUL Open Expression Delegates?

VPUL Open Expression Delegates can attend meetings, events or demonstrations where violations of the Guidelines might occur and are identified by a badge worn when volunteering. The Delegate's role is to protect the rights of the participant(s) to express their opinions in non-disruptive ways, as well as to protect the rights of other members of the University community to conduct normal business. The Delegate mediates conflicts on site, by notifying individuals when their conduct may violate the Guidelines and provides options on how to modify that behavior. In instances where mediation is not successful the Delegate will share a report for the VPUL to review.