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INSPIRING IMPACT MAGAZINE

Spring 2026

A CLIMATE OF Possibility

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Friends,

Thank you for supporting Penn and being part of our vibrant, interconnected community. These connections are the lifeblood of our University, and they are an important part of what makes Penn such a distinctive place. Here, first-year students form lifelong friendships, researchers collaborate across disciplines, and partnerships with communities and businesses bring new ideas to life. In short, Penn is where new perspectives come together to spark discovery and shape our future.

This issue highlights just a few of those connections in action. An interdisciplinary approach is driving progress across the University: The new Penn Climate initiative brings together expertise from every field to develop innovative climate solutions; researchers are adopting more agile models that integrate advances in AI and help us adapt to a changing funding landscape; and the Computational Social Science Lab uses large-scale data to address complex societal challenges. You'll also see how visionary philanthropy is helping to make this work possible.

Thank you again for your continued support of Penn. I look forward to seeing you at an event soon!

Sincerely,

Wendy Holman, W'97
Chair, Trustee Development Committee

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Throughout this issue, we've included QR codes that link to related videos and other digital content. Using your mobile phone or tablet, open the built-in camera app. Point the camera at the QR code, and tap the banner to access the content.

A CLIMATE OF Possibility

How philanthropy is driving Penn's progress toward climate solutions

At Dorit Aviv's Thermal Architecture Lab, she and her team are rethinking some of the basic assumptions about how our built environment can alleviate the effects of extreme heat. At the Penn Center for Climate Resilience, led by R. Jisung Park, the team is focused on the impacts of climate change that are hidden in plain sight, from the loss of worker productivity to declining student test scores and long-term health effects. At the EconClimate Lab, Heather Boushey is exploring how decarbonizing our energy system can grow the economy equitably. The common thread? Each program exemplifies how Penn is creating innovative, implementable solutions to one of the most significant challenges of our time: climate change.

Now, we have launched Penn Climate, a University-wide initiative to mobilize and coordinate our vast experience to address climate and energy concerns. This effort will advance high-impact initiatives and position Penn as a premier hub for climate solutions.

This fall, Sanya Carley was named the University's Vice Provost for Climate Science, Policy, and Action. Carley is one of the world's leading experts on energy policy, especially related to affordability, decarbonization, and the impact of changing climate systems. In her new role, she is leading Penn Climate and the work to integrate knowledge from every part of the University to find the climate solutions we need.

> **"One of Penn's greatest strengths is our talent in applied, translational work. All 12 of Penn's schools are committed to climate action through solutions that are implementable—meaning that what we develop at Penn can be replicated at scale."**

SANYA CARLEY
Vice Provost for Climate Science, Policy, and Action

Penn Climate brings together the full power of the University to confront the problem of climate change. By uniting climate research, education, policy, and action across disciplines, Penn Climate will support ambitious initiatives that tackle the climate crisis locally, nationally, and globally.

At its core, Penn Climate is built on three keystones:

CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CLIMATE LEADERS

Preparing students to lead in a climate-altered world

STRENGTHENING INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

Integrating and amplifying climate scholarship across all 12 of Penn's schools to accelerate discovery and identify real-world solutions

ADVANCING TRANSFORMATIONAL INITIATIVES THROUGH THE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS HUB

Launching strategic efforts that tackle our most urgent climate challenges

Across the University, Penn scholars are already turning insight into action, demonstrating how rigorous research, creative thinking, and cross-disciplinary collaboration can drive meaningful climate solutions. Here are just a few examples.

What if we could turn waste into fuel? A clean energy future may depend on it. At **Penn Engineering**, **Anthony Shoji Hall**, Associate Professor of Materials Science and Engineering, is developing methods that use electricity to drive chemical reactions, turning substances like carbon dioxide and nitrate into useful products such as sustainable fuels and fertilizers. His lab is also working to improve the performance of fuel cells in order to make them more efficient, affordable, and ready for widespread use.

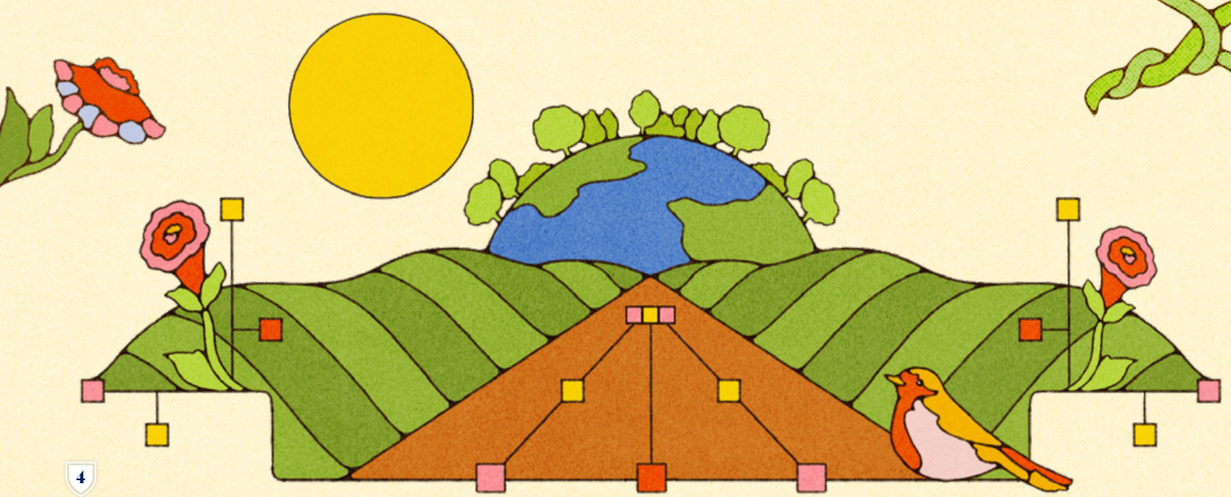
Climate change is transforming governance, both in the United States and around the world. In her scholarship, **Shelley Welton**, Presidential Distinguished Professor of Law and Energy Policy with the **Kleinman Center** and **Penn Carey Law**, is exploring how energy transitions can be made justly for local populations, how climate change is affecting the governance related to power grid reliability, and much more.

Plants can't just pick up and move if they don't like where they are. Understanding how they grow, adapt, and survive in changing environments is critical to understanding how plants respond to climate change. At the **Plant Adaptability and Resilience Center at Penn Arts & Sciences**, **Doris Wagner**, DiMaura Professor of Biology and Center Director, is studying how plants adjust to the stresses of climate change, giving us vital insights into protecting the food systems we all rely on.

PHILANTHROPY: A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Philanthropy has catalyzed Penn's leadership in climate and sustainability. Visionary support from key donors has built a foundation of excellence across research, policy, and action, positioning Penn to launch new and impactful work.

"Thanks to the extraordinary generosity and commitment of alumni who care about this critical issue, our researchers and scientists are making breakthroughs that will help shape our climate future," said Penn President J. Larry Jameson, MD, PhD. "Donor support makes a tremendous impact in accelerating this vital work to develop new climate solutions."



A UNIFIED VISION

VAGELOS LABORATORY FOR ENERGY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

By supporting a 110,000-square-foot, LEED Platinum facility for research on energy science, P. Roy Vagelos, C'50, PAR'90, HON'99, and Diana T. Vagelos enabled Penn scientists to accelerate transformative discoveries that will advance our transition to a clean energy future.

Driven by their belief that science holds the key to solving global problems, the Vageloses have used their philanthropy to enhance graduate education and endow the Vagelos Institute for Energy Science and Technology, now one of the nation's premier centers for energy research. In addition, their support of the Vagelos Laboratory for Energy Science and Technology has propelled pioneering, interdisciplinary research.

> **"Roy and Diana's support is advancing breakthrough science for a sustainable energy future and creating an educational environment where tomorrow's energy science leaders are trained. Their generosity has shown how a clear vision can make a profound impact on research, education, and the world."**
>
> **KAREN GOLDBERG**
> Vagelos Professor in Energy Research and Inaugural Director of the Vagelos Institute for Energy Science and Technology

PENN CLIMATE

Alp Ercil, W'95, ENG'95, recognized that confronting climate change requires the knowledge and expertise of researchers from every field. That's why he made a gift to establish Penn Climate, creating both a hub for climate research and an accelerator for climate solutions.

This kind of philanthropic support is a catalyst—one that advances current initiatives and builds connections across the University that will spur new ideas and innovations. Penn has all the pieces in place, and through Ercil's gift, Penn Climate is now driving the entire University forward around a charge to generate climate solutions.

Penn Climate brings together the expertise and determination required to meet this moment. Powered by philanthropy, Penn will continue to build on this momentum—uniting disciplines, empowering leaders, and finding the climate solutions our world urgently needs.

KLEINMAN CENTER FOR ENERGY POLICY

Over a decade ago, Scott Kleinman, C'94, W'94, noticed that young people were eager to talk about energy policy, but didn't have a vocabulary to engage with energy and the energy transition. In response, Kleinman made a gift to establish the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy. Since then, the Center has elevated the national discourse on energy policy and empowered researchers to translate scholarship into action for policymakers.

> **"Scott Kleinman's vision and focus set the stage for Penn's pursuit of a sustainable energy system. Thanks to his philanthropy and continued engagement, the Kleinman Center has brought together some of the top scholars in the field and built a program that offers opportunities to faculty members and students from every one of Penn's 12 schools—creating an environment that leverages teaching and learning for smart energy policy outcomes."**
>
> **CORNELIA COLIJN**
> Executive Director of the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy

The impact on energy policy has been significant: The Kleinman Center has produced nearly 1,000 publications and nearly 200 episodes of the *Energy Policy Now* podcast, influencing policy makers around the world; sent delegations to the annual Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and launched the annual Carnot Prize, which recognizes globally distinguished contributions to energy policy. The space that Kleinman envisioned now continues to grow, with even more collaborations and points of impact.

> **"Penn's commitment to climate brings together every part of the University. With Alp's support, and by marshaling the knowledge and ingenuity of every discipline, we can meet this challenge with solutions that honor Penn's values and positively impact the future of the planet."**
>
> **SANYA CARLEY**
> Vice Provost for Climate Science, Policy, and Action

To learn more about Penn Climate's efforts, visit **climate.upenn.edu.**

To support Penn Climate, contact **Kim Grube,** Senior Associate Vice President, University Strategic Giving, at **kimgrube@upenn.edu.**

Accelerating IMPACT

Reimagining Penn's research enterprise for a changing world

A Q&A with **David Meaney,** Penn's Vice Provost for Research

Research has long been at the heart of Penn's academic mission. Today, the stakes and opportunities have never been greater. As funding models evolve and artificial intelligence reshapes discovery, David Meaney, Vice Provost for Research and the Solomon R. Pollack Professor at Penn Engineering, is guiding the University toward a more agile and impact-driven research model—one that depends on visionary partnerships to accelerate breakthroughs and advance the most promising new ideas.

Q: Penn has long been recognized as a global research powerhouse. How would you characterize Penn's research identity today? What differentiates Penn's approach to research and innovation from that of other institutions?

DM: Penn is exceptionally good at putting ideas to work. We generate insights across the spectrum—from CAR T cell therapies and mRNA technology, to policy innovation and the ways we think about the composition of the workforce—and we translate them into practice. Our ability to span the full arc from fundamental discovery to implementation is part of our secret sauce.

What differentiates us is both the range of what we do and our intentional focus on impact. Historically, Penn has done that extraordinarily well, and we're positioned to do even more in the future.

Q: *Penn Forward*, the University's current strategic planning initiative, places research at the core of advancing Penn's mission. What can you share about your work leading the Research Strategy and Financing working group, and how do you see Penn's research engine evolving in the coming years?

DM: Three strong themes have emerged as part of *Penn Forward*. First, we need to deepen our partnerships with industry so that we become even more agile in moving ideas to market. As our research becomes more practical and more directly useful to society, industry partners should be engaged from the earliest stages of an idea all the way through product development. Our faculty increasingly see this as a critical dimension of their scholarship, and these partnerships will further strengthen Penn's role as an economic engine in the region. Second, we are advancing what we call the "One Penn" research ecosystem, making it far easier for scholars to find collaborators across disciplines and schools. At a university of our size, we have extraordinary expertise, but we need more robust ways to connect with one another. Third, we need to consider new funding models that will allow us to strategically deploy resources for bold, unproven ideas that need early support to fully develop.

> *"We are advancing what we call the 'One Penn' research ecosystem, making it far easier for scholars to find collaborators across disciplines and schools."*
>
> DAVID MEANEY

Q: Artificial intelligence is reshaping every field of inquiry. How is Penn leveraging AI to accelerate research discovery, and what opportunities do you see ahead for AI-driven breakthroughs?

DM: AI is going to have a profound impact on the research enterprise. The speed at which we can make discoveries is accelerating rapidly. Breakthroughs often happen when ideas from different fields converge. Take optogenetics—a technique that lets scientists control cell activity using light. The foundational technologies existed for decades before researchers connected them in a new way and transformed medicine. AI is an accelerant for exactly that kind of synthesis. It can absorb vast bodies of knowledge across disciplines and help optimize how we design and conduct experiments.

At Penn, we're leaning in through efforts like our new AI Fellows Program, which supports emerging leaders whose research engages with artificial intelligence and its implications for society. We're also providing competitive research awards to faculty pursuing the most promising AI-driven projects across a range of disciplines. The pace—and scope—of impact will be extraordinary.

Supporting AI in Research

How can AI advance research and education at Penn? These two opportunities offer high-impact ways for donors to support this work. Contact **Kim Grube** at **kimgrube@upenn.edu** to learn more.

The **Discovering the Future of AI Awards** support high-risk, high-reward projects that apply AI in transformative ways. This year, available funding allowed four awards to be made. Chosen from a competitive pool of 54 applications, the four winning projects span a wide range of disciplines. One project, CASPER4D, is using AI to reconstruct 4-D surgical environments. Another, the Penn AI Pedagogy Initiative, supports faculty and students in co-designing AI-enhanced teaching practices. Two others, ApexMol and EchoMFM, are using AI tools to accelerate drug discovery and improve diagnostic efficiency in clinical settings, respectively.

To learn more, visit: **ai.upenn.edu/discovering-future-ai**

The newest generation of researchers innovating in AI and data science is taking shape at Penn through the **AI Fellows Program.** These competitive fellowships are awarded to postdoctoral and advanced graduate students who are pursuing cross-disciplinary, AI-related research projects across Penn's schools. Through faculty mentorship, dedicated research and travel funding, and structured opportunities for collaboration and professional development, the program accelerates high-impact scholarship and builds lasting research partnerships. There are currently 51 AI Fellows at Penn.

To learn more, visit: **ai.upenn.edu/penn-ai-fellows**

Innovative Funding Models for Advancing Research

As the funding landscape evolves, Penn is proactively developing new funding mechanisms for research at all stages. Here are a few examples from across campus:

The Penn Engineering Futures Fund, fueled by visionary philanthropy, accelerates research across the School. It offers timely awards that move early ideas toward success, including large grants, industry partnerships, and startup companies. When projects succeed, the returns are reinvested, serving as a renewing source of support for promising ventures.
To learn more, contact **Vanessa White** at **vanwhite@upenn.edu.**

The Dean's Innovation Fund at Penn Medicine provides flexible, catalytic support for high-risk, high-reward research across Penn Medicine's research enterprise. Backed by philanthropy, the fund enables rapid investment in emerging ideas—often at their earliest and most uncertain stages—helping researchers advance their innovations from bench to bedside more rapidly.
To learn more, contact **Sarah Gilmour** at **sarahra@upenn.edu.**

The Dean's Horizons Fund advances scholarship across the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Penn Arts & Sciences is seeking philanthropic support for this new fund, which will advance the people, resources, and ideas shaping the next generation of knowledge.
To learn more, contact **Deb Rhebergen** at **drheberg@sas.upenn.edu.**

The StartUP Fund provides vital seed-stage investment for promising startup companies founded by Penn researchers from all 12 schools. Returns are reinvested to sustain support for new ventures over time.
To learn more, contact **Paul Mischler** at **mischler@upenn.edu.**

Q: With changes in the traditional funding environment, how is Penn rethinking its research financing model to ensure long-term sustainability and impact?

DM: Federal research funding has been the foundation of American research universities since World War II, and Penn is no exception. It supports everything from fundamental discoveries in basic science to clinical trials that determine which treatments work. This kind of funding is a vital national infrastructure that drives discovery, strengthens the economy, and improves lives. At a moment of rapid scientific change, maintaining a strong federal partnership is essential.

At the same time, research itself is evolving. Interdisciplinary, AI-enabled discovery moves faster than established funding cycles. Traditionally, federal grants are directed toward proven concepts, and it can take time for funding to materialize even after a grant is awarded. Today, more than ever, researchers need rapid funding at the proof-of-concept stage as well as support for the "last mile" to translate breakthroughs into practical applications.

Industry partnerships are an important part of our strategy here. We are also looking at new philanthropic models for donors. The Penn Engineering Futures Fund is one example of this strategy. Through a term gift, a donor can provide catalytic support for exciting projects—some of which may be able to be commercialized. The idea is that profits made through commercialization can be funneled back to support more research, so the gift becomes self-perpetuating as fuel for the research enterprise.

Q: What are some of the "great challenges of our time" that Penn researchers are uniquely positioned to tackle, and how is the University mobilizing interdisciplinary teams to address them?

DM: Universities across the country are reflecting on their mission, which is a healthy exercise. The challenges of the moment demand it. The questions we face today are extraordinarily complex. Health care is an enduring priority, but now we are also faced with questions such as: How do we promote and protect democracy in a world shaped by social media, AI, and large language models—tools that can both strengthen and threaten it? How will the AI revolution reshape the workforce, the idea of a career, even the meaning of work itself? How do we confront climate change? How do we rethink education for a new era?

These are not narrow disciplinary problems. They require economists, engineers, neuroscientists, ethicists, clinicians, and policymakers working together. Every one of Penn's 12 schools has a piece of the solution. Universities like ours are not just positioned to tackle these challenges. We are called to do so.

"The evolving research landscape demands new ways of investing in discovery. By supporting bold ideas at their earliest stages and fostering collaboration across disciplines, these innovative funding models help accelerate breakthroughs that can have a lasting impact on society."

J. LARRY JAMESON, MD, PHD
PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Q: Philanthropy can have an enormous impact on catalyzing bold research. What are some of the most exciting ways that donors can support research at Penn right now?

DM: One of the most exciting opportunities for philanthropy right now is supporting nascent, high-potential ideas. Grand challenges will be solved by extraordinary teams, which don't always form through traditional channels. At Penn we are creating new ways to fund promising research across disciplines, and philanthropy will be essential to support and expand these efforts at scale. It will also catalyze new collaborations, bringing together researchers across schools who might not otherwise find one another and giving them the runway to pursue bold questions. Universities are very good at imagining new solutions that need to be tested. Supporting the most creative ideas to see if we can get closer to a solution will be key for our future.

Philanthropy also plays a critical role in the "last mile"—the final experiments or proof points needed before an idea becomes a startup or secures major external funding. There are very few mechanisms to support this crucial stage, yet it's often where breakthroughs either move forward or stall. In all of this, speed matters. Flexible, visionary philanthropy allows us to move at the pace discovery now demands.

For more information about supporting research at Penn, contact **Kim Grube**, Senior Associate Vice President of University Strategic Giving and Partnerships, at **(215) 746-3007** or **kimgrube@upenn.edu.**

MONUMENTS RISING

The vision was ambitious, especially for 1918: the Palace of Merenptah, displayed at full, monumental height in a gallery specifically designed to showcase artifacts excavated by Penn researchers in Egypt and Nubia.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly; the artifacts had survived the transatlantic voyage intact, and newspapers buzzed with news of the collection being "one of the largest and finest in the world." Yet when the time came, revised calculations revealed that the gallery's floor was unable to support the weight of the palace's gargantuan columns, and large sections of the palace remained in storage.

Today, the vision is finally being realized—stone by heavy stone.

The largest renovation in the Penn Museum's 139-year-history, the multi-story transformation of the 14,000-square-foot Ancient Egypt and Nubia Galleries will unveil the Palace of Merenptah in its full glory (opening 2029). The Museum's extensive artifact collections will also be newly displayed alongside the 4,300-year-old Tomb Chapel of Kaipure, an architectural marvel composed of nearly 100 carved and painted limestone blocks (opening December 12, 2026).

This monumental effort has been supported at every step by philanthropy—including a Matching Challenge gift from Bernard and Lisa Selz. "This landmark undertaking would not have been possible without donor support," says Christopher Woods, Williams Director of the Penn Museum. "We are especially grateful to Bernard and Lisa Selz for their leadership in providing a matching gift, which has already helped generate more than $2.5 million in other donations toward the final stages of this transformation."

> **"This landmark undertaking would not have been possible without donor support."**
>
> **Christopher Woods**
> Williams Director of the Penn Museum

Watch a behind-the-scenes preview of the sweeping renovations.

Double your impact through the Selz Matching Challenge, available while funds last. For more information on giving opportunities, contact **Katie Murtha** at **kmurtha@upenn.edu.**

Haley Sharpe Design for Penn Museum

An Ambitious Goal

Defining a New Standard for Affordability

Penn's Quaker Commitment has changed the financial aid landscape for talented students of all backgrounds

Financial aid is central to Penn's identity and reflects a clear, enduring promise: Every student with the talent to be admitted should be able to attend and thrive without the burden of insurmountable debt. For years, Penn has made that promise real through comprehensive financial aid policies, ensuring that students from all backgrounds can fully engage in the breadth and opportunity of a Penn education, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Building on this enduring foundation, Penn reaffirmed and further strengthened its commitment in 2024 through an expanded set of financial aid policies known as the Quaker Commitment. These efforts are helping to reshape the higher education landscape, particularly for middle-income families, by extending access and opportunity in new and meaningful ways.

Beginning in the fall of 2025 for all classes, Penn is now effectively tuition-free for families earning up to $200,000 with typical assets. In addition, home equity is no longer included in financial aid calculations—a rare policy in higher education.

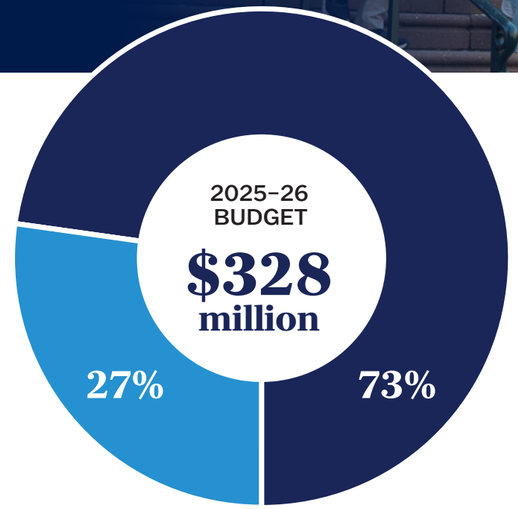
This expansion reflects Penn's belief in the transformative power of education.

"Overall, the generous financial aid here has let me meet new people, engage in different subjects, and grow in ways that I never imagined prior."

Max Brody, C'26

"Penn's financial aid has broadened both my world and my own sense of self," says Max Brody, C'26. "Even though I'm from a small town in Oklahoma, Penn's financial aid has given me the opportunity to participate in national fellowships like the Truman Scholarship, advocating for policies that would benefit rural communities like mine. Penn's financial aid also allowed me to travel internationally for the first time in my life—I had the wonderful chance to visit Chile undertaking work on dietetics and patient care."

The impact of this investment is clear. Over the past three decades, Penn's undergraduate financial aid budget has grown from $50 million to $328 million. The average aid package now exceeds $70,000, and student borrowing has declined by nearly 70 percent.



ENDOWED FUNDS	OPERATING FUNDS
$88.9 M	$239.1 M

Philanthropy is critical to supporting the Quaker Commitment. Today, endowed funds support just 27 percent of our undergraduate financial aid costs. The remainder is funded by the University's operating budget. Flipping this ratio will enable the University to redirect operating funds toward advancing Penn's priorities in research, teaching, and other critical initiatives. Increasing endowed scholarship support is one of the most powerful ways donors can help close this gap, ensuring that Penn can meet our commitment to students today and for generations to come.

"Higher education opens doors, and we've seen again and again how our students go on to make an indelible impact on their communities and society. The Quaker Commitment is an extension of our values and our firm belief that excellent students deserve the opportunity to flourish."

J. Larry Jameson, MD, PhD
President, University of Pennsylvania

At the heart of Penn's commitment to access and affordability is the catalytic power of challenge matches. Through a new University-supported match for Men and Women of Pennsylvania Challenge Fund donors, a growing pool of resources is generated that, in turn, matches gifts to existing or new endowed scholarships. The result is a virtuous cycle—one that amplifies every dollar, deepens the longevity of student support, and sustains the culture of leadership giving that drives the Quaker Commitment forward.

Roughly **10,000** undergraduates

Nearly **50%** of all students are aided

25% of students receive a Named Scholarship

25% of students belong to the Penn First Plus community

Nearly **15%** of all students are highly aided

For information on how to support financial aid and Penn First Plus, contact **Maryann O'Leary Salas** at **maryanno@upenn.edu.**

PENN'S SCIENTIFIC METHOD MAN

The CSSLab, led by PIK Professor Duncan Watts, is reinventing the social sciences with philanthropic support

An engineer by training and polymath by nature, Duncan Watts doesn't just see problems: He sees opportunities.

Watts is the Stevens University Professor and the twenty-third Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor, and he holds appointments in the Annenberg School for Communication, Penn Engineering, and Wharton. He is also the Founder and Director of the Computational Social Science (CSS) Lab, a vantage point from which he sees the many opportunities ahead.

"In the social sciences, it's very unusual for researchers to make communal, large-scale investments," Watts observes. "If you look at scientific fields like high-energy physics or astronomy, it's normal for researchers to collaborate on big pieces of infrastructure, like a particle accelerator or an orbiting telescope. They build it once, and humanity benefits for many years afterward. The social sciences need that."

That need is the goal behind the CSSLab, which was founded as a joint venture by the Wharton School, the Annenberg School, and Penn Engineering in 2021. Now, just five years later, the Lab is pioneering a model of building and investing in ambitious, shared infrastructure for the social sciences.

What does this infrastructure look like? Here are four projects that are already underway, led by Watts, CSSLab's Executive Director Jeanne Ruane, and the Lab's team of 23 students.

> "They build it once, and humanity benefits for many years afterward. The social sciences need that."

Duncan Watts

Founder and Director of the Computational Social Science (CSS) Lab

01 MEDIA BIAS DETECTOR

It's difficult to ignore the division in popular media these days. But why is the division so overwhelming? Watts, after observing the phenomenon, decided to investigate. "Our hypothesis is that this division is exacerbated less by lies or 'fake news' than by bias."

The Lab found a partner in Richard Mack, W'89, who was excited by both the inquiry and one of its outcomes: the Media Bias Detector, which uses large language models (LLMs) to identify media bias in headline news.

Unlike similar tools, the Media Bias Detector relies not on the reputation of publishers but rather on the construction and language of the articles themselves. "We can analyze stories in real time, and our tool is better able to capture the heterogeneity within different news organizations over time," says Watts. "For example, over President Trump's first 100 days in office, the Media Bias Detector was able to show what the media covered most heavily and also what was ignored—tariffs and protests, for example—by certain publishers."

For Mack, one of the Media Bias Detector's greatest advantages is its location at Penn. "Housing something at Penn, a not-for-profit focused on academic research, is a really powerful model. It's a model that isn't advancing a specific point of view or business interest," he says.

It also ensures that the Media Bias Detector is grounded in a certain academic rigor—something many organizations simply do not have the expertise or resources to achieve. That quality informs everything from how Watts and his team collect data to how they define, identify, and quantify bias on an algorithmic level.

It's a reputation that earns them points not just with the average consumer who turns to the Media Bias Detector for information, but with industry leaders as well. "We have a number of data partnerships, and we're forming more," says Jeanne Ruane. "Having a breadth of data is crucial for the quality of our research, and it benefits not just our own work and that of our partners, but researchers around the globe."

In the Media

In March, *Inspiring Impact* profiled the Media Bias Detector and how it uses large language models (LLMs) to identify media bias in headline news. Read the story and watch a video at **pennpri.de/css-lab**

02 THE COMMON SENSE PROJECT

In 2024, researchers at the CSSLab noticed a lack of common sense—or rather, the absence of any agreement on the definition of what, exactly, common sense is.

As a result, the team launched The Common Sense Project, an international survey designed to define and measure what people around the world consider "common sense." The international survey is already uncovering how those assumptions differ across groups. Eventually, Watts hopes, the survey data will help AI and machine learning researchers better model common sense.

"Common sense has always been a challenge for AI, and the problem is that we don't understand how common sense works in humans to begin with," observes Watts. By registering the differences in how people understand common sense, Watts and his team of researchers hope to identify its underlying principles, which computers could then use to navigate its often-contradictory nature—with applications ranging from agentic AI to decision-making algorithms.

03 INTEGRATIVE EXPERIMENTS

The structure of behavioral science experiments will be familiar to anyone who's taken high school psychology: first, a question ("Why do people cooperate?"), then a hypothesis, and then, ultimately, an experiment designed to prove the hypothesis either true or false. According to Watts, however, this tried-and-true approach to scientific inquiry has its limitations. "At the end of the day, for one phenomenon we may have dozens or even hundreds of theories," he says. "The complexity of relevant variables makes it difficult to build cumulative knowledge based on individual findings."

So CSSLab is redesigning the process, defining every variable that can be manipulated in an experiment and developing predictive AI models that can explain which of these variables contribute—and in what degree—to specific outcomes.

"Because we're developing a general framework, there's real potential across almost any discipline," adds Watts. "These studies could inform everything from de-escalation strategies to designing nudges that are actually able to help people take advantage of public services, for example."

04 NETWORK FOR OPEN MOBILITY ANALYSIS AND DATA (NOMAD)

To understand NOMAD, think back to the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus spread, private companies opened their troves of geolocation data to academic researchers, hoping to improve developing disease models. It was an altruistic gesture, and at the time, researchers were "very, very excited," recalls Watts.

Soon, however, it became clear that the data had limitations. For starters, the data is privately owned, so researchers could only access what companies chose to share. There was also little transparency into how the data was collected, which made it difficult to interpret results and build reliable models.

To address that gap, CSSLab launched NOMAD, a National Science Foundation–funded initiative that collects high-quality data and builds algorithms for its analysis. "It's a one-stop shop for geolocation data, without researchers having to spend years building relationships with data providers, fronting the money, and figuring out everything themselves from scratch," describes Watts. It's an obvious benefit for researchers, and one with larger implications down the road. Watts and his team envision a future of improved crisis response, more accurate transportation maps, and policies informed by real population data.

THE VALUE OF PHILANTHROPY

Across all the Lab's projects, both Watts and Ruane highlight the value of philanthropy. "It allows us to really home in on the quality of what we're developing," says Ruane, adding that "this type of support is critical for the long-term success of what we do." As for Watts: "Donor support allows us to build tools that take time. Tools that will pay dividends when we need them most."

Learn more about the CSSLab and its work at **css.seas.upenn.edu**

For inquiries about giving opportunities, contact:

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Giving Highlights

Philanthropy shapes every corner of the University. Our engaged and generous donors help Penn inspire impact locally and globally. Here is a snapshot of recent gifts that are fueling the University's pursuit of knowledge for good.

James D. Seitz, CE'75, and **Colleen Seitz** made a $50,000 gift to support the Intensive Care Nursery (ICN) at Pennsylvania Hospital, in honor of the special role the ICN has played in their family. In 1994, the Seitzes' newborn triplets were cared for in the ICN. Thirty-one years later, their first grandbaby spent 107 days in the ICN before going home, healthy and happy. The Seitzes' gift supports neonatal intensive care for other families at Pennsylvania Hospital.

C. Jason Liu, C'97, Gr'05, M'06, and **Benita Tamrazi, MD,** established a $50,000 deferred charitable gift annuity to support the William N. Kelley, MD Biomedical Research Award and the Walter T. Miller Scholarship at Penn Medicine. The gift was made to honor Dean Kelley's legacy at Penn Medicine and Dr. Miller's positive influence as a radiologist, as well as in recognition of Dr. Liu's 20th reunion.

Stephanie Weiss Naidoff, L'66, made a $200,000 gift to name the Michael Naidoff Communication Hub in memory of her late husband. The Hub supports the Penn Memory Center's podcast studio, communications, and outreach initiatives.

◀ Two alumni made gifts to support students through the McNulty Leadership Program at the Wharton School. **Antonio Carrillo, WG'93,** gave $4 million to establish the Carrillo Family MBA Venture Fellows Fund. His gift will enable enhanced training, support, and innovation for Graduate Venture Fellows, who hone their own leadership skills and serve other students. In addition, **Nikos Panagiotopoulos, C'93, W'93, G'97, WG'97,** made a $3 million gift to establish the Panagiotopoulos Family Undergraduate Venture Fellows Fund. The fund will support the McNulty Leadership Program's Undergraduate Venture Fellows, strengthening training and resources within this premier leadership initiative.

▼ **Sam Blank, C'01,** a new board member at the School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2), and **Taryn Blank** made a gift to SP2's Annual Fund and Dean's Discretionary Fund as well as the Nancy and Robert Blank Scholarship. In addition to increasing support for his family's undergraduate scholarship, his gift will help advance SP2's strategic priorities.

Giving Highlights

Cynthia and **Christopher Davies, C'81,** gave $45,000 in honor of the Pan-Asian American Community House's (PAACH) 25th anniversary and Chris's 45th reunion. This gift was made in celebration of the Inspiring Student Life fundraising initiative supporting University Life Cultural Resource Centers across campus. Their generosity recognizes the contributions of PAACH's leadership team and students, who help shape PAACH's vital role in Penn's community every day.

Younan Xia, G'93, gave $125,000 in memory of his late wife, **Dong Qin, GR'96,** to establish a lectureship in chemistry at Penn Arts & Sciences.

Sandor Hau, W'94, made a gift to Penn Arts & Sciences to create a program fund in Asian American studies.

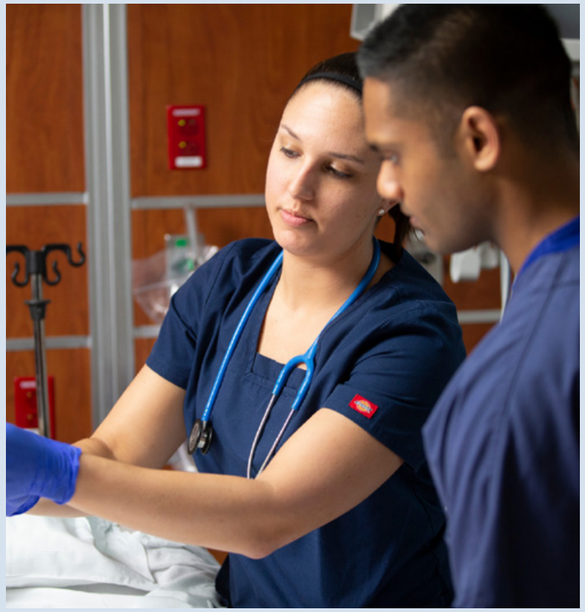
The PHLY Foundation made a meaningful grant to the Graduate School of Education to establish the Dean's Fund for Philadelphia Impact. This fund will support strategic initiatives and strengthen GSE's partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, ensuring that Philadelphia's students, educators, and communities can grow and thrive.

▼ **Alan S. Atkinson, GEng'88, PAR'29,** and **Ivette Alonso Atkinson, PAR'29,** made a $500,000 gift to Penn Engineering to establish the Atkinson Family Fund for Engineering Physical Intelligence, advancing research and educational programs in this emerging field. The gift is part of the Futures Fund Partnership for Innovation, which is Penn Engineering's top priority. This gift reflects Alan's enduring connection to Penn Engineering and the importance of Penn to the Atkinson family.

▲ **ChenXin Xu, GED'22, GRD'25,** made a gift to the Graduate School of Education to establish the Education Entrepreneurship Global Fellowship and Support Fund, which will provide students in the Education Entrepreneurship program with customized support and startup funding to develop, launch, and grow their ventures.

Vijay Mehta, C'04, W'04, and **Ruby Mehta, W'04,** made a $250,000 gift to Penn Arts & Sciences and the Wharton School to support the Huntsman Program in International Studies and Business.

Varun Sampath, ENG'12, gave $125,000 to establish the Varun Sampath, ENG'12, Endowed Scholarship to support Penn Engineering undergraduates. The gift was made in gratitude for the scholarship support he received as a student.



▲ In celebration of her 99th birthday, **Hannah Henderson** made a generous $100,000 gift to Penn Nursing's Hannah Lowell Henderson Endowed Fellowship Fund. In her honor, her family also contributed gifts, making this milestone a tribute to opportunity and the future of nursing.

Kim Ostheimer, C'04, and **Jason Ostheimer, W'04,** along with **Alexander Havenick, C'04,** and **Barbara Havenick,** made gifts to support the Penn-Kalaniyot Academic Fund, which will provide financial support for the Penn-Kalaniyot Chapter at Penn. Penn-Kalaniyot aims to advance academic excellence by deepening ties with Israeli scholars and building a supportive campus community, and foster collaboration among researchers at the University to advance knowledge without regard to national, ethnic, or religious background.

Recognizing the importance of securing his family's future while advancing Penn Medicine's mission, **Barry Matthew Berger, FEL'76, M'76,** has established multiple charitable gift annuities—guaranteeing lifetime payments to him and his children while supporting future Perelman School of Medicine students through his family's Penn Scholarship Fund.

By directing a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from his IRA, **Richard Wong, MD,** contributed $27,000 to establish a charitable gift annuity benefiting, in part, The Penn Fund—creating lasting support while maximizing the tax advantages of his gift.

Lathrop B. Nelson Jr., W'63, continues a decade-spanning tradition of supporting horticulture equipment maintenance at Morris Arboretum & Gardens with a $5,000 gift. Well-maintained equipment is essential to the daily operations of a public garden and helps keep the Morris's grounds healthy and vibrant for all who visit.

Nehal Madhani, L'09, endowed the Madhani Legal Tech Fellowship at Penn Carey Law, supporting students who are developing legal tech projects or ventures. Fellows will receive funding, mentorship from leaders in the field, and access to resources such as AI credits or tools, along with a faculty-supervised curricular component.

▼ **Eliza Auth** has donated the extensive archive of her late husband, Tony Auth, to the Annenberg School for Communication. Tony Auth was a Pulitzer-Prize winning American editorial cartoonist and children's book illustrator who is best known for his syndicated work originally drawn for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (1971 to 2012), providing powerful commentaries that captured the urgency and complexity of American culture.

Giving Highlights

Timur Galen, MArch'84, MSE'84, gave $1.25 million to the Weitzman School of Design to establish the Linda Genereux and Timur Galen Family Fellowship Fund in Honor of Peter M. McCleary. Professor Emeritus Peter McCleary, the former chair of the Department of Architecture, extended a generous scholarship to Galen and encouraged him to study at Penn. Once fully endowed, the scholarship established by Galen will cover full tuition for an incoming graduate student studying architecture.

◂ **Jason, C'93,** and **Tricia Pantzer** made a $1 million gift to Penn Live Arts to name the Tricia and Jason Pantzer Family Box Office at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. The Pantzer family's gift stands among the early leadership gifts to Penn Live Arts' capital campaign and reflects their strong belief in the University's vision to renovate and expand the facilities that support performance and cultural life at Penn.

A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR PHYSICIAN TRAINING

At the Perelman School of Medicine, a landmark gift will launch a new initiative to reimagine medical education for an era defined by gene therapy, artificial intelligence, and advancements in digital care. The $8 million gift from the RTW Foundation, led by Rod Wong, M'03, and Marti Speranza Wong, C'98, is the single largest donation to curriculum innovation in the School's history.

"Rod and Marti are visionary alumni leaders whose commitment to advancing medicine will shape generations to come," says Penn President J. Larry Jameson, MD, PhD.

The project, known as FRAME: Fueling Re-imagination to Advance Medical Education, will integrate technology, AI, and data in powerful ways, providing greater flexibility and customized learning plans through the concept of precision education. Together, these elements will support training flexibility and innovation as the field of medicine races ahead.

"I believe medical innovation is the key to life being better in the future than it is today," adds Rod Wong. "As science accelerates, so should education."

The gift also establishes an Entrepreneurship Pathway for medical students and an endowed lecture series to encourage innovation beyond the clinic, underscoring Penn's ambition to lead the evolution of medical education.

To read more, visit: **pennpri.de/wong-gift**

PENN-O-RAMA

A CELEBRATION OF ALL THINGS PENN

An Investment in the Common Good

In hospitals, classrooms, and neighborhoods across the country, social workers are a steady presence in moments of crisis and transition. They are the primary provider of social care in health settings and the leading provider of mental health services—improving lives while strengthening the systems that serve our most vulnerable communities.

Yet despite the profession's essential role, social workers often carry high student debt burdens and are undercompensated relative to the demands and impact of their work. When financial barriers push talented people out of social work, the communities that rely on them feel it most.

Scholarship support empowers students in Penn's Master of Social Work (MSW) program to become committed and compassionate leaders in a field that touches nearly every dimension of contemporary life.

To learn more about supporting MSW scholarships at the School of Social Policy & Practice, contact **Kristen de Paor** at **kwd@upenn.edu.**

Marking a Milestone Anniversary for Penn Periodontics

As Penn Dental's Department of Periodontics was preparing to celebrate its 70th anniversary, a distinguished graduate and clinical faculty member was looking toward its future. Last year, Hector Sarmiento, GD'14, made a significant gift to mark this milestone and ensure Periodontics' continued strength.

For Sarmiento, the gift stemmed from a desire to give back to the department that has shaped his life and career. "Just as others invested in me when I was a resident, I feel motivated to do the same so Penn continues to lead the way in periodontics, producing clinicians that patients seek out with confidence," he explains.

Sarmiento's gift will advance two priority needs. It establishes the Hector Sarmiento Support Fund to benefit the Department of Periodontics, including renovations as well as faculty and resident needs. Second, the gift will add to The Hector Sarmiento Resident's Award Fund, which provides an annual award to a graduate resident in Periodontics.

Penn's Periodontics Clinic in the Evans Building has been named The Sarmiento Center for Periodontics in recognition of his generosity.

Teamwork Takes the Title

It's clearer than a championship court: Quaker squash has returned to the national stage. In March, the Penn women's squash team clinched the Howe Cup to secure its first national team championship win in over two decades. The victory comes hot on the heels of two national titles for the men's team in as many years, as well as this year's inaugural Ivy League Tournament victory.

"I'm overwhelmed," said team captain Jana Dweek, C'26, after the Howe Cup win. "I'm just so proud of this team. We've come a long, long way."

That's thanks to talented athletes like Dweek, the program's dedicated coaches, and an overhaul of the squash facilities, which reopened as the Penn Squash Center in 2019. Those who practice, play, and cheer in the renewed Center can't help but admire the new glass-wall courts, improved seating and viewing areas, and increased circulation space.

The renovation has also brought coaches' offices closer to the center of the action and has provided space for film review and team meetings.

To sustain the momentum, Penn Athletics is initiating a $9 million endowment campaign and Annual Fund drive to keep the cups coming. "Thanks to generous support over the years, our squash program has grown into one of the best in the nation," says Jack Wyant, Director of Squash and Head Women's Coach. "We aim to ensure this program remains a training ground for teamwork, sportsmanship, and excellence for generations—and many more championships—to come."

To learn more and to join the campaign, contact **Blythe Tarbox** at **btarbox@upenn.edu** or **(215)746-7448.**