Dear Proud Penn Parents,

One of the most rewarding parts of my work is witnessing the drive, intellect, and character of our incredible undergraduates. Your children are among a generation of innovators, and they are leading the way. They arrive at Penn with their many talents and their possibilities proceed without limit. As they collaborate with peers, engage with faculty, and explore inside and outside the classroom, they cultivate the soil of their aptitude and grow and thrive as the new leaders of discovery and change.

On any given day, a walk through campus tells this story. Students are at tables engaging in important dialogue around complex issues. They are in libraries navigating vast resources and formulating powerful arguments. They are in advanced laboratories conducting research to better understand challenging problems. Within these spaces, and many others, you will hear students asking important questions and searching for new answers.

Yes, the view from College Hall is an inspiring one. Penn undergraduates—your children—are the leaders of our promising future. Thank you for your role in making that possible.

Amy Gutmann, President
Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Professor, Annenberg School for Communication

Your children are among a generation of innovators, and they are leading the way.
PARTNERS IN WELLNESS

The network of support at Penn is extensive. It is built on circuits of staff, faculty, and peers who work in tandem to ensure no student’s voice goes unheard. At the helm of this critical system is CAPS: Counseling and Psychological Services.

“Whether it be a coach or an academic advisor, they’re connected and will hook them into the network,” says Dr. William Alexander, Psychologist and Director of CAPS. “Whether it’s a coach or an academic advisor, they’re connected and will hook them into the network.”

It’s inevitable that students will face difficult tests and tough questions while they’re at Penn, both within the classroom and beyond it. Sometimes, the hardest of these challenges can be life challenges.

“This is a normal part of growth,” says Dr. Meeta Kumar, Psychologist and Director of Outreach and Prevention. “Let’s make this an open conversation.”

The staff at CAPS encourages families to be their partners in this effort. CAPS welcomes parents to reach out, whether it be with specific questions or concerns, or to simply learn more. Families can also participate in panel discussions held during New Student Orientation and Family Weekend, which focus on the transition to college and parenting from afar.

“We want to hear from you,” says Dr. Kumar. “Parents sometimes see things that no one else does. Don’t be dismissive. Trust your instincts.”

Counseling a less intimidating option for students because of their shared experience. This connection between two students at a university is the grand prize. The three team members had developed a new defense against glaucoma, using an ultra-thin material called “plates.”

The plates, developed in the lab of Engineering Professor Igor Bargatin, are the thinnest material that can be picked up and manipulated by hand. Despite being hundreds of times thinner than household cling wrap or aluminum foil, these textured plates of aluminum oxide can spring back to their original shape after being bent and twisted.

Team VisiPlate merged their backgrounds in business and engineering to design the product and form a business plan. They recognized the technology’s unique combination of strength and leanness, and then imagined a concept that involved implanting a drainage plate in the eye of a glaucoma patient. Because the plates are so thin, they can be implanted just under the surface, in the front of the eye. Diffusing fluid over a wide area, the plates will allow that fluid to be reabsorbed at a manageable rate, thus making for a less invasive surgery and less risk to patients.

So what’s the next stage for VisiPlate? They’re heading out of the lab and into the market. With backing from the Y-Prize, VisiPlate is ready to move into pre-clinical testing and prototyping.

WHAT’S A Y-PRIZE?
The Y-Prize founders often describe the competition as “an inverted X-Prize.” An X-Prize competition first identifies a challenge—put a robot on the moon, harness CO2 emissions, design a self-driving car—and then asks participants to come up with a technological solution. The Y-Prize turns this concept on its head. It identifies an exciting but underused technology, then asks participants to find a problem that this technology can help solve. Instead of starting with the challenge, participants start with the solution and work backwards.

A collaboration between the Mack Institute, Penn Engineering, Penn Wharton Entrepreneurship, and the Penn Center for Innovation, the Y-Prize is a university-wide competition, open to students of all levels and fields of study.

THE POWER OF PEER-TO-PEER: PENN BENJAMINS

Penn Benjamins is an organization run by students, for students. The group was formed by undergrads in 2014, with a focus on peer listening in a safe space. Benjamins operates with the understanding that there’s a certain connection between two students at a university because of their shared experience. This common ground can make peer-to-peer counseling a less intimidating option for students who may have reservations about approaching a professional. All of the peer counselors—known on campus as “Bens”—have been through an extensive interview and training process overseen by CAPS professionals.

Through recurring walk-in hours held every Sunday through Thursday, Bens offer a listening ear, meaningful support, and guidance on mental health services. Penn Benjamins wants to break down the walls of communication, and they’re starting with each other.

pennbenjamins.org

Interdisciplinary Innovation

A new open stage, a nano-sized technology, and $10,000 at stake… The pressure was on and the room was full. Enter team VisiPlate.

One seamless pitch and game-changing idea later, juniors Adarsh Bhattu, Rui Jing Jiang, and Brandon Kao were on their way to securing the grand prize. The three team members had developed a new defense against glaucoma, using an ultra-thin material called “plates.”

The plates, developed in the lab of Engineering Professor Igor Bargatin, are the thinnest material that can be picked up and manipulated by hand. Despite being hundreds of times thinner than household cling wrap or aluminum foil, these textured plates of aluminum oxide can spring back to their original shape after being bent and twisted.

Brandon Kao, EASY’18, Rui Jing Jiang, W’18, and Adarsh Bhattu, W’18, were named Y-Prize recipients at the competition’s culminating event in January. Since its beginnings in 2012, the story of the Y-Prize has been one of cross-disciplinary invention. This year, three undergrads came out on top.
These two young alums are creating their own definitions of what it means to be a millennial in the world of work. Here’s a look at their paths from Penn to present.

## Jon Youshaei, C’13, W’13

**San Francisco**  
**DUAL DEGREE:** Huntsman Program in International Studies and Business

Jon is a writer and content creator for sites like Forbes, TIME, Buzzfeed and more. He writes about 20-somethings in the workplace and has a knack for viral content. He also does product marketing for Google, and is the founder of EveryVowel.com. ( Hint: You can’t spell his last name without every single one.) Speaking of his name, you’ll find it topping lists of marketing influencers who are leading the digital pack—including Inc. Magazine’s top 7 marketers of 2017.

**What have you been up to since graduation?**

After Penn, I moved to California as a product marketing manager for Google, where I got to work on everything from filming commercials to negotiating a partnership with the Oscars. Then, I transferred to Google India to lead their Brand team. Two years after starting my career, I quit to cofound WayUp with a Penn friend, JJ Fliegelman.

**How has Penn been a part of this journey?**

I’ve drawn on my Penn network every step of the way. Going to Google, I got lots of advice from fellow alumni—on everything from preparing for the interview to succeeding in my new job. Later, when starting a company, a number of Penn connections became investors and some of our first employees.

**Any wisdom for current undergrads?**

The advice I’d offer to students is to try as many opportunities—jobs, internships, and extracurriculars—during college as possible. It was because I did a summer internship that I learned I didn’t like finance, and because I worked as an Anheuser-Busch Campus Ambassador (promoting their jobs, not their beer!) that I learned I loved marketing.

**What’s next for you?**

Continuing to build WayUp so that every student and recent grad can find an amazing job or internship. One out of every three students who uses WayUp gets hired, with our user base made up of 72% underrepresented minorities. We’re democratizing the hiring process for young talent and employers, and I’m utterly passionate about the business we continue to build.
**FACULTY FOCUS**

**Lauren Sallan**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Earth and Environmental Science

Professor Sallan will be teaching GEOL 205: Paleontology in the fall, an introductory course available to all majors.

Dr. Lauren Sallan is a paleobiologist who uses “big-data” approaches to understand how global events, environmental change, and ecological interactions have shaped evolution and modern biodiversity. Her work with fish fossils has shed light on the role of mass extinctions of the past, with significant implications for Earth’s future.

“Past is key in understanding what is to come.”

**DR. SALLAN ON BEING SELECTED AS A 2017 TED FELLOW**

Sallan’s groundbreaking work has made national headlines, and she was recently selected as a 2017 TED Fellow. She’ll be joining a class of 15 innovators from around the world who will deliver a talk on the TED stage this month in Vancouver, B.C.

“I don’t know quite what to expect, but I know it will be incredible.”

Karen Sallan’s family life activities, and learn from world-renowned faculty.

Karen shares some of her experience as a Penn parent, and what it has meant for her: "When our children were small, someone gave me a book titled "Parenting Isn’t for Cowards." I quoted it when we moved our oldest son James into DuBois College House freshman year. One of the most challenging aspects of parenthood for me has been balancing the inevitable “letting go” with the desire and responsibility I have to “be there” for my kids. There is the natural fear about how your son or daughter will handle freedom, stressful course loads, disappointment, or even failure. But, I have found that many of my fears revolve around my identity as a parent, and how that changes as my children mature, embrace new ideas, and make decisions on their own. It’s scary about how your son or daughter will handle freedom, stressful course loads, disappointment, or even failure. But, I have found that many of my fears revolve around my identity as a parent, and how that changes as my children mature, embrace new ideas, and make decisions on their own. It’s scary about how your son or daughter will handle freedom, stressful course loads, disappointment, or even failure. But, I have found that many of my fears revolve around my identity as a parent, and how that changes as my children mature, embrace new ideas, and make decisions on their own. It’s scary about how your son or daughter will handle freedom, stressful course loads, disappointment, or even failure. But, I have found that many of my fears revolve around my identity as a parent, and how that changes as my children mature, embrace new ideas, and make decisions on their own. It’s scary..."

**JACK STACK, C’19, first became interested in paleontology when he stumbled upon a 385-million-year-old fossil in his grandmother’s backyard. He was in high school in Michigan at the time and decided to dig a bit deeper. This led Jack to Dr. Sallan, who was at nearby University of Michigan. His passion for conducting research, analyzing data, and unearthing discoveries grew from there. Jack ended up following Dr. Sallan to Penn for his undergraduate studies, where he works in her lab and is majoring in paleontology.

Karen Hamilton, C’87, PAR’14, PAR’18

Karen was born and raised in Philadelphia, a few blocks away from Penn’s campus. She came to Penn as an undergraduate in 1983 where she met her husband, Dexter Hamilton, L’87. Their oldest son James, C’14, graduated with a degree in urban studies, and daughter Doris, C’18, is majoring in theater arts and Africana studies.

As a Penn parent, Karen has participated in making welcome calls, speaking on the Penn Parents panels, and serving as a resource on campus to families who are making the transition to college. As a Philadelphiaan, she has enjoyed comforting far-away parents and touching base with their children, as well as hosting students for Thanksgiving who were unable to travel home.

Karen’s groundbreaking work has made national headlines, and she was recently selected as a 2017 TED Fellow. She’ll be joining a class of 15 innovators from around the world who will deliver a talk on the TED stage this month in Vancouver, B.C.

“I don’t know quite what to expect, but I know it will be incredible.”

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“I don’t know quite what to expect, but I know it will be incredible,” Sallan says. She looks forward to gaining perspectives from big thinkers across diverse fields. The potential for cross-disciplinary projects is inherent to the TED Fellow experience, and she cites “crowdsourcing the assembly of huge fossil databases” as an idea she already has brewing. “I hope to bring a deep-time perspective,” she says about what she plans to contribute to the group of gurus. (Her 15 Fellows range from an investigative journalist to a neuroscientist entrepreneur.) “Understanding our place within long-term evolution is essential...” It can answer a lot of questions about the current world we live in.”

**THE PARENTS FUND UPDATE**

Your support of undergraduate education through The Parents Fund is a wonderful way to show your commitment to the University, while positively impacting the student experience. Gifts to The Parents Fund support areas such as residential programming, innovative curricula, scholarships, campus enhancements, and technology upgrades.

Every gift, regardless of size, makes a difference in the lives of our students. Last year, parent donors gave more than $227,000, primarily through gifts of $250 or less.

**LEARN MORE AT:**

[www.pennparents.upenn.edu](http://www.pennparents.upenn.edu)
We love welcoming Penn families to campus!