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## Welcome Back from the Senate Chair: Knowledge As a Beacon

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There is a heightened sense of anticipation at the start of a new academic year. Hues are brighter, sounds crisper, aromas sharper, and the very air crackles with electricity. I have always looked forward to this time of year and, as the Chair of the Faculty Senate, I now have the privilege of welcoming you, our fabulous students who are our *raison d'être*, our wonderful staff without whom this place will come to a standstill, and our distinguished and diverse faculty who are in the vanguard of that most wonderful of human pursuits, the creation of knowledge, back to our lovely and ever-evolving campus. And a particular welcome to the newest members into our fold: you will sense that the colours are just that little bit sharper and the air just that little bit more rarefied, but I assure you we old hands feel it too.

*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, wrote Jean-Baptiste Karr in 1849, and while it is certainly true that some verities in the Academy are timeless there is an undeniable feeling of change in the air. It is echoed outside our walls in societal unrest and turbulence, hand-in-hand with the most dramatic of advances and changes in technology, sociology, and the human condition. And it is mirrored inside the Academy in the burgeoning new curricula of study, the effervescent search for integrative understanding at the interstices of disciplines, and the truly pan-university creation and integration of knowledge. It is not an accident that the Provost's Academic Theme Year for 2017–2018 was identified as the Year of Innovation.

In the spirit of the times, the Faculty Senate of the University of Pennsylvania will be taking the extraordinary step of coordinating a University-wide Teach-In on the *Production, Dissemination, and Use of Knowledge* to be celebrated during March 19–22 of Spring Semester 2018. At a time when the Academy itself feels under siege our goal in the Teach-In is to reaffirm the fundamental search for knowledge that is at the heart of the Academy, in the process knitting together each of the 12 Schools that comprise the University. This is a large endeavour that we do not lightly enterprise; our hope is to engage the entire University community and, indeed, to reach out to the broader civic community around us, in common cause around something that is at the very cornerstone of our being. If you have insights, thoughts, or ideas, or would like to be involved in some fashion, I invite you to reach out to us at the Office of the Faculty Senate ([senate@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:senate@pobox.upenn.edu)) (<mailto:senate@pobox.upenn.edu>).

This is going to be an exciting year. On behalf of the Tri-Chairs of the Faculty Senate, Past Chair Laura Perna, Chair-Elect Jennifer Pinto-Martin, and myself, I extend to you all the warmest of welcomes.