

---

# The Penn Compact and the Teachers Institute

By Amy Gutmann

*For many years the colleges went on their way with little reference to the secondary, and especially to the public, schools. Now, however, university presidents consult the secondary schools which furnish them with students, and are interested in every grade of education . . . Perhaps the most cheerful symptom in the present educational movement is the exchange of views by teachers from all sorts of institutions. It is a period of good feeling, of common interest, of mutual understanding, and of co-operation between the public schools and the universities of the land.*

*Is it not possible to devise a system which shall be rooted and grounded in actual universities and resident instructors . . . and which shall interest the great body of conscientious teachers now in service?*

*. . . can we not find some practical means by which teachers of the public schools may come under the training influence of the universities, and through which the universities may learn how to contribute toward supplying the needs of common-school education?*

*Albert Bushnell Hart, Ph.D.*

*"University Participation—A Substitute for University Extension"*  
*Educational Review, June, 1893*

High school seniors are approaching the first major crossroads in their lives. Some are busy assembling the materials they will need to be admitted to their first choice of college: excellent SAT II scores, a vivid, well-written application essay, glowing teacher recommendations, impressive extracurricular activities, and ample funds. Some are contending with financial barriers and the assumption that a college education is beyond their means. And some are not giving college a second thought, because they haven't received a quality education

*Amy Gutmann is President of the University of Pennsylvania.*

that prepares them for success in college and beyond.

Despite the impressive gains we have made in enrolling men and women of diverse backgrounds, our nation's colleges and universities remain out of reach for far too many capable students from the latter two groups. Without true cultural and socioeconomic diversity, we cannot educate leaders for all sectors of society.

How can we bring more students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds into the college-bound pipeline and onto our campuses?

In my presidential inaugural address, I proposed a Penn Compact that included a bold, unifying mission for the University of Pennsylvania and the higher education community: Bring the goals of increasing access to higher education, integrating disciplines of knowledge, and collaboratively engaging with local and global communities to bear on our teaching, research, and service for the betterment of society.

To fulfill the Penn Compact, we have reduced reliance on student loans by adding grants and scholarships to support undergraduate education. We have expanded the outreach efforts of Penn's Center for Community Partnerships and our Graduate School of Education to establish programs on nutrition in local public schools, workshops for Teach for America participants, and programs to improve math and reading scores in neighborhood elementary schools. Penn partnered with the Philadelphia School District and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers to create the Penn-Alexander school, an excellent University-assisted neighborhood public school for kindergarten through eighth grade. The student body is more than three-quarters minority, with many students coming from low-income households.

The children at Penn-Alexander are flourishing socially and academically. Three quarters of last spring's graduating eighth graders are now enrolled in selective high schools in Philadelphia, making their chances of getting accepted to selective colleges or universities much better than would have earlier been the case.

Buoyed by our success, we have reached an agreement with the School District to create a magnet high school with an international focus.

Yet there is so much more a great University could accomplish toward improving public schools—especially in professional development for high school teachers, where the needle for frustration, burnout, and turnover has been stuck in the red zone.

In far too many public schools, teaching, like war, is hell. In many cases, teachers are assigned to subjects in which they are barely proficient. In other cases, they have long lost their enthusiasm and are just going through the rote motions.

What if university faculty could work closely with these teachers in developing innovative curriculum units that would make classroom instruction come alive for teachers and students alike?

Enter the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia (TIP). Based on the Yale National Institute model, TIP was established in July 2005 in the Office of the Provost, with funding from generous alumni gifts and a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. Under the guidance of director Alan Lee and advisory board chair Rogers Smith, TIP has just completed a resoundingly successful pilot year. As subsequent articles in this issue will reveal, Penn faculty collaborated with local teachers to create thirty-five new curriculum units, which the teachers will incorporate into classroom instruction in schools in West and Southwest Philadelphia.

The Teachers Institute of Philadelphia captures the scope and spirit of the Penn Compact. TIP is forging closer connections between Penn and our neighbors. By promoting better student outcomes, it advances our commitment to make a college education accessible to a more diverse population. TIP also is marvelously integrative. By fostering creative, ongoing relationships among Penn faculty, the Graduate School of Education, the Center for Community Partnerships, the School District of Philadelphia (and its teachers),

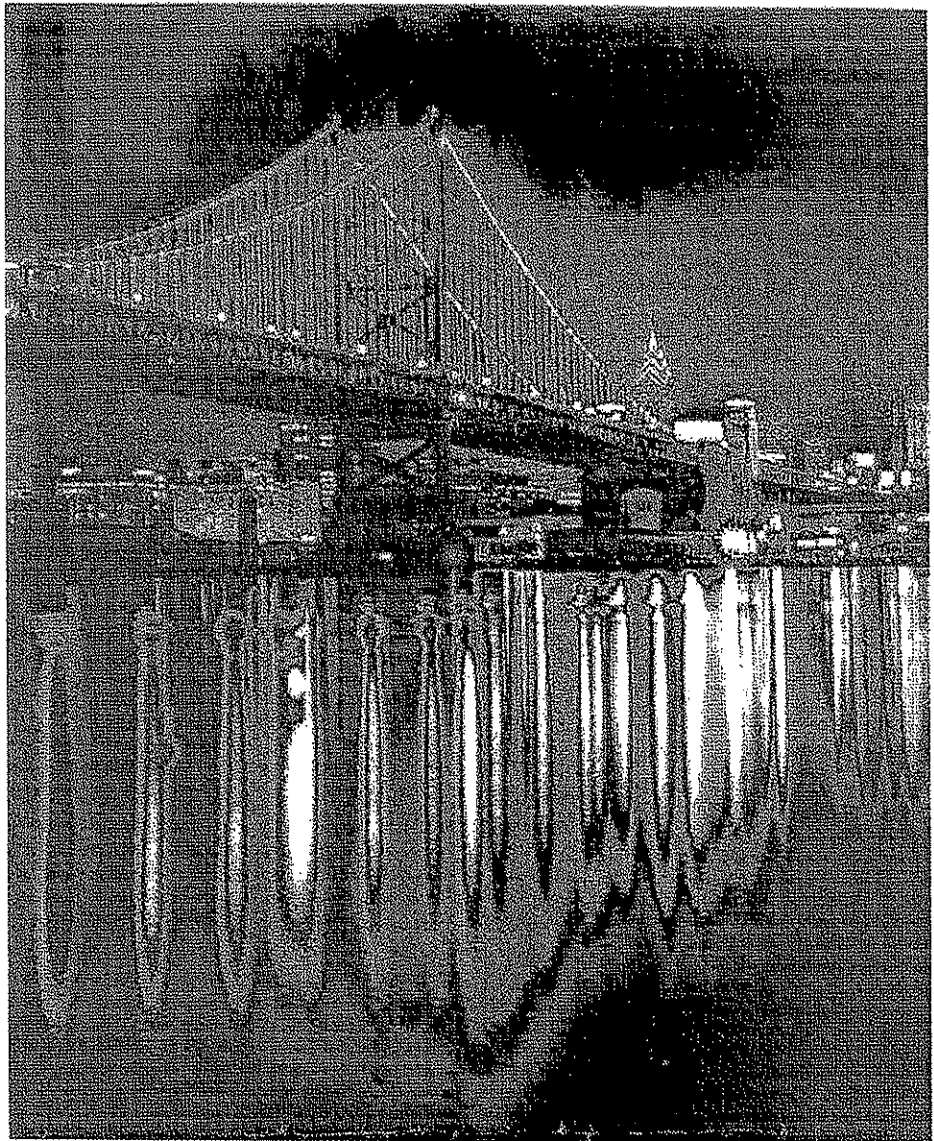
TIP is leveraging integrated expertise and resources to have the greatest systemic impact on public education in Philadelphia.

TIP's impact is global as well. With a couple of mouse clicks, teachers throughout the world now can freely access all TIP curriculum units on the Institute's web site. Moreover, faculty and teachers who participate in the program, not to mention the students who benefit from rejuvenated teaching and engaging content, will carry the experience, knowledge, and skills they have gained wherever they go.

The benefits that will accrue from TIP are myriad and mutual. The teachers who collaborated in planning the program, and those they recruited to participate, have had an opportunity both to blossom as educational leaders among their colleagues and to reinvigorate a profession that is fraught with burnout. Based on initial feedback from participating Penn faculty, translating academic expertise into lessons that engage and excite students in urban public schools can have a galvanizing effect on faculty teaching, research, and morale.

Building on TIP's initial success, we will expand seminar offerings, engage ten to twelve additional high schools in the program, and develop more support for teacher participation. The School District of Philadelphia's Chief Academic Officer, Gregory Thornton, is committed to offering stipends to teachers who participate in TIP, and envisions ongoing support of the program.

In higher education, we have made major strides in recognizing and accommodating students' diverse learning styles, and in preparing graduates for rapidly emerging career paths, particularly in the sciences. We have also expanded the liberal arts curriculum beyond the canon of Western thought to include scholarly examination of a much more diverse record of human endeavor, from the long overdue study of African American and women's history, to the collision of cultures that culminates in post-Colonial literatures. We have modified our pedagogies, shifting from strictly didactic instruction toward more dialogue,



JOSEPH MULHEARN, BEN FRANKLIN BRIDGE (DETAIL), 1989

where learning is multi-directional. We have recruited faculty who are more representative of the world's rich diversity of cultures and perspectives.

But to fulfill the promise of democratic education in general, and higher education in particular, we must redouble our efforts to improve public elementary and secondary education. If all universities deployed even modest shares of their expertise and resources toward improving public schools in their neighborhoods, the results would add up. One excellent public school here, another there, and pretty

soon, you're talking about some real systemic change in public education that yields more college-bound graduates from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

Breathing new life into the teaching profession will not alone solve the crisis of public education in America. But programs like the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia can be part of a dynamic mix of university initiatives that ultimately will redound to the advancement of higher education's mission to educate the great future citizens and leaders of our democracy.