

Holistic Education:

An Analysis of the Status Quo and Recommendations for the Future

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I. Introduction

When the University of Pennsylvania was established, its founders sought to create an institution that educates the whole person and trains students to thrive as leaders in all aspects of society. In his writings, Benjamin Franklin emphasized that “true merit [...] consists of an inclination, joined with an ability, to serve mankind, one’s country, friends, and family; which ability is [...] to be acquired or greatly increased by true learning; and should, indeed, be the great aim and end of all learning.” In many ways, Franklin’s perspective on education mirrors that of the modern concept of a “holistic education,” a model that focuses on allowing the student to find meaning and connection to the community through academic work. The Student Committee on Undergraduate Education (SCUE), the education and academic policy focused branch of undergraduate student government, believes that a Penn education today embodies these principles in many areas. However, the Penn community still struggles to emphasize experiential learning and provide students with a balance throughout their time at Penn.

The holistic education model is distinct from traditional models because it seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice through the promotion of experiential learning and lifestyle balance in all aspects of university life. A holistic education is defined by the following components:

- Transformative learning
- Connections and transdisciplinary inquiry
- Experiential learning
- Flexible pacing
- Meaningfulness
- Community

Transformative learning is a process by which students develop new frames of reference by thinking critically about how they come to know and understand information, rather than simply absorbing facts passed to them in their coursework. By paying special attention to *transdisciplinary inquiry*, students learn to forge connections between seemingly disconnected areas of thought, which allows

them to develop an integrated and nuanced understanding of the world. This is facilitated through *experiential learning*, or opportunities for students to directly apply theoretical lessons to real-world situations as a necessary part of the curricular experience. Through this type of learning, each student is able to find individual *meaning* in his or her coursework, connecting what is taught to their personal values and goals. Finally, holistic education allows the student to see him or herself as part of a classroom *community*, broader school community, and society as a whole. In short, students who pursue a holistic education learn to think critically about how they come to know and understand information, while finding meaning in the material that is learned through direct connections to their personal values and the surrounding community.

SCUE believes that experiential learning is a crucial part of a holistic education and provides students the opportunity to think in different ways than they would in traditional classroom settings. Experiential learning and field experience can come in many different forms, and the utilization of cultural resources, civic engagement, and active learning are undervalued components in the definition of education at Penn today. These are all possible avenues for incorporating experiential learning into the fabric of a Penn education. Furthermore, we seek to demonstrate that these components can be incorporated without sacrificing the rigor of the university’s academic model. Utilization of cultural resources can become second nature as students consider the resources available in Philadelphia as an extension of the classroom. Civic engagement can come to be valued as a duty in receiving an education at Penn, and efforts to pursue active learning can be engrained as standard practice at the University. If we, as a community, redefine what it means to have a **holistic** “Penn education,” mental wellness and balance will implicitly become tenets of the Penn experience.

This paper seeks to show the steps the Penn Community can take to return to its founding principles and better embody these ideals of a holistic education.

II. Museums and More

This section is focused on expanding opportunities for Penn students to engage academically with cultural resources in the city of Philadelphia as parts of their classes.

There are many opportunities for students to engage academically with the city of Philadelphia outside of the metaphorical “Penn Bubble.” These opportunities for engagement can complement classwork and personal development. SCUE believes that the university can play a major role in fostering a greater sense of curiosity about the community and its cultural and academic resources, while both expanding and intensifying a Penn education.

SCUE believes that Penn can accomplish this goal by creating and promoting relationships with Philadelphia institutions to foster academic partnerships that integrate the city’s resources into course curricula.

These partnerships would be utilized by students to enhance their academic experience, as well as convince students to take advantage of the partnerships and visit these institutions in their free time. The goal is to diversify

students' perspectives on course material by providing them with additional layers of understanding of complex subjects. Most courses at Penn and in universities across the nation function traditionally, with professors leading lectures and seminars. Engagement with the broader community would provide professors with the ability to incite students' passion, sparking new academic pursuits.

There are several Penn courses across different disciplines with varying course sizes and modes of instruction that serve as existing models of this holistic

approach by incorporating local resources into the course. From SCUE's conversations with professors across departments, many are interested in pursuing this form of instruction but have questions on how to implement resources into syllabi. In each of the following examples, professors have partnered with a Philadelphia institution to provide students with an experience outside the classroom and have successfully integrated this experience into their course's syllabus.

Course Information	How the Course Engages with Philadelphia's Resources
Biology 102 & Biology 124 Large Enrollment Introductory Lecture & Laboratory Science Course <i>Linda Robinson (Biol 102) and Karen Hogan (Biol 124)</i>	As a part of the metagenomics lab module, students obtain a leaf sample from the garden at either James B. Kaskey Memorial Park or Penn Park [on-campus]. The goal of the exercise is for students to collect preliminary data on the species of bacteria that might inhabit the leaf as a part of a biology professor's research study. The module culminates in a lab assignment that is graded like any other lab from the course.
Art History 271 & 281 Humanities Lecture Course <i>David Brownlee</i>	In these classes on the history of architecture, recitation sections are held in locations across Philadelphia (Including Philadelphia Museum of Art, Independence Mall, Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Temple Beth Shalom) to provide students with an opportunity to view works of architecture that were discussed in class and engage with these works of architecture first-hand. Students are evaluated based on their observations and their participation in the discussion at each site. The art history department also has an arrangement for free admission for Art History students to some Philadelphia Museums.
Geology 125 Large Enrollment Science Introductory Lecture Course <i>Lauren Sallan and Jane Willenbring</i>	The course leverages flexibility in recitation scheduling so its students can use a free ticket to the Drexel Academy of Sciences in Center City to complete an assignment which is turned in and graded by the TAs.
Criminology 100 Large Enrollment Social Science Introductory Lecture Course <i>Jill Portnoy</i>	Students have the option of attending the Eastern State Penitentiary and producing an essay for credit about the real-world applications of the course's lessons. Since the assignment was optional, students' completion was counted as extra credit towards the course. SCUE encourages professors to be cognizant of course costs associated with extra credit field trips and attempt to ensure that field trips provide equal opportunities for all students. If there is a cost associated with the trip, professors can also provide an alternative form of extra credit that does not incur a cost to ensure equal opportunities for all students, regardless of financial means.
Legal Studies 101 Intermediate Enrollment Business Course Core Business Course <i>William Laufer</i>	Students are given the opportunity to go to the Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Philadelphia and travel to Washington D.C. to listen to Oral Arguments in the Supreme Court of the United States. Students are encouraged to do so as a part of the course, and are not charged for the trip.

In other urban centers comparable to Philadelphia, peer institutions have created similar systems and partnerships with their communities' resources that have enhanced their academic environments and have provided outlets for students to explore their communities.

For example, Columbia University created the "Passport to Museums," which acts as a centralized

initiative that partners with over 30 museums in New York City to provide students with free admission. While students are actively encouraged to explore the museums in their free time, the [Passport to Museums ArtsLink](#) initiative also coordinates with professors to integrate the museums into their curricula.

If a partnership does not exist with a desired institution, the university can often subsidize the cost of tickets and manage the logistics of a class outing on behalf of a professor. New York University and the City University of New York have also created similar partnerships. CUNY has developed a “Cultural Passport” that provides discounted or free links to over 100 places ranging from museums to theaters and retail. Beyond connecting students with resources, an office of this nature, can also ensure

accessibility of resources to students with different backgrounds and financial situations.

While Penn can create a centralized office, a centralized office is not the only approach to broadly integrating excursions into the course curriculum. A holistic exploration outside the classroom can also be encouraged through syllabi and department levels. SCUE sees this approach as potentially more effective given the decentralized administrative structure at Penn.

Key Recommendations for Integrating Outside Resources in the Curriculum

- A focus on integrating excursions into the learning experience for the course
- Open the potential for learning to outside the classroom where students can experience what they are learning
- Encourage professors to promote excursions within syllabi at the department level
- Construct long term partnerships with local institutions to reduce financial burden on students and level the economic playing field.

As Penn is rethinking Penn InTouch and Pennant user experience, SCUE recommends that a keyword or search filter be added to the course registration system to denote that the course includes an off campus excursion.

SCUE recommends that Penn professors and teaching assistants evaluate their courses and brainstorm ways in which they can take their classes outside the classroom. We also encourage department chairs to encourage their departments to participate in this initiative, and to work with Philadelphia resources to create partnerships that afford students free or subsidized admission to these institutions. Department level relationships ensure that the steps towards integrating Penn are easier to measure and attain with the Philadelphia resources, and will promote more focused collaboration. Constructing long term partnerships with local institutions would benefit professors and students by reducing administrative overhead and admission costs. At the same time, partnerships would increase academic collaborations, sharing of resources, and provide students the opportunity to engage with the institution, both in learning and in their own research. Though other universities have these programs structured as initiatives within the university, SCUE recommends these relationships be built and maintained at the department level because the departments are most knowledgeable about resources within their fields and have the best ability to form these relationships.

Furthermore, different departments would visit unique places: a physical science class would engage with the community in other ways than a social science class would. Over the following semesters, SCUE will continue to collaborate with professors to integrate engagement with Philadelphia’s resources into their curricula. Each major curricular revision presents an opportunity for departments to incorporate these suggestions into their syllabi. SCUE is willing to sit in and provide feedback regarding the holistic effects on student life and behavior. In coming years, SCUE firmly believes that a “holistically educated” student will take multiple courses in their time at Penn that actively engage the student outside the classroom.

Eventually, Penn should also consider creating a centralized initiative that benefits all students and faculty, manages funding for this engagement and promotes the culture of exploring Philadelphia as a part of the Penn education.

SCUE and other resources on campus are available to offer support and guidance on this initiative and work with departments and professors to incorporate this initiative into their department’s curriculum. Ultimately, SCUE believes that should be an integral part of Penn’s education. A student's holistic education is a function of *how* the student’s classes might be structured. In this proposed atmosphere, students would be incentivized to explore the vibrant city around them and would be participants in a more holistic education.

III. Civic Engagement

This section focuses on providing resources and guidance for undergraduate students at Penn interested in civic engagement within the community.

As students, we hope to leave Penn better equipped to be citizens in the real world and contribute in a meaningful way to society. This mindset begins with promoting and prioritizing civic engagement throughout our curricula.

Penn is unique in that it allows students the opportunity to engage with the greater community through curricula and on-campus organizations. While many organizations exist at Penn that promote community service, and students have

the option to take Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) classes, on occasion there is still a lack of engagement from some segments of the student population. Opportunities for community outreach are often utilized by the same group of students, and while community service is encouraged by the administration, at times there comes a growing deprioritization of civic engagement by some in the student body who may view it as time-consuming and secondary to other interests.

There are different approaches the university can take to integrate civic engagement both inside and outside of class, and to encourage students who may not actively seek these opportunities to do so. Decentralization is still a central issue civic engagement (and the larger university) faces. Thus, sources of information for social impact opportunities available for both undergraduate and graduate students should be made more widely known, especially for students who may not traditionally seek them out. Furthermore, shifting the focus toward civic engagement within existing courses, especially those that aren't specifically labeled as ABCS courses, is important in order to incorporate an awareness in students who traditionally may choose not to enroll in an ABCS course.

The relationship between civic engagement and education is a widely researched subject in academia, and many findings promote the integration of community service with the academic environment. Developing social responsibility, especially in the form of political engagement, has been cited as one of the main products of increased civic engagement by students in higher education¹. Furthermore, civic engagement allows students to hone their leadership skills outside of a classroom setting, while becoming more globally-minded citizens in society. They have the opportunity not only to gain academic qualities such as motivation from their service, but also important social skills as well.

To address the issue of decentralization of civic engagement opportunities, SCUE recognizes that there are several undergraduate and graduate programs, groups and organizations on campus that are run independently. One of Penn's greatest strengths as a university is its substantial population of graduate students across 12 different schools. In particular, SCUE calls for formalized partnerships and collaborations with the School of Social Policy and Practice and the Graduate School of Education. Many undergraduate and graduate schools already have formal partnerships in place, but these are often limited to specific schools and thus information about these opportunities may not be readily accessible to the rest of the student population. Both of these schools have established curricular components that involve community engagement and interaction with the Philadelphia community which could extend to the undergraduate experience. These include the Leadership Practicum, in which students in the

School of Social Policy and Practice work closely with and learn from a nonprofit in the Philadelphia area, and the Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander—University of Pennsylvania Partnership School (“Penn Alexander”) in West Philadelphia, which is a partnership school with the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. Leveraging the extensive network of the Graduate School of Education, and utilizing resources from the School of Social Policy and practice, are examples of opportunities between different schools that may be further explored.

There are several forms of partnership and collaboration that can take place. One recommendation is to establish a mentorship program in which graduate students can volunteer to mentor undergraduate students interested in public service or civic-engagement-related futures. Another possibility includes setting up presentations, discussions, or panels featuring graduate students or faculty and connecting them with undergraduate clubs and organizations. Penn already has similar programs in many fields, but none that directly integrate the possibilities of civic engagement into these discussions. Civic engagement-focused career fairs are currently more heavily offered off-campus, as Career Services at Penn advertises most of its civic engagement opportunities like the Non-Profit and Public Service Career Fair at Bryn Mawr College and the Philadelphia Social Impact Career Fair at Villanova University. As consortium events, there is less of an emphasis on bringing Penn-focused social impact career fairs to campus, which could be expanded upon. Furthermore, while there are currently student organizations that offer events and talks on the state of the West Philadelphia education system, or research opportunities for undergraduate students within different schools, these kinds of opportunities can be better advertised through a more centralized system. Lastly, the School of Social Policy and Practice and the Graduate School of Education can partner more closely with the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CURF) to promote research positions within the field of civic engagement. CURF offers many resources for students interested in applying for social impact fellowships or research, and increased dialogue with different schools on campus may help further facilitate these opportunities. This may provide chances for students to use data analytics, writing, or other research skills with a social purpose.

In addressing the decentralization of civic engagement opportunities at Penn, increased communication between academic departments should also be promoted. Major advisors, as well as faculty, should take on an active role in promoting increased collaboration across academic departments and highlighting the advantages of working with community service hubs on campus such as the Netter Center or Civic House to further engage students in their respective departments.

To address the long-term goal of integrating civic engagement into the Penn education, SCUE hopes to focus on establishing this mindset and approach with professors and department heads. Through partnerships with department heads and different faculty, class syllabi can incorporate components of civic-engagement related research or connect classroom topics to community, national, or global issues. While this is often achieved in humanities or social sciences classes, quantitative and scientific classes, for example, can also benefit from understanding the implications of data and how it can be applied for a broader purpose.

SCUE also calls upon the twelve schools at Penn to promote increased collaboration, specifically between graduate and undergraduate groups. Interactions between graduate and undergraduate students may be limited beyond the classroom, and developing mentorship programs or providing for increased discussion may further the current conversation about civic engagement at our school. While certain undergraduate and graduate student collaborations exist within specific student organizations, often undergraduates may be lost when trying to find opportunities for mentorship.

Finally, SCUE seeks to increase the conversation surrounding civic engagement by supporting student groups that promote community service through their own organizations and to spread awareness about current opportunities that may exist for civic engagement at Penn. Many student groups on Penn have extensive application processes that may deter students from applying, and better understanding and having a conversation about the application processes and ways to further support students interested in civic engagement should be promoted. Opportunities for social impact, entrepreneurship, or fellowships can be further encouraged by student groups, and increased collaboration between different clubs and organizations may help further the dialogue about community service at Penn.

As students at Penn, we hope to leave after four years better equipped to be citizens in the real world and to contribute to society in a meaningful way. With that being said, opportunities for civic engagement during our undergraduate years (and for graduate students as well) are important in order to introduce this mindset, and long term integration of community service as a mindset will leave students prepared to contribute and engage as global citizens beyond their college years.

IV. Experiential Learning and Physical Activity

This section focuses on integrating field work and physical activity into course curricula in order to diversify academic experiences and promote physical wellness.

This section focuses on ways that the University can promote experiential learning and foster greater physical activity for students by integrating it into course curricula. The main objective of experiential learning is to promote learning outside of the classroom. Experiential learning shows students the real-world applications of their fields of study, encouraging them to further immerse themselves in their chosen intellectual pursuits. At a very broad level, physical activity can be understood in the context of this paper as any activity that improves physical health. Many Penn students do not allow enough time for physical activity and wellness in their schedules. Within the framework of a holistic education, SCUE has developed recommendations for how the University can promote feasible changes with the goal of creating this balance in students' lives, and further development in their academic pursuits.

Research shows that physical activity helps students to perform better intellectually and improves brain activityⁱⁱ. One study determined that endurance activity aids in executive planning and working memory, and increases attention and performance on cognitive tasksⁱⁱⁱ. Aerobic fitness is associated with higher measures of neuroelectric responsiveness, faster cognitive processing speed, and better performance in executive control; analyses also confirm a positive relationship between physical activity and

cognitive and academic performance. In the context of Penn students, this shows potential for physical activity to allow students to perform better on assignments and to be able to complete them more efficiently. In addition to the potential benefits to academic performance, there is a significant benefit to the added life balance provided by integrating regular physical activity into a daily routine. Regular physical activity is proven to increase students' happiness levels and help regulate stress hormones. Research has indicated that the mood benefits of just twenty minutes of exercise can last up to twelve hours, which makes experiential learning experience a powerful tool in improving student's mental and physical health.

A significant portion of students' classes, especially in freshman and sophomore years, are lecture classes in which students sit at desks and are expected to absorb the information presented. Some of these courses include discussion or lab based elements designed to reinforce the information or show its practical applications. Homework is mostly composed of readings, problem sets, essays, or projects. Students sometimes exercise on their own, utilizing Pottruck or other fitness centers, but ultimately physical activity is not built into most Penn students' daily lives, and these classes are purely extracurricular. In addition, students rarely have the opportunity to see the

real-world applications of their work outside of Penn. Seminars that get students out of the classroom could be a way to break the mold of the traditional classroom and teach in a different model. For example, a geology class could do a hike and field study to examine different types of rocks. An archaeology class could schedule a time to participate in an actual dig. An English class on Shakespeare could enroll in a theater workshop. The proliferation of discussion based seminars is a step in the right direction, although there is room for Penn to innovate further.

Curricular requirements can and should be used further as a way to encourage and facilitate physical activity both in the short and long term. Both Penn and peer institutions have conducted classes with this focus. We envision three potential models for how physical activity and experiential learning can be incorporated into the academic environment and culture at Penn:

- Focus on activities outside the classroom that link to in-class material
- Teach physical skills as course material
- Promote activity within class time to teach related materials

The first model integrates required physical activity outside of class time with course material learned during class. This model is built upon the premise that experiences teach in a way that a classroom is unable to in order to gain additional perspective. Some Penn seminars already integrate some level of physical activity into the curriculum. Yoga and Philosophy (PHIL051), a Freshman Seminar, exposes students to topics in Sanskrit philosophy involving yoga, examines the relationship between these topics and conventional western philosophy, and explores how yogic philosophy applies to college life and beyond. Throughout this course, students are required to regularly practice yoga outside of class and maintain a log to track what they do. In the same methodology, but different topic, Living Deliberately: Monk, Saints, and the Contemplative Life (RELS356) has outside of class requirements including meditation, strict dieting, and even an entire month of silence to help the students in the class understand the course material studying religious practitioners throughout history. Both of these courses allow the physical experiences to augment the learning in class, and professors grade these assignments based on dedication to learning the material.

This kind of model could be applied to other types of classes that study humans to show real world examples of the effects that are studied in class. Nurses or pre-med students studying anatomy or diseases could be required to track their exercise to show how it improves their health in order to better understand the effects and convey that understanding to their patients. Nursing students already have clinical hours that require them to put the skills they learn in the classroom into practice. Psychology,

neuroscience, and criminology students studying the way that changes in physicality influence decision-making could take a survey in the beginning of the semester and then take the same survey at the end after a custom regimented exercise routine based upon their starting point to measure their personal change.

Another model that can be implemented is one where physical skills *are* the course material. Penn can look to neighboring Temple University as a potential model for creating physical education-based curriculum. Temple's Department of Kinesiology Physical Activity Program offers for-credit classes in four different "Forms of Movement": Aquatics, Fitness, Lifestyle, and Survival. Courses and workshops are open to all students and include Lifeguard Training, Fitness for Life, Yoga, Backpacking & Camping, and Personal Defense, among others. This is designed to "explore human movement and its impact on health, society, and quality of life." Approximately 2,000 students participate in the program per semester and the courses are taught by professionals in these areas. Students sign up for these classes just as they would for any other class, and earn the equivalent of Temple credit that would correspond to a 0.5 C.U. of credit at Penn. This kind of class would give Penn students an opportunity to learn new and valuable skills while improving their physical health and gaining college credit. These courses have real-world applicability and use an innovative teaching model that gets students out of the classroom. Penn recognizes the importance of exposure to new fields through experiential learning in half-credit classes such as Arab Choir (MUSC 007), and should expand this to include physical education. With the advent of new courses like this, concerns could arise about the academic rigor of the course material. It is worth noting, however, that even though the material is not a traditionally academic subject, it can still be rigorous and it is still extremely useful in developing more well-rounded students.

The third model is one that promotes activity within the confines of scheduled class times to teach related course material. One example could be integrating outdoor education with a science class. In addition to regularly scheduled classroom sessions, these classes would include student-run trip-planning components. For instance, a class on plant biology could go hiking in a state park to study the plants on site to gain a better understanding of the ecosystem that contributes to their growth. Such excursions could be facilitated through the Outdoor Adventure Department which already guides similar trips. Global Seminars already use this model by combining a regularly scheduled class during the week with external trips outside of class time. Students would research and coordinate short trips alongside the professor that incorporate scientific and observational components, and then the class would go on these trips together. SCUE believes that planning trips will

help students to be better immersed in the learning experience and lead them to continue the activity after the end of the class. These classes would not require any prior experience for students to enroll, and instead would only require a willingness to learn and commit to the activities. In turn, the courses would teach life skills that students would be able to take with them in the future, embodying experiential learning.

Experiential learning has both immediate and long-term benefits for students. In the short term, students who participate in classes including physical activity may have a deeper understanding of the topic material because they will

have concrete examples where they can physically see and be actively involved in everything they are learning in class. In the long term, students who participate are far more likely to continue with the activities in which they participated during class, improving their physical and mental health. Integrating experiential learning into the Penn curricula will help students to improve cognitive tasks, planning, attention, memory, morale, and will build practices students can carry the rest of their lives. SCUE believes in building a campus culture around physical activity that is supported and furthered by the University with a blend of traditional learning and out-of-classroom experiences and assignments.

V. Course Policies, Syllabi, and Stress Management

Throughout this paper, we have identified numerous ways in which course syllabi and department goals could be revised to reinforce the ideal of a holistic education, such as civic engagement and learning outside the classroom. This section details the role that course syllabi themselves can play in promoting balance in students' lives.

We believe that syllabi have the potential to be a vital communication tool between professors and students, instead of their traditional use as an agreement between professors and their students. Syllabi outline expectations for student conduct, policies such as grading and attendance, and outline key topics to be covered in the course. Moreover, as the first impression that a student receives during course selection or on the first day of class, syllabi have the power to set the tone for the rest of the semester. It has the power to create conversations between professors and students regarding opportunities for academic enrichment and the importance of maintaining balance in their lives. As they stand now, syllabi across the university serve very well in their function of laying out key course themes, expectations, and policies. However, SCUE recommends that professors use both the tone and content of course syllabi to demonstrate their willingness to work with students to promote and institutionalize the ideals of a holistic education, specifically flexibility and understanding to account for student stress management.

One way that this could be achieved is through the inclusion of an explicit discussion of stress management in course syllabi. By acknowledging that they understand the pressure and high workload that students face, professors can create channels for dialogue at the start of the semester that will help students budget their time and fully understand what policies are in place for their specific course that will help them manage their workload in healthy ways.

Another solution to set a positive tone for students at the beginning of class is early access to class syllabi during advanced registration. As it currently stands, many classes do not offer their syllabi to be seen on PennInTouch nor can it be found on the class website. This creates a problem for students who are interested in trying to balance out their course load early on in the semester. If syllabi are easily

accessible during advanced registration, students would be able to engage in early forms of communication with the professor before the class begins. With access to class information, students are able to make a more sound decision about the classes for which they register. Syllabi allow the ability to balance workload while encouraging students to choose classes that peak their interest.

While there is not a single policy that works for the diverse set of courses offered at Penn, some creative best practices that have been incorporated into the structure of a course to help students manage stress are for example late day budgets for assignments and conferencing drafts of papers before submitting the final draft. Some problem set-intensive courses at Penn have introduced "budgets" of late days, which allow students to turn in homework past the deadline without penalty until they use up their budget. This course policy helps students manage their time and find flexibility when necessary, without the option of delaying assignments indefinitely. Conversations with students and the Office of Student Conduct have shown that late day policies allow students to have more time to dig deeply into the material covered and complete their assignments to the best of their ability, rather than cut corners through rushing or plagiarizing. In other courses, where papers make up the bulk of coursework, a recommendation is for professors of smaller courses to build a first draft/final draft grading method into their syllabi which helps students incorporate feedback and learn how to improve their writing and research skills. For larger classes, we recommend professors explicitly state that their office hours are times that are available for conferencing with students about expectation on papers and work that they have completed thus far. Such measures, rather than detracting from the academic rigor of a course, would allow students to manage their time and alleviate stress, especially in periods where deadlines for multiple courses coincide.

Another way syllabi should be used as an effective communication tool is to include language that acknowledges unforeseen circumstances. Syllabi and included course policies around unforeseen circumstances can allow for a dialogue to develop between students and their professors. Dialogue that may be misconstrued as aloof only serves to increase student stress. Ideally, grades would be determined based on a student's ability to master the content of the course and unforeseen and unique circumstances during the semester should not prevent the student from earning a grade that matches his or her potential.

Offering variable weighting on assignments is one way to achieve this goal. Course policies that do this allow students to deal with personal situations or stress without the added worry of the impact a "rough patch" in the semester might have on their overall grade. Some courses, such as some sections of Calculus I (MATH104) and Monetary Economics and Global Economy (FNCE101) structure final course grades to place more weight on those assignments and assessments on which students performed better, therefore mitigating the impact of unforeseen circumstances or stressful periods in students' lives.

Another example of course policies include opportunities to make up or drop test or quiz grades to build flexibility that accommodates unforeseen or unique circumstances. Student athletes that have an event requiring them to be away from campus for a period of time should be given the opportunity to take the exam at a different time. Professors should be clear in syllabi about their policies regarding religious holidays, illness and family emergencies and make sure that students are aware of

University policy surrounding alternative arrangements for missed work and examinations due to those circumstances.

Through stress management sections and reasonably flexible policies in syllabi, professors can show that they care for their students' well-being, and are aware of circumstances that the students face outside of the classroom. Policies, when couched in language in the course syllabus that acknowledges the possibility of unforeseen circumstances or exorbitant academic pressure, allow for a dialogue to develop between students and their professors. The widespread adoption of course policies and syllabi language that acknowledges wellness and creates open communication channels that make students feel valued at Penn is a tangible way in which we can create a conversation about balanced lifestyles and stress management on campus, making these issues a priority for students and faculty alike.

Ultimately, SCUE hopes that syllabi can be seen by both students and professors as a starting point for dialogue regarding classroom policies and overall university goals, rather than simply an enumeration of expectations and policies. We hope that professors will pay special attention to tone when constructing course syllabi, taking steps to demonstrate their acceptance of varying student circumstances and their willingness to work with students on issues surrounding mental wellness, stress management, and personal issues. We by no means suggest that course requirements at Penn should be relaxed at the expense of academic rigor, and understand that course policies are constructed to provide a clear framework for students. Rather, we hope that by addressing learning enrichment opportunities and stress management explicitly in course syllabi, we will be able to bring these issues to the forefront of discussion among students and faculty.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper, SCUE has defined the concept of a holistic education and shown how it can be promoted through curricular integration with resources in Philadelphia, civic engagement, encouragement of experiential learning, and facilitation of dialogue on stress management in the classroom. It is important to note that holistic education is not a radical departure from Penn's pedagogical philosophy; rather, it is a return to the principles on which the University was founded. While existing policies such as One University are motivated by the university's desire to give students a well-rounded educational experience, Penn today seems to stray from the "holistic" university it was intended to be, with a prevailing sense among many students that our culture rewards pre-

professionalism, unnecessary competition, and unhealthy habits in place of intellectual curiosity and balance. SCUE believes that every stakeholder at Penn – from students to administrators to department heads to professors – has a role to play in fostering and modeling the ideals of a holistic education. SCUE hopes that through discussion of these ideas and concrete ways in which they can be addressed, we can work toward setting a set of short, medium, and long-term goals for the Penn community in promoting holistic education. Ultimately, by creating a conversation about the balance that we keep as individuals and supporting each other in promoting that balance, we will become the self-actualized and effective world citizens that the founders of Penn sought to create.

ⁱ Whitley, C.T. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* November 2015 vol. 10 no. 3217-233

ⁱⁱ Hillman, Charles H., Kirk I. Erickson, and Arthur F. Kramer. "Be smart, exercise your heart: exercise effects on brain and cognition." *Nature reviews neuroscience* 9.1 (2008): 58-65

ⁱⁱⁱ Ploughman, Michelle. "Exercise is brain food: the effects of physical activity on cognitive function." *Developmental neurorehabilitation* 11.3 (2008): 236-240.