

President and Provost's Reception  
GAPSA Chair's Welcome Address

September 3, 2008

Ladies and gentlemen, graduate and professional students, scholars, future colleagues and friends, welcome to the University of Pennsylvania!

My name is Andrew Rennekamp, and I hold the privilege of being the 2008-2009 elected Chair of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (or "GAPSA" for short).

As your university-wide student government, GAPSA sponsors academic and social/networking events, GAPSA provides funding for individual student grants and student groups, and GAPSA represents your collective concerns to the University trustees, faculty, administrators and staff.

We have 12-member executive board – they're here today wearing black GAPSA t-shirts – and we have about a 50-member general assembly with representatives from all 12 Penn schools. Together we provide a voice for the more than 12,000 graduate and professional students on campus. That's right, more than 12,000 – which means that, we narrowly outnumber the undergrads here! So once again, welcome!

You are now a part of that very important population of seasoned students who play an integral role in shaping and holding together our University and West Philadelphia community. Together we graduate and professional students bridge an intellectual and generational gap between the faculty and the undergraduates, and a residential gap between campus and the rest of Philadelphia in every direction!

As a group we are cool enough to connect with the undergrads and yet experienced and learned enough to engage Penn's brilliant world-class faculty. We are culturally savvy enough and daring enough to enjoy life both on campus and out in the city around us. We are therefore in the enviable position to teach and to learn from both faculty and freshmen, from both lecturers and locals.

And don't for a minute neglect your graduate and professional student peers, including those standing next to you right now. It is perhaps these individuals from whom you will learn the most during the next 1, 2, maybe 7 years and beyond.

Take advantage of the many resources offered by the University including the Graduate Student Center, GAPSA, your school-specific student governments, and the many centers, which have tables here today. And finally make the most of your Penn education by taking every opportunity to think critically and collaboratively, across disciplines and across stereotypical boundaries.

With that I'd like to introduce you to the President of the University, Dr. Amy Gutmann, who has been a leader in removing boundaries, making graduate and professional education at Penn more accessible, more intellectually integrated, and more collaborative than ever.