

UNIVERSITIES ALLIED FOR ESSENTIAL MEDICINES

Open Forum of the University Council: 3 May 2006

First and foremost, we'd like to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to come here today to tell you about our organization, Universities Allied for Essential Medicines. Here at Penn, UAEM is an interdisciplinary group comprised of students from the school of medicine, the school of law, the Wharton school of business, the school of nursing, and undergraduates. UAEM chapters are also active at over 25 major research universities in the US, Canada, and the UK.

As students at one of the most prominent research universities in the world, we believe that Penn has an opportunity and a responsibility to improve global access to public health goods --particularly those which Penn researchers have helped develop. Specifically, our mission as an organization is two fold:

(1) to determine how universities can help ensure that biomedical end products, such as drugs, are made more accessible in poor countries and

(2) to increase the amount of research conducted on neglected diseases, or those diseases predominantly affecting people who are too poor to constitute a market attractive to private-sector R&D investment.

As a group working to improve global human health, we are immeasurably enthusiastic about Penn's growing commitment to global engagement. We echo the idea, as presented in the Penn Compact that Penn is a University which should "engage dynamically with communities all over the world to exchange knowledge that improves quality of life for all." In this vein, we come to the Council today with a proposed alteration to language within University Policy.

- The document entitled "Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations in Technology Commercialization at Penn" describes the mission of the University's Center for Technology Transfer as "to commercialize Penn Research for the public good." It is our hope that the Council will consider broadening the scope of this statement, so as to read that the mission of the CTT is "primarily, to improve global human welfare through technology transfer." By concretely defining the community we seek to benefit as a global one, we believe that Penn can tangibly demonstrate the growing commitment to Global Engagement thus far professed in the Penn Compact and elsewhere. We hope to formalize such a recommendation via resolution at the next University Council meeting.

Yet the change which our organization seeks, and that to which we realize the University aspires, is not one of semantics. Rather, it is the change which may follow from this alteration of language. We believe that two specific policy recommendations flow from this statement of principle:

- First, Penn should adopt licensing provisions that facilitate access to its health-related innovations in poor countries; and
- Second, Penn should promote research on neglected and find ways to work with nontraditional partners that seek to develop medicines for those diseases.

Our organization has thought carefully about the ways in which these recommendations may be operationalized -- an effort which has resulted in the development of model licenses and policy documents that we believe universities can use as a concrete means to enhance their efficacy in improving global public health. We understand these as one proposed solution to a complex problem, and we enthusiastically await the opportunity to work with University Administrators in determining how to maximize the global impact of Penn Research.

While the details of concrete action are still to be resolved, we do believe that the University currently has the opportunity to make a symbolic statement NOW through the alterations in Penn Policy to better reflect the university's commitment to global engagement. Thank you for your time and attention – I and my colleagues now welcome any questions you may have.