Described by colleagues as an outstanding teacher who had a terrific impact, Wolf Visiting Associate Professor in Television Studies Victoria Johnson won the 2009 Katherine S. Kovacs Book Award during her recent time at Penn. Granted by the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, the award recognizes original works that significantly advance scholarship in the field. Johnson received the honor for her 2008 book, *Heartland TV: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for U.S. Identity*, which examines the Midwest of popular imagination in the context of television’s development, programming and marketing, as well as public debates over the medium’s cultural worth.

During the spring semester, Johnson taught two popular undergraduate courses—an introduction to television studies and TV Nation: Television and the Imagination of Community. She also took part in the annual Cinema Studies Pedagogy symposium, which provides ongoing training for faculty and graduate students in teaching at the undergraduate level. Johnson is the second scholar appointed to the Wolf Visiting Professorship since its inception in 2007. Established through a gift by Dick Wolf, C’69—the Emmy-winning creator and executive producer of *Law & Order*, among other achievements—this professorship plays a key role in attracting leading television scholars who share their talent and expertise with the Penn community.

If time is money, then President of Disney Channels Worldwide Rich Ross, C’83, has made students in the School of Arts and Sciences wealthy indeed. Over the last 15 years, Ross has traveled to campus 17 times to speak to—and with—students across the University campus about planning their career paths. Most recently, he was the first alumnus to speak via video conference with undergraduates as part of the College Alumni Mentoring Series.

One student who has benefited from Ross’s time and personal engagement is Bing Chen, who graduated from the College in May with a degree in English. Chen has his own aspirations for a career in the media industry, managed to hear Ross speak every year during his time at Penn and also received one-on-one counsel from the Disney executive.

“He has been an incredible mentor,” Chen says, “and he’s incredibly candid and honest with his advice, which has proven to be very helpful in my professional trajectory thus far.” Ross helped Chen identify his personal interests in media and entertainment and recommended the College student for his first summer internship at Disney-ABC Media Networks, an experience Chen says taught him a “host of transferable business skills.”

Chen believes the fact that Ross has returned to campus regularly for the past 15 years to speak—particularly with College students—is a testament not only to his loyalty to his alma mater but also to his belief in the importance of a liberal arts education. "He will often emphasize the importance of the softer skills that he learned as an English and international relations major to his daily life today," Chen explains. Indeed, says Ross, “What can be better than to have the opportunity to avail yourself of the wide range of learning that comes from a liberal arts education, especially when you know there is a world out there today that demands thinkers, not just graduates?”

There is no way to put a price on what students can learn from alumni experiences, but alums like Ross get a lot out of the interaction as well. “I believe returning each year to see students provides for them clear evidence that their career possibilities are as endless as their dreams,” Ross says, “and for me, that there are new dreamers at Penn ready to enter the work force.”
A distinguished alumnus, businessman and one of the University's most dedicated citizens, Christopher Browne, C'69, can now count among his accolades the SAS Dean's Medal—a special recognition that has only been given at one other time in the School's history.

"I can think of no one more deserving of this honor," remarked Dean Bushnell as she presented the medal at the Dean's Forum reception in April. "A man who always speaks his mind, Chris has said many times that volunteers need to bring at least two out of three things to the table: work, wealth or wisdom. I can say confidently that Chris has provided all three in abundance."

Browne's legacy of giving at SAS includes not only the 10 Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professorships but also the Christopher H. Browne Center for International Politics. "Chris's generosity to the School of Arts and Sciences is legendary," said Dean Bushnell, "and has touched more departments, programs, faculty and students than I can name."

As a co-chair of Penn's Making History Campaign and a Charter Trustee of the University, Browne believes that supporting the School is critical to Penn's future. "My long involvement with the University has been motivated by my desire to see that the University I leave behind is even better than the one that helped to shape me as an undergraduate," he explains. "That can't happen without a strong School of Arts and Sciences."

Christopher H. Browne has been a trustee of the University since 1991 and a member of the Board of Overseers of the School of Arts and Sciences since 1982. He has served as overseer chair since 1999. Browne has spent his entire career at Tweedy, Browne Company, LLC, a registered investment advisor with offices in New York and London, and is president of the Tweedy, Browne Mutual Funds.
In April, after serving more than 10 years as chair of the School's Board of Overseers, Christopher Browne, C’69, stepped down. His successor, David Silfen, graduated from the College in 1966, but he has never really left Penn.

David has been a generous donor and an equally committed volunteer. His gifts include two Penn Integrates Knowledge Professorships, the David and Lyn Silfen University Forum, a Student Study Center and support for the College’s Pilot Curriculum, an experiment in learning that helped shape the School’s general curriculum. He is also a proud Penn parent: his two children, Adam, C’98, WG’03, and Jane, C’07, are also Arts and Sciences alumni.

Two years after graduating from Penn, the same year he earned an MBA at Columbia, David joined Goldman Sachs. Within 10 years, he was a partner. He subsequently rose to become co-head of the firm’s Global Equities Division and a member of its Executive Committee. He retired in 1997 from Goldman Sachs and holds the honorary title of Senior Director. He now oversees his family’s office of investments.

In addition to serving on the School’s Board of Overseers, David is a longtime Penn Trustee. He has served as chair of the Trustee’s Development Committee and as a member of the Executive, Budget and Finance, Investment Board and Nominating committees. He was also deeply involved in planning for Penn’s Making History campaign.

We spoke recently with David by phone about his long association with the School of Arts and Sciences.
Q: How did you first become involved with the School?
Silfen: I’ve been a supporter since my graduation—40 years ago. I felt indebted to Penn because of the impact that my experience there had on me. I was a Russian history major, and I believe strongly that my liberal arts education served me well. So I view Penn, and especially SAS, as one of the institutions in my life that really helped shape who I am. But my volunteer involvement intensified when I joined the School’s board in the ’80s. I’ve had the pleasure of working with four of the School’s distinguished deans, most recently Rebecca Bushnell.

Q: What motivated you?
Silfen: I’ve always felt that it’s important to give back to the community and to organizations that I feel close to. It’s a view that my wife Lyn shares. For many years after graduation, I was immersed in my professional career. Although I didn’t have much time, I wanted to make a meaningful contribution to a relatively small number of organizations that were important to me. Penn is at the top of the list.

Q: What advice would you give to alumni interested in becoming more involved with Penn?
Silfen: They should try it. Philanthropic and volunteer involvement is like anything else in this world—if you like it, you’ll do more of it. From my own involvement in the Making History campaign, I’ve had many opportunities to see the excitement of our donors and volunteers and the gratification that they’ve gotten from the good things that have happened at Penn because of their support. There’s a lot for all of us to be proud of.

Q: You’ve been associated with SAS for decades. Can you comment on the changes that you’ve seen?
Silfen: There is a lot of positive momentum. I feel extraordinarily pleased with the direction that both Amy Gutmann and Rebecca Bushnell have taken. The School has great success in attracting the most diverse and academically capable students year in and year out. And the caliber of professors that we’ve been able to attract from around the world is truly impressive. The Penn Integrates Knowledge initiative is bringing world-class scholars with a multidimensional perspective to Penn. Lyn and I have endowed two—both joint appointments to the School of Arts and Sciences and Medicine. I’m very excited about the people that we have recruited to these chairs. Jonathan Moreno in Medical Ethics, and History and Sociology of Science is a leading bioethics expert and has been heading up the Obama transition team’s Council on Bioethics Review. And Sarah Tishkoff in Genetics and Biology just had a great write-up in the New York Times about her work in Africa.

Q: What impact do you see the global economic crisis having on the Making History campaign?
Silfen: Obviously we are very aware of the strain that the downturn in the global economy is placing on people’s philanthropy. While we’re still looking to raise funds for our critical priorities, we’re also emphasizing stewardship and cultivation, and making people aware of all the terrific things that are happening at SAS and the entire University. In the last six months Rebecca [Bushnell] has met with alumni and supporters in India, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and England, as well as New York and California. We’re using the Making History campaign as an opportunity to make people aware of the progress and exciting initiatives at Penn—there’s an important story to be told.

Even with the difficult economic climate, the University is doing very well against the $3.5-billion goal. With three years still to go we’re already at $2.4 billion, so I feel cautiously optimistic that we’ll hit our target. But the real success of the campaign will be based on funding specific priorities, which include student aid, support for faculty, and important facilities projects like the Neural and Behavioral Sciences Building, and on assuring that SAS achieves its campaign goal of $500 million. This will be challenging, but we’re committed to getting it done.

Q: As the new chair of the Board of Overseers, what are your goals for the School?
Silfen: First of all, I would be remiss if I didn’t give credit to Chris Browne for his outstanding leadership over the last decade. The School enjoyed great upward momentum under his tenure as the board’s chair, and one of my main goals is to continue that momentum and take it to the next level. I’m especially eager to engage younger alumni on our board and to expand our geographical and professional representation. And I want to be sure that the Overseers are actively involved in the campaign. We still have to compete with peer institutions for our world-class students and faculty, and the campaign will help assure that we have the resources to compete effectively. As well as we’ve done at SAS, and at Penn, we can’t be complacent. I’m not opposed to taking victory laps. But I do think that great organizations don’t sit still.