Jack’s back

One of Boston College’s best known graduates — although in this case the “alum” has never set foot in Chestnut Hill — is back in action as the central character in a best-selling novel.

The character is Jack Ryan, a CIA operative who ascended up the ranks to become president of the United States over a two decades-long series of Tom Clancy techno-action novels that began with the popular Hunt for Red October in 1984. In Clancy’s latest work, Dead or Alive, the now-retired agent Ryan is mulling a campaign to return to the White House, while at the same time heading up a covert effort to find the world’s most wanted terrorist.

As is the case in almost all of his works, Clancy includes a reference to Ryan’s fictional alma mater, Boston College, in the text. Midway through the pages of Dead or Alive, Ryan is depicted as savoring BC’s recent football successes against Notre Dame.

Clancy is believed to have modeled his Jack Ryan character after a real-life high school friend who went on to attend Boston College in the mid-1960s and then became a US Navy helicopter pilot in Vietnam. Clancy is a 1969 graduate of Loyola of Maryland, a Jesuit school in his hometown of Baltimore.

—By Reid Oslin, Boston College Chronicle, 3-3-11