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# The best of both academic worlds

By [Heights Editorial Board](#)

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**THE ISSUE:** BC research continues to grow **WHAT WE THINK:** Sustain the focus on undergrad education

When one thinks of research universities, Boston College would probably not be placed among the rankings of institutions well-known for their academic research: Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Duke, and Yale. In recent years, however, BC has risen to prominence in many fields.

Between June 2006 and May 2007, the University had \$51.6 million in research expenditures.

Mick Smyer, Marcie Pitt-Catsoupes, and the Center on Aging and Work have conducted some of the earliest and most reputable studies on the aging workforce, especially in relation to the baby-boomer generation.

Paul Schervish and The Center for Wealth and Philanthropy recently received an \$8 million grant to conduct the first-ever study on the effects of wealth on the "ultra wealthy."

Alan Wolfe of the Boisi Center for Religion and Public Life is one of the foremost public intellectuals, regularly publishing opinion pieces and reviews, as well as being quoted in countless articles.

Alicia H. Munnell has led the Center for Retirement Research to national acclaim; its work is now regularly cited and used by many newspapers, notably The New York Times, and government entities, such as Congress. Joseph Quinn, the former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of economics is also working closely with the center.

And it doesn't stop there.

The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center at the Lynch School of Education is at the forefront of comparative studies in education. The study centers, considered two of the nation's foremost testing programs, focus on achievement in math, science, and literacy.

The Center for Child, Family, and Community Partnerships at the Lynch School led by Mary Walsh is funded by the Carnegie Foundation and is also a prominent educational research center.

In the field of natural sciences, Kris Kempa and a group of his colleagues in the physics department created an antenna out of carbon nanotubes that makes great advances toward an ultra-fast conversion of light to usable energy. This is applicable to both converting solar energy to electricity and making television and Internet connections significantly faster than broadband.

Michael Naughton, along with another group of physicists and chemists at BC, is using a \$1 million grant to

create a miniscule microscope created from nanotubes and nanofibers that can take pictures of the smallest parts of human DNA.

The best part: You're likely to have some of these professors as instructors, since many of them teach undergraduate classes.

The University Strategic Plan seeks to bolster research efforts at BC but, unlike many other universities, the plan calls for a strict balance between research and instruction. While students at other universities might not have a professor teaching a class they are enrolled in until they reach graduate school, BC realizes that putting renowned professors and researchers in undergraduate classrooms is imperative.

We feel that this is what makes a liberal arts education at BC special - world class faculty who both teach at the undergraduate level and conduct renowned research. This distinction - which is growing scarce in academia - should be protected and promoted by the University to attract undergraduate students who are considering other prestigious school.