

**GETTING STARTED AT BOSTON COLLEGE:  
INFORMATION FOR NEW TEACHERS**

The Connors Family Learning Center  
Boston College University Libraries  
2008

## *Campus Resources for Your Students*

Here are some offices and organizations we thought you might want to know about as you interact with students. Although some are relevant to undergraduates only, most services are available to all BC students.

### *Academic Advising Center*

The Academic Advising Center offers excellent programming for all BC students and coordinates advising for first-year students and undeclared sophomores in the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Management. The Advising Center staff can help students with any questions about requirements or problems in classes as well as with larger questions about choosing majors and thinking about future careers. Their main number is 552-9259.

### *Academic Deans*

All BC undergrads are assigned an academic dean, according to school and year of study. These deans can be an extremely useful resource for you.

If a student seems to be having a lot of academic problems, you can suggest that he or she make an appointment with the appropriate dean to get some advice. Sometimes a student will suddenly stop coming to class, or will give you excuses about family situations or illnesses--the appropriate dean can either inform you about what's going on or write the student a letter asking for explanation.

Below is a list of the current deans for each group of students and their phone numbers. (All phone numbers below begin with 552-)

#### College of Arts and Sciences

Sophomores:	Clare Dunsford	2-2274
Juniors:	Akua Sarr	2-6870
Seniors:	William Petri	2-3272
Freshmen in Arts and Sciences and Carroll School of Management:		
Elizabeth Nathans, Director, Academic Advising Center		2-9260
School of Management	Richard Keeley	2-8739
School of Nursing	Catherine Read	2-4925
School of Education	John Cawthorne	2-4204

## ***AHANA Student Services***

AHANA is BC's acronym for African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American students. The AHANA Office has several programs that support AHANA students on campus, including tutoring, counseling, academic advisement, and career counseling. The AHANA Office also offers a summer program, *Options Through Education*, which prepares 40-50 pre-freshmen to enter BC each year. If you have any questions about AHANA, or if you have a student who might benefit from getting in touch with them, call 552-3358.

AHANA also sponsors the Benjamin E. Mays Mentoring Program which pairs faculty and staff with AHANA students who want a mentor. Becoming a Mays Mentor is an excellent way to get to know students as well as other faculty around campus. It doesn't require a huge time commitment but it is very enjoyable. Call Ines Maturana if you are interested (552-4806).



## ***Technology Services***

Several kinds of technology support are available to you and your students. Current BC students can use the workstations in the Student Learning and Support Center (SLSC) in O'Neill.

All BC students automatically receive e-mail accounts as soon as they arrive on campus, and each resident is connected individually in the dorms. You can take advantage of these electronic connections in many ways in your teaching. For example, our course management software (Blackboard Vista) enables you to securely add course material, create discussion boards, and offer

assignments, quizzes and surveys. You can also set up e-mail communication with and among your students, have them work collaboratively, and assign projects which require using the internet.

If you'd like information or advice on using technology in your teaching, contact Instructional Design and eTeaching Services ([www.bc.edu/offices/instruction](http://www.bc.edu/offices/instruction)). Media Technology Services (located in Champion Hall G36) can provide you with multimedia training and equipment for your classroom presentation (x2-4219). You can also check out the Faculty Microcomputer Resource Center (FMRC) for faculty-to-faculty help with technology ([fmwww.bc.edu/fmrc](http://fmwww.bc.edu/fmrc))



### ***The Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC)***

The Connors Center offers several kinds of academic support services to you and your students, including tutoring (552-0611 for appointments) for most core courses, many upper division courses and some grad level courses as well. The Center also coordinates services and accommodations for students with learning disabilities. For information on tutoring, to arrange for extra time on proctored exams in the CFLC, or for responses to any other questions about students with LD, please call 552-8055.

The CFLC also sponsors a number of programs on teaching for graduate teaching assistants and teaching fellows as well as for faculty. For an up-to-date calendar, check the website: [www.bc.edu/connors](http://www.bc.edu/connors) The CFLC does mid-semester teaching evaluations, videotapes classes, and provides general teaching consultation for grad students or faculty. The CFLC is located on the second floor of O'Neill Library.

## ***The Intercultural Office***

The intercultural office provides assistance for international students in the form of advising, orientation, and help with immigration forms and information. The office also facilitates intercultural clubs and organizations on campus. If you or your students have questions about international or intercultural support, call 552-8005

## ***Intersections***

The Intersections project offers faculty a number of ways to interact with students outside of the classroom. Intersections is designed to help students think about key choices they need to make in college and beyond, and in addition to several programs directed at students, there are also programs involving faculty and staff.

If you are interested in or would like to know more about any of the Intersections programs, please contact:

Burt Howell

Director

The Boston College Intersections Project

Phone: (617)-552-6141

Email: howellbu@bc.edu

## ***Learning Resources for Student Athletes (LRSA)***

Varsity athletes at BC meet the same academic standards as everyone else, despite their demanding practice and game schedules. BC has an excellent record in terms of athletes' graduation rates, and LRSA is one of the reasons for this success. The LRSA staff will notify you if you have a varsity athlete in your class, and they will follow up to make sure that student is managing to keep up with his or her work. If you have any questions about a student athlete, or about LRSA, call 552-8533.

## ***Learning to Learn***

Learning to Learn's mission statement says that their "first priority is to provide first generation, financially needy college students with academic assistance" (LTL web site). LTL has a variety of services to assist students, including a three-credit course, *Applications in Learning Theory*, designed to help students improve their analytical thinking and overall academic performance. The course is offered through the Psychology Department, as PS 005, and has an impressive, well-documented record of success. If you have students who could benefit from LTL services, or if you are interested in finding out more about LTL, go to [www.bc.edu/ltl](http://www.bc.edu/ltl) or call 552-4551.

## ***Office of the Dean for Student Development (ODSD)***

ODSD administers a wide array of programs: student clubs and organizations, judicial affairs, drug and alcohol education, intramural sports, residence halls, and off-campus and commuting student affairs. ODSD also sets and enforces policies regarding student conduct and discipline. If you or your students have questions about any of these matters, call 552-3470.

## ***Tutoring Services***

BC offers a number of options for students who want tutoring. The Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC) provides tutoring for all students on campus, free of charge, in about 60 different courses. The Math Department has a free walk-in tutoring service, AHANA has various tutoring opportunities for its students, and Learning Resources for Student Athletes provides tutoring services for varsity athletes. Many departments also maintain lists of students who are willing to tutor; the average charge for such private tutoring is between \$25 and \$35.

Tutoring can be a real help to you as the instructor. If a student needs more individual help than you have time to provide, consider suggesting that he or she seek a tutor; if you're teaching a course in which small group interaction with a trained tutor would benefit students (such as a language course), you can arrange this through the CFLC. For most core courses, and many others, the tutoring is free of charge (at the CFLC, math department, AHANA, etc.) so you shouldn't hesitate to recommend it.

## ***University Chaplaincy***

The University Chaplains' Office offers spiritual support and counseling to all BC students. You might suggest the Chaplains' Office to students who want someone to talk with about religious or personal problems and to students who want to become involved in community service and volunteer work here or abroad. The Chaplains' Office sponsors worship services, retreats, prayer groups, and community projects, as well as offering individual counseling. Call 552-3475 for more information.

## ***University Counseling Services***

While the University Chaplaincy is primarily concerned with the spiritual development of students, University Counseling Services seek to enhance their emotional development. In addition to a number of ongoing programs, Counseling Services offers individual and group counseling to all BC students. Students can call for appointments (552-3310). The regular office hours are Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm, but there is a psychologist on duty 24 hours a day. In an emergency, you can reach him or her by calling the Infirmary (552-3228).

## *University Libraries*

BC's libraries are a wonderful resource for you and your students. The University Libraries belong to the Association of Research Libraries and recently celebrated the acquisition of their 2 millionth volume. The libraries also have hundreds of digital databases and indexes. You can help your students get off to a good start by making sure they're aware of the library resources for your discipline and that they know where to go if they need help. The reference librarians in all the campus libraries are eager to assist undergraduates as well as graduate students and faculty.

The library's web system provides many convenient electronic services, including book renewal, answers to reference questions, consultations with subject specialists, interlibrary loan requests, rushes and recalls and a service called 24/7, which will provide direct contact with a librarian at any time of day or night.



## **Questions about how things work at B.C.**

These are some of the teaching-related questions we hear most frequently. For more information on these topics or for other questions related to teaching, you are welcome to contact Sue Barrett ([barretsc@bc.edu](mailto:barretsc@bc.edu) or 552-0835).

### ***What are the policies on academic integrity?***

BC recently clarified its policy on academic integrity and the new version is very thoughtful and very thorough. You can find the policy at:

<http://www.bc.edu/integrity>

In addition to defining cheating, plagiarism and collusion, it also outlines the roles of community members, including students, deans and faculty, in promoting academic integrity and goes through the procedures to deal with violations.

The new policy gives faculty responsibility for creating an atmosphere that encourages academic integrity. The policy goes far beyond making sure nobody cheats on exams. Specifically, it states that faculty should discuss academic integrity at the beginning of every semester to make sure that students understand the concept in the context of the class. Faculty should also provide a written syllabus that clearly outlines course requirements and due dates, if possible, as well as a statement on academic integrity. Exams and assignments should be new each semester or, if not, all students should have equal access to old exams. Exams and assignments should be carefully designed to minimize the possibility of dishonesty. Proctors should be present at exams. Faculty must respect students' intellectual property and confidentiality. Finally, grades should be awarded in a manner that is fair to all students.

If, in spite of your efforts, students violate academic integrity, it's important to hold them accountable. Your first step is to discuss the suspected violation with the student. If you decide to impose a grade penalty, you are expected to send a letter to the student's class dean, describing what has occurred. The student will receive formal notification of the charge and have an opportunity to respond. First offenses typically receive only a warning. The case will eventually come before the Committee on Academic Integrity for the student's school, as described at the web site given above.

## *Is class attendance required?*

As a matter of policy, students are expected to attend class but handling the specifics of that are up to you. It's a good idea to have an attendance policy of your own, but it's also good to know that the college catalogue explicitly states that attendance is required. If a student has to miss several classes because of illness or other exceptional circumstances, the student or the family should communicate with the appropriate associate dean, who will notify you that the student needs special consideration. Absences for religious reasons are also excused.

Faculty sometimes have questions about students missing classes because of involvement on varsity sports teams. These absences are legitimate, and you should receive an official travel letter telling you which dates the student will be unable to attend class. The athletes will be responsible for making up all work. The academic lives of student athletes are taken very seriously at BC and if you have any questions, please call Learning Resources for Student Athletes at 552-8533.

## *How are teaching evaluations handled?*

All course evaluations are now online. This has several advantages for faculty, including immediate reports as soon as your course is completed. The online survey contains 6 standard response questions and 3 open-ended ones. Faculty can also add up to 5 of their own customized questions. You can easily access your evaluations through Agora.

There is also an on-line evaluation system run by the undergraduate student government where interested students can submit comments about teachers. It is quite unofficial and inconsistent in that students at either extreme tend to submit comments—those that loved or hated a class—and the others usually don't bother. Although most faculty take these reviews for what they are, many students check them before signing up for classes.

You may also want to get some feedback on your teaching without waiting for the end of the semester. There are many methods of getting mid-semester feedback, including just asking your students how the class is going for them. This has the advantage of simplicity, but the disadvantage of not allowing them to answer anonymously. One way around this is to invite someone else in to gather information for you. You might have a department colleague visit your class mid-way in the semester and ask the students to write short answers to three questions: what does this teacher do that helps you learn? What does the teacher do that does not help you learn? And what one or two specific things could this teacher do that would help you learn more in this class? Your colleague can

then type up the answers, to protect anonymity, and give you the feedback. (This is a service provided by The Connors Family Learning Center.)

### ***What should I do when I have a student with a learning disability?***

Kathleen Duggan, who coordinates services for students with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder, contributed the following answer to this question.

It's very likely that sooner or later you will have a student with a learning disability (LD) in one of your classes. These students may or may not identify themselves to you with a letter from Kathleen Duggan, the University's Coordinator of Academic Support Services, or from Dard Miller, the Learning Specialist for Student Athletes. If they do bring you a letter certifying their LDs, and ask for special accommodations, such as extended time on tests or the opportunity to take tests in the Academic Development Center, it's important that you make every reasonable accommodation. Any student with such a letter has a specific, diagnosed learning disability and most likely needs the requested accommodation--at the same time, it's his or her legal right. If you need advice or consultation regarding a specific request, call Kathleen Duggan at The Connors Family Learning Center (552-8093). Other students with learning disabilities may choose not to identify themselves; they may feel that they don't need any special help and that they'd rather not disclose their disabilities.

In either case, it's useful for you to know what the phrase "learning disability" means. A person with a learning disability has average or above average intelligence but has difficulty taking in, remembering, or expressing information in an understandable way. Students with learning disabilities don't have one set of characteristics, but they do share one thing--they learn in noticeably different ways than their peers.

Some general tips are helpful in teaching students with learning disabilities--and in helping all students learn better:

- \* Be positive and give praise when appropriate
- \* Encourage student responsibility
- \* Build upon the student's strengths
- \* Insist that the student fulfill course requirements, but, if possible, provide him or her with several possible strategies for doing so.
- \* Explain information in as many ways as possible. These ways could include speech, writing, illustrations, or demonstrations.
- \* Be sure to be clear and concise in your presentation and pose specific questions to see if the student understands the information.

## ***What do I do for students with physical challenges?***

BC also serves a number of physically challenged students, including some with vision or hearing impairments, and some of these students may require accommodations in your course. Possible accommodations include signers, notetakers, adaptive software and alternative testing arrangements. All of these students are able to complete academic work successfully and they deserve and have a legal right to reasonable accommodations. The person to contact with questions about accommodating a physically challenged student is Suzy Conway, Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities. Her phone number is 552-3470.

## ***Is there support for teaching students for whom English is not the first language?***

BC has a large number of international students and also some students who come from U.S. backgrounds where English is the second language. When students are having trouble with English, they may sometimes seem to be having trouble mastering course material. This may or may not be the case. They may understand the material perfectly well but have difficulty demonstrating mastery. There is always a question of fairness—should they have extra time to do work? Should you try to overlook grammar and style errors and evaluate them only on their knowledge? Or do you think that all students should be able to demonstrate mastery of English as well as of your subject matter? There is no policy that will answer the question for you. There are ESL courses available to these students, but they may still have difficulty even after taking the courses. You may decide that it would be fair to allow such a student extra time to complete assignments or in-class work. You can encourage him or her to join a study group or to come to your office hours. Make sure the student knows that the Connors Center offers free tutoring in English for Foreign Students, as well as in specific course materials. If you have questions regarding international students, contact the International Student Services staff at 552-8005.