

ATAB Annual Report 2013-2014

The Academic Technology Advisory Board (ATAB) continues to be the voice of the faculty in all technology matters on the Boston College campus. The board welcomed two non-faculty members this year, including Scott Cann, Technology Director of IT Services in Information Technology Services (ITS), and Cristina Joy, Director of Instructional Design and eTeaching Services (IDeS). The board also welcomed Scott Britton, Associate University Librarian for Instruction, Access, and Users, who replaced Tom Wall, University Librarian, on the board. ATAB was also sad to see the departure of Rita Owens, former Executive Director for Academic Technology, from the board in order for her to pursue full-time teaching in the Carroll School of Management.

ATAB's major initiative in Academic Year 2013-2014, in partnership with the University Council on Teaching (UCT), was the Academic Innovation Program. The primary goal of the program is to enhance student-faculty interaction through technology by supporting new teaching initiatives and course redesign. Rather than using a standard grant model, this program gathered faculty members from across the university's academic disciplines and departments to discuss innovative teaching approaches and then asked interested faculty members to submit short pitches for projects. Staff from IDeS then investigated and scoped each potential project and brought recommendations back to a combined subcommittee of the UCT and ATAB to determine which projects should move forward. In all, the subcommittee approved twelve projects. Notable projects include a flipped classroom pilot in Art History, an animated online module for Corporations Law, and hybrid course design for a Computers in Management course. Participants are also gathering useful data on each project to inform further BC projects in the future. The innovation program will continue into the 2014-2015 academic year and will culminate in a report on innovative teaching at BC to be shared with the university community. A full list of projects and participants can be found at bc.edu/atab.

ATAB welcomed a series of guests to present on the state of technology and teaching at the university, including Michael Bourque, Chief Technology Officer in ITS, Mary Crane, Director of the Institute for the Liberal Arts, and Pat DeLeeuw, Vice Provost for Faculties. Each presenter provided ATAB with updates on various efforts to support faculty members across the university.

ATAB also advocated for faculty, staff, and administrator adoption of the Google Apps suite of tools. The ATAB chair, with input from the rest of board, drafted a letter to the CIO, EVP, and others expressing ATAB's recommendation that the new system be implemented as soon as reasonably possible. Several months later, when ITS announced they would be implementing Google Apps across campus, several ATAB members volunteered to be early adopters.

ATAB also re-examined its role within the university and prepared a new charter for approval by the Provost. The departure of Rita Owens, the restructuring of IDeS, and the formation of the Center for Teaching Excellence changed the reporting lines between the Provost and the faculty on technology matters, prompting this effort. The new charter (awaiting approval at the time of this writing) clarifies ATAB's role and responsibilities.

ATAB continued to fund innovative faculty teaching and research through Academic Technology Innovation Grants (ATIGs) and Exploratory Technology Grants (ETGs) in 2013-2014. New projects include in-class annotation tablets, neural network simulation, the establishment of a digital humanities space and further development of digital humanities software, and the use of robotics to teach science.

ATAB was also able to witness the culmination of several existing ATIGs, including Professor Dennis Shirley's Mindful Teacher project and Professors Ana Martinez-Aleman and Heather Rowan-Kenyon's BC101 project. These projects helped teachers practice mindfulness before and during teaching, as well as helping first-generation Boston College students succeed, respectively.