**Provost's Advisory Council**

**Summary of March 29, 2012 meeting**

Bert Garza

Judy Gordon

Pat DeLeeuw

Lillie Albert

Pat Byrne

Marilyn Matelski

Katie O'Dair

Diana Pullin

Stephen Pfohl

Tom Wall

David Quigley

David Wirth

Jenny Baglivo

Larry McLaughlin

Don Hafner

Callista Roy

Anita Tien

Francine Cardman

Tim Crawford

Jillian Maxey

Renee Jones

Maureen Kenny

1. The summary for the meeting of February 23, 2012 was approved. The summary will be sent to the President's Office. All summaries are posted on the Provost's Office website; members are encouraged to share the summary with colleagues.
2. At the December 1, 2011 meeting of the Provost's Advisory Council, questions were raised about a sentence in Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Commitment policy: "External activities should be of such nature and conducted in such manner that they bring credit to the University." As follow up, language from similar policies at other institutions was distributed for review. It was proposed that a subcommittee of the Council be constituted to propose alternate language. Renee Jones, David Wirth, and Pat DeLeeuw will comprise the subcommittee.
3. It was reported that at a recent meeting of the Mathematics Department, the subject of grade inflation was raised. The Princeton grading policy, which sets the expectation that grades of A and A- should compose no more than 35% of grades in undergraduate courses, was discussed as a possible model for adoption at Boston College.

* It was noted that grade inflation has been a subject of concern for the University Council on Teaching; that group has made recommendations for specific measures to combat grade inflation.
* Some members of Council raised questions about the applicability of the Princeton model to BC. It was noted that the academic profile of students applying and admitted to Boston College has improved dramatically, and that the rise in grades overall may in part reflect this trend as well.
* There was general agreement that grade inflation must be approached as a cross-school effort.
* Don Hafner, David Quigley, and Jenny Baglivo will meet to discuss the topic and propose possible approaches for a future discussion by the Council.

1. Pat Keating, Executive Vice President, and Bob Lay, Dean of Enrollment Management, joined the Provost's Advisory council to talk about financial aid at the University.

* Boston College is one of only 21 institutions that are need-blind and committed to meeting full demonstrated need. The other 20 institutions, it was observed, have significantly more financial resources than BC and all are ranked among the top 25 colleges and universities by *US News and World Report*.
* It was reported that financial aid has been among the most significant budget priorities of the University. The comprehensive cost of a BC undergraduate education (tuition, room, and board) has increased 67% over the last 11 years; during the same period, the financial aid budget has increased 100%. The overall University budget has grown just over 80% over the same period.
* The goals of financial aid were described as two-fold: (1) to make a BC education possible for high-ability students; and (2) to enroll the best possible class in keeping with the University's mission, i.e., attracting the students of highest ability and forming them as leaders for society ("men and women for others").
* It was noted that insofar as BC is on a select list of institutions committed to need-blind admission, financial aid helps to position the University among elite universities.
* There was wide agreement that a Boston College education is expensive; among undergraduates graduating with debt, the average debt burden is approximately $20,000. It was pointed out that students will rarely accept an offer of admission solely on the basis of financial aid; university rankings appear to be the principal determinant.
* It was reported that that more and more students and families have an expectation of merit-based aid, particularly as the academic profile of admitted students has improved and that the regressive quality of merit based aid is not widely recognized.
* A recent article in U.S. Catholic magazine reported that among the top 146 US Colleges, the percentage of students coming from the bottom income quartile (annual income under $30,000) is only 3%. Boston College receives perhaps 5% of its applications from this quartile. Many of the top students from the low-income quartile will matriculate at institutions with greater financial resources that are ranked higher and offer more generous no-loan aid packages.
* A question was raised on how "full need" is defined. Boston College is a member of a consortium of institutions that discusses needs analysis. Income, home equity, the custodial parent contribution, and the non-custodial parent contribution, are among the factors weighed.
* International students do not currently qualify for financial aid. Currently only 4 or 5 institutions nationwide guarantee to meet the full demonstrated financial need of admitted international students. There have been discussions at BC about the possibility of offering targeted segments of international students financial aid, but the marginal cost is extremely high.
* The Provost observed that budget allocations are subject to trade-offs, and that a priority has been placed on financial aid, recognizing that investments in faculty recruitment, salaries, facilities, and auxiliary services are therefore affected.

1. Provost's Report

* Acceptance letters for the Class of 2016 were mailed last week. As was reported at last month's meeting, approximately 34,000 applications were submitted for 2,270 spots in the freshman class.
* The Board of Trustees met earlier in March. The Trustees were particularly pleased by the successes of the academic program--the quality of students, recent faculty achievements, the recently-released rankings of the graduate and professional programs.
* Commencement is approaching, and the Provost requested that members of Council remind colleagues in their departments and schools about the importance of faculty attendance at both Commencement and the Baccalaureate Mass.
* The Faculty Forum will convene on April 18, 4:00, in Fulton 511. Faculty attendance is strongly encouraged.