**Provost's Advisory Council**

**Summary of September 22, 2011 meeting**

Bert Garza

Rosanna DeMarco

Pat DeLeeuw

Lillie Albert

Diana Pullin

Colleen Griffith

Judy Gordon

Katie O'Dair

Christopher Kirby

Gilda Morelli

Pat Byrne

Tom Wall

David Quigley

Stephen Pfohl

Renee Jones

Francine Cardman

David Wirth

Mark Massa, S.J.

John Spinard

Callista Roy

Tony Annunziato

Jenny Baglivo

Harrison Kent

Larry McLaughlin

Tim Crawford

Don Hafner

Anita Tien

Maureen Kenny

Sana Sheikh

Jillian Maxey

1. The summary for the meeting of April 28, 2011 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. Don Hafner, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, reviewed the results of an advisor evaluation pilot that took place in the Connell School of Nursing last spring. A copy of the evaluation (in pilot form) was circulated.
   * + The advisor evaluation pilot was administered in late April 2011, immediately after course registration for Fall semester 2012 had taken place. A question was raised about whether conducting the evaluation at a different time in the academic year might produce different responses from students.
     + The evaluation instrument was administered by Student Voice, a vendor which Student Affairs has used for student surveys in the past. In the future, it would be administered by the same vendor that does the Course Evaluations.
     + Faculty logged on to Student Voice to review the results of their advisees evaluations.
     + There was an 82% response rate among students in the Connell School.
     + The evaluations were completed anonymously.
     + The survey highlighted ways in which advising programs might be strengthened in collaboration with the Academic Advising Center.
     + It was noted that the evaluation pilot was the latest in a series of activities undertaken in a four-year effort to strengthen academic advising, which began with a survey administered by the UGBC about the effectiveness of advising efforts across the University.
     + It was observed that advisement takes place in a variety of venues and contexts--in the Academic Advising Center, in the schools and departments, and in group and individual settings.

Next steps:

1. A second pilot will be conducted in Spring 2012.
2. Jillian Maxey, president of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), introduced the topic of graduate student advising at the University. Last spring, as a result of conversations within the GSA Senate, it was determined that a survey instrument should be developed to explore the experience of advising from the perspective of graduate students. It was noted that any survey would be intended to provide an opportunity to see where advising is successful, as well as to reveal areas for improvement.
   * + It was observed that research has pointed to the importance of effective advising for graduate students, insofar as it provides support for socialization, timely progress toward the degree, and professional prospects after degree completion.
     + The proposed survey would be completed anonymously by graduate and professional students, and individual faculty advisors will not be identified.
     + Given this, it was posited that feedback from the proposed survey would be most useful at the aggregate school and department levels.
     + Several members noted that the lack of identifiers in the survey might limit its impact.
     + It was added that those who prepare the survey should think about how it will help department chairs diagnose and address problems.
     + The importance of involving faculty in the development of the survey was noted. This would provide faculty with the opportunity to help produce an instrument that yielded useful and credible information.
     + Survey questions should have validity for the Boston College context.
     + Questions were raised about how students in different programs (e.g., masters and doctoral programs) may require differentiation in the proposed survey instrument. It was also observed that the advising experience for PhD students will vary widely as students move through various stages (e.g., pre-qualifying exams, pre-dissertation, research, writing).
     + A suggestion was made that the Lynch School ERME department could play a useful role in developing the survey instrument.
     + Several members of the Council raised questions about the formulation of the questions and the degree to which they would be relevant for student experience in the professional schools. For example, it was noted that in the professional schools, there are practica and clinical experiences that play a critical role in the preparation of students.
     + It was pointed out that some of the schools have been conducting systematic surveys of alumni that include large sections related to advising and differentiate among programs. It was suggested that the associate deans should be approached for information about and from those surveys.
     + A question was raised about whether initiatives might be put in place at the University level to recognize excellence in faculty advising.
     + A suggestion was made about including a comment field in the proposed survey.
     + It was noted that the terminology used in any survey should be as accurate as possible, and should distinguish among advisors, dissertation committee chairs, committee members, and mentors.
     + Several members stressed that efforts to improve graduate student advising would be successful only as a result of effective partnerships with the associate deans, Deans' Offices, the Provost's Office, and student organizations.

Next steps:

1. Council members are urged to discuss the issues with colleagues and send comments to the Provost Office by Columbus Day, 2011. The Provost Office will forward all comments to the GSA.
2. Bert Garza and Gilda Morelli, Vice Provost for Graduate Education, circulated proposed text for guidelines regarding the readmission of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students after extended leaves of absence. It was noted that it is left to the schools to clarify and elaborate the proposed guidelines.

Next steps:

1. Members of the Provost's Advisory Council are asked to invite feedback from colleagues and send comments to the Provost by Columbus Day.
2. Provost's Report

* Undergraduate admissions remained strong this year. The University met all of its targets in terms of the quality and quantity of students. It was noted that the number of students from the Northeast is declining, reflecting a shrinking demographic pool, while those from California and the Southeast are increasing; international students are among the fastest-growing groups. It was noted that the University does not provide financial aid for international students, and a suggestion was made that domestic students may be developing an inaccurate idea of the world based on the international students who attend Boston College.
* Bert Garza reviewed the recently-released *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, which placed Boston College at #31. He noted the University's progress on reducing class size and reported that currently, 52% of Boston College undergraduate courses have enrollments below 20. The goal is to get this number to 60%.
* Pat DeLeeuw reported that the University Sesquicentennial events are being planned for 2012-13 and fall 2013. Members of the Council are encouraged to think about departmental and programmatic activities that might be undertaken.

1. The Chair of the Council, Rosanna DeMarco, invited members of the Council to forward suggestions for items for discussion at future meetings to her or to Pat DeLeeuw.