

Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of October 29, 2015 Meeting

Can Erbil (Chair)	Stephanie Berzin	Gregory Kalscheur, S.J.
Min Song	Thomas Crea	Thomas Wall
Anthony Annunziato	Judith Tracy	Katherine O'Dair
William Keane	Lillie Albert	John Rakestraw
Susan Michalczyk	Laura O'Dwyer	Hagop Toghramadjian
Devin Pendas	James Bretzke, S.J.	David Quigley
Judith Clair	Theresa O'Keefe	Patricia DeLeeuw
Samuel Graves	Daniel Chambers	Akua Sarr
Marie Boltz	Sasha Tomic	Nanci Tessier
William Fehder	Vincent Rougeau	Jessica Pesce

-
1. The summary of the October 1, 2015 meeting was approved. It will be sent to the President's Office. All summaries are posted on the Provost's Office website; members are encouraged to share them with colleagues.

2. Discussion of the Boston College Academic Integrity Policy—Pat DeLeeuw

This topic was suggested for an agenda item at our last meeting. The official BC policy is about 15 years old. The Associate Deans who are in charge of administering the policy in each school would like the PAC to reevaluate and possibly suggest elements of the policy that might merit revision. They will be having a meeting in November that will be informed by our conversation here.

The Council member who raised this issue said that the current policy is mainly focused on repercussions after a student has been caught, and he feels it should contain more language about preventing transgressions. Members then discussed possible ways forward, such as looking at best practices of other universities and using randomized seating during exams. A group of students invited to help investigate this issue told faculty that many students see nothing wrong with cheating in courses that do not count for their major. Faculty believe that there may be more cheating going on than they are aware of. Ultimately, many members stated that we need more data on the number of cases before we recommend a plan. Data would also help determine if the problem has grown worse over time (a generational change). Talking more with students would help determine if there's a broader ethical issue at play.

Anecdotal evidence mentioned by Council members implied that faculty have had mixed experiences when taking integrity cases to their schools' committees. They also raised the issue of cultural differences, as many international students may be coming from backgrounds where copying is acceptable. It is our job to show students the culture of academic integrity in the United States. BC has an online tutorial regarding academic integrity that all freshmen are required to take, but the impact of the program is unknown, and many students have not yet taken it this year. The STM has its own tutorial that was modeled after the one used for freshmen. There are a significant number of cases each year at the STM, and most of them

involve international students. Students have to pass the tutorial with a score of 70% or else they must retake it. So far, the feedback indicates that the tutorial is useful.

Members agreed that for a policy to function, it is important that the faculty in each school agree to police it. There should be clarity in the process, and it should not be onerous for faculty members to report instances. Most people also agreed that first-time offenders should have a notation on their record, but this note should go away at graduation provided there is no second offense. Putting it on the record helps show whether this is something a student does in one class, or if it is a repeat offense occurring in multiple classes. It is more equitable to have the process centralized because there can be a committee and a policy in place.

A Council member asked about the effectiveness of using turnitin.com and other online resources. Some members of the PAC said they found it helpful. David Quigley noted that some on campus have used it with uneven rates of satisfaction. Sometimes it is easier to Google a suspected phrase than to go through turnitin.com. Some departments are skeptical of vendors like turnitin.com because of copyright issues; detection sites often hold the papers in perpetuity.

Faculty noted that, in the past, handling cases had been up to each individual professor (and thus sometimes cases went unreported), but they believe that a standardized set of guidelines should be in place. They would like to see better communication between the committee reviewing cases and the faculty member whose decision may or may not be upheld. They would like to be consulted regarding the recommendations of the committee. Additionally, junior and non-tenured faculty may be reluctant to take action on cases because they are afraid their course evaluations will be adversely affected. A major challenge is that in the way the policy has been enacted in the past, there is confusion about which academic integrity committee to go through if a student is in one school and the faculty member is in another. There should be more coordination across schools in such cases.

All universities are struggling with academic integrity because technology makes it easier and more tempting to cheat. Some Council members said that the situation might be ameliorated by having an honor code, since BC students are often here because of the institution's values. Other members felt that an honor code would not be sufficient. Cheating on exams is easier to prevent than other forms of plagiarism. A number of Council members shared their preventative strategies, ranging from color-coded exams to checking ID cards when the exam is turned in. Others do not allow hats during exams, while some faculty have students sign an academic integrity statement on the exam's cover. One Council member even takes a photo of students on a regular class day and makes sure that they do not sit next to the same people on exam day. The committee said it would be useful to come up with a list of best practices.

Faculty have also been confused because the current policy says that the committee can recommend a final grade for the course, but they feel the final grade in the course should be up to the faculty member. Faculty also want to be sure that there is mandatory communication between the Associate Dean working on the case and the faculty member before a decision is sent to the student.

Faculty are concerned about the standard of proof. It is difficult to prove cheating in many cases. It is also important not to target international students. One Council member asked if BC has experienced litigation due to unproven academic integrity cases. So far, BC has not seen any legal cases. Pat DeLeeuw said in legal cases turnitin.com will not support the institution.

2. Out-of-class Exams: Practices and Policies—Akua Sarr

There are multiple places on campus for students to take out-of-class tests. Student Affairs administers tests for students with medical and psychological issues, LRSA proctors tests for athletes with learning disabilities or those who are traveling, and the Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC) proctors tests for students with learning disabilities and ADHD. This makes it difficult for faculty members, especially those teaching large classes, to keep track of where/when all their students are taking exams. The test-taking sites have different policies and procedures.

The number of students taking exams in different locations is growing. There were 190 tests administered in Student Affairs alone during the first two months of the semester; this will likely reach 1,000 tests by the end of the school year.

Faculty on the Council expressed concern about the increased number of requests they are receiving for students to take exams outside of class. Students have been coming to them with reasons such as plane tickets home, other assignments due the same week, job interviews, etc. David Quigley said it is crucial that we express to all students that scheduled exams are important. It is also important for faculty to keep final exams scheduled during finals period, not during study days or during the last week of classes. He asked the group to discuss what works well with the current process and what does not work well. CFLC has expanded its hours this year, and the response thus far has been positive.

In the Woods School, students have unpredictable schedules that the school tries to work around. They typically offer at least three proctored exam dates. They also use online exams; there is software that can be used to lock students' computers so they can only view the exam during the testing time. Other faculty members suggested centralizing the decision about giving an out-of-class exam. For example, faculty can say that they must ask the Associate Dean to approve the request, which helps regulate the process and verify the nature of the request. The Law School does this, and they find it helps provide clarity and consistency. Students are then able to see that the process is non-negotiable.

3. Provost's Report

Tom Wall presented the Library's new written policy regarding the electronic archiving of dissertations and theses through eScholarship@BC. This allows these documents to be open-access in perpetuity. It also helps BC rely less on outside vendors. If a student chooses to embargo the document for a set period of time, only the metadata (descriptors, abstract, author's name) will appear online, not the full text. Greg Kalscheur said he would like to see

more conversation about open-access dissertations and theses, since the process is sometimes not entirely clear to students.

David Quigley updated the group on the search for the next Lynch School of Education Dean. The Dean search in the School of Social Work begins with an open forum on November 4

There is also a search underway for Peter McKenzie's successor as Financial Vice President. Peter will end his tenure in December, and his successor should be on board in January.

BC recently purchased a 27-acre parcel of land in Newton, about a mile away from the main campus. The long term use of the land has not been decided, but in the short term it will be used for overflow parking during large events like Commencement and football games.