

**Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of April 26, 2012 meeting**

Bert Garza
Rosanna DeMarco
Pat DeLeeuw
Lillie Albert
Callista Roy
Marilyn Matelski
Katie O'Dair
Renee Jones

Judith Gordon
David Quigley
Jenny Baglivo
Stephen Pfohl
Diana Pullin
Pat Byrne
Tony Annunziato
Larry McLaughlin

Maureen Kenny
Don Hafner
Tom Wall
Anita Tien
Harrison Kent
Christopher Kirby

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1. The summary for the meeting of March 29, 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. Helen Wechsler, Director of Boston College Dining Services (BCDS), joined the Provost's Advisory Council. Dining Services at BC are self-sustaining; BC is one of three universities in the greater Boston area (Tufts University and Harvard University being the two others) that do not outsource dining services.

The University commissioned several operational efficiency studies in the past year; one of the studies focused on competitive bidding. This study noted that nearly \$1 million annually is being directed off-campus for procurement of food and beverage services and recommended that BCDS should be the first choice for departments and offices ordering food for on-campus meetings and functions. Implementation will begin immediately, with phase-in over the summer and full-scale adoption with the beginning of the academic year. A survey will shortly be distributed throughout the University as part of the phase-in effort.

- It was suggested that faculty and staff are not sufficiently well-informed about evolving policies and practices in Dining Services, and that communication and outreach could be improved. For example, surcharges are not well-communicated. It was also reported that departments have experienced some difficulties with service. Mechanisms for feedback and for responding to feedback should be incorporated into the adoption of the new process.
- Questions were raised about the price of goods and services offered by BCDS. Departments have reported saving 50-70% by ordering food from off-campus, savings of considerable significance given limited budgets. It was also suggested that ordering off-campus provides greater quality and variety.
- Some departments hold events of longstanding tradition, featuring specialty or ethnic foods from preferred off-campus vendors. It was observed that the new policy will mark a break from these traditions and may occasion resistance.
- Concerns were expressed about the timing of the adoption of the policy, since it would allow departments very little notice for adjusting their programs, events, and budgeting.

- Some questioned whether the new policy will succeed in saving money for BC, given the need to increase services and perhaps expand capacity to deal with increased volume. It was also noted that small businesses around campus rely on University business; the loss of that revenue to them and the adverse impact on university-community relations could be significant.
3. Tom McGuinness, Associate Vice President of Counseling Services, and Susan Gennaro, Dean of the Connell School of Nursing, joined the Council as co-chairs of the Alcohol Task Force. The Task Force was charged last fall with identifying the scope of alcohol problem drinking on campus and its impact on academic performance, and to make recommendations for further action.

The Task Force found that problem drinking had no clear impact on grade point averages; that is, BC students can drink heavily and still receive high grades for coursework. However, students do report that as a result of their drinking, they are more likely to miss classes, fail to submit assignments on time, and/or fall asleep in class. It was noted that grade inflation and compression are very high at BC, which may lie behind the apparent lack of impact on grades. However, the Task Force noted that students who report binge drinking are more likely to become ill, to be taken advantage of sexually, to be more argumentative, and to be more abusive. Other significant secondary social effects also were noted (for example, having a roommate who is a problem drinker will make a student more likely to be subjected to abuse).

- Questions were raised about whether students are drinking primarily on campus or off campus.
- It was noted that at the beginning of the academic year, for the first 3-6 weeks, academic assignments are relatively light and student activities have not yet ramped up. It was suggested this was especially true in freshman courses. It was also observed that events such as St. Patrick's Day, the Boston Marathon, and the football season can drive problem drinking.
- It was suggested that there may be differences in student experiences across majors. Although the Task Force study did not examine the correlation between problem drinking and specific majors, it was noted that the Carroll School had the highest rate of problem drinking, and the Connell School the lowest. At the same time, at least 20% of students in all schools reported drinking five or more drinks in a row (the threshold used to identify binge drinking behaviors), three to five times in the last two weeks.
- Students on the Task Force reported that drinking in the residence halls affected students who do not themselves drink, in particular during freshman year.
- It was pointed out that 30% of students enter Boston College as binge drinkers, and that those students may be enabling a drinking culture for others on arrival.
- Some proposed that mandatory attendance at classes and weekly paper assignments would also reduce drinking. It was suggested that scheduling earlier classes or Friday classes would have little impact.
- It was proposed that the general experience of BC students in their first year could be a subject for discussion in the Provost's Advisory Council.

4. Provost's Report

- Rosanna DeMarco will be stepping down from the Council at the end of this year. In the near future there will be elections for a new chair. In addition, Jenny Baglivo, Francine Cardman, Colleen Griffith, Callista Roy, Ce Shen, and Jerry Smith will be rotating off the Council. Tony Annunziato's term has also ended; he has been reelected for another 3-year term.
- In September the Provost's Advisory Council will turn to the topic of five-year review of deans.
- Also next year, there will be continued discussion of the language for the Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Commitment policy.
- Implementation plans are being developed in each of the schools for peer review of teaching.
- Currently, the Provost's Office hosts an event for retiring faculty at the end of each year. Feedback from some of the department chairs and deans has been that the event comes at a particularly difficult time of year and is superfluous, given department celebrations and the University event for retiring employees. Members were asked whether the event specifically for retiring faculty should be continued; it was felt that it should be.