

Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of February 27, 2014 meeting

James Bretzke, S.J., Chair	Don Hafner	Devin Pendas
Lillie Albert	Joseph Jiang, S.J.	David Quigley
Mark Brodin	Maureen Kenny	Joe Quinn
Daniel Chambers	Narintohn Luangrath	Min Song
Pat DeLeeuw	Susan Michalczyk	Anita Tien
Bill Duffey	Katie O'Dair	Judith Tracy
Can Erbil	Laura O'Dwyer	Tom Wall
Samuel Graves	Theresa O'Keefe	Danny Willis
Katherine Gregory	Cy Opiel, S.J.	Linnie Green Wright

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1. The summary for the December 5, 2013 meeting 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. Mike Bourque, Vice President for Information Technology, and Scott Cann, Technology Director, Support Services, joined the Council to discuss (1) phishing and (2) Google Apps for Education.

Phishing

ITS has begun a campaign to raise awareness within the BC community about phishing attacks, which are intended to deceive users to reveal personal data or credentials. The volume of phishing emails has increased dramatically over the last few years.

- It was reported that approximately 90% of incoming email to Boston College is spam, and of that, many are phishing emails. Despite the fact that ITS employs algorithms to filter email, a small amount of spam will slip through.
- Recently, highly targeted phishing attacks have been seen at Boston College and elsewhere. One such attack targeted 3000 accounts, directing recipients to click on a link that simulated a BC Webmail page. While most of the messages were intercepted by network filters, a small number of users received the email, and a number of them entered their personal credentials. The phishers then used the information to re-route direct deposits of paychecks. As a result, the paychecks of nine employees of the University were redirected to foreign bank accounts.
- It was emphasized that Boston College will never ask users for passwords, except when logging in to BC sites, and that as a precaution, it is safest not to click on links within emails that go to a website. Even if the website looks official or authentic, it may be fraudulent.
- It was noted that university ITS departments share spam and phishing information freely among institutions, which helps in early identification of new security threats and ways to combat those threats.

Google Apps for Education

The University is preparing for a possible transition from the current Microsoft Exchange email and calendaring system to Google Apps for Education. Student accounts were migrated to Google two years ago. Now, ITS is planning for a migration of all university faculty and staff, to take place by June 2014.

- It was explained several considerations support a move to Google Apps: faculty and students using the new Canvas LMS would be able to collaborate within Google Docs; file sharing on Google Drive has stronger protections than other cloud services such as Dropbox, which some faculty currently use; the email quota will be significantly greater on Google Apps than it is on Microsoft Exchange.
 - Google Apps has capabilities for calendaring which are different from what is available under Microsoft Exchange and Outlook. Several administrative offices have raised concerns about the differences. ITS is committed to working with offices to maximize the likelihood of a seamless transition.
 - ITS has met with departmental contacts to communicate the impending transition, and is now meeting with individual offices to answer questions and anticipate concerns.
 - For technical reasons, it will not be possible to link personal and BC Gmail accounts. However, there are solutions that afford their co-existence.
 - More than 70 other major universities have moved to Google Apps for Education, and BC will draw upon their experience in making its own transition.
3. Paul Chebator, Dean of Students, joined the Council to discuss services to students with disabilities. He noted that over time, the number of students with disabilities at Boston College has risen. In addition, providing services for students with disabilities has become more complex; for example, food allergies, latex allergies, and gluten allergies have increased significantly, and require accommodations in a number of ways across campus. He also observed that students with disabilities--as well as their families--have reported that the support structures for disability services at BC can be confusing and difficult to navigate.

Some recommendations for disability services at Boston College have been formulated, including the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan for disability services and establishment of policies and guidelines for standards of accessibility for students.

- It was noted that it would be preferable to consolidate and centralize requests for accommodations, and that students and their families would benefit from consistent information and communication.
- It was also observed that there is a need for space for proctoring exams for students who have need for extended time or other accommodations, and that currently the infrastructure is not sufficient to support consistent proctoring for all students.
- The topography of BC's campus is also challenging for students with physical disabilities.
- A question was raised about expectations that faculty must meet in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It was explained that faculty are asked to identify and select reading assignments well in advance of the beginning of the term, so that students who need braille or digital textbooks have adequate time to secure copies. It is also helpful to have syllabi from faculty as early as possible, so that--in cases where only selected portions of a book are assigned--staff in the Library (who are responsible for digitizing books for student use) may focus on the necessary selections instead of

digitizing the entire book.

- In general, BC needs to be more proactive in anticipating and providing for disability needs, and not wait for those students with disabilities to press their case.
4. Professor Susan Michalczyk raised the topic of the Faculty Handbook. Currently, the Provost's Office has a webpage, subtitled "Faculty Handbook," on which policies and procedures pertaining to faculty are posted. Professor Michalczyk proposed that Boston College should have a standing faculty committee, which would be responsible for reviewing and producing a printed Faculty Handbook.

The topic will be discussed at greater length during the March meeting of the Provost's Advisory Council.

5. Provost's Report

- Joe Quinn reported that while the outlook for admissions is positive, Boston College (and other colleges and universities) is seeing the impact of the decline in the high school population. Overall, the applicant pool this year is about 5% lower than last year. The applicant pool for the College of Arts and Sciences is down 10% while undergraduate applications to the Carroll School, the Connell School, and the Lynch School have increased. Other developments include a 9% decline in the number of students indicating they intended to file for financial aid, which might signal an improvement in the economy. Over 23,000 applications were submitted for the current cycle.
- Joe Quinn announced that beginning in the Fall 2014 semester, students taking Semester Online courses will be responsible for half of the costs (financial aid students will be responsible for 1/4 of the costs).
- Don Hafner distributed graphs illustrating grading trends since 1978. The topic of grade compression will be discussed at the upcoming Faculty Forum.