**Provost's Advisory Council**

**Summary of February 24, 2011 meeting**

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Bert Garza

Pat DeLeeuw

Mark Massa, S.J.

Lillie Albert

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Colleen Griffith

Renee Jones

Thanh Tran

Judith Gordon

David Wirth

Katherine O'Dair

Thomas Wall

David Quigley

John Spinard

Francine Cardman

Anthony Annunziato

Callista Roy

Jerry Baglivo

Meghan Cawley

Harrison Kent

Don Hafner

Gilda Morelli

Larry McLaughlin

Stephen Pfohl

Anita Tien

1. The summary for the meeting of November 18, 2010 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 noted that the fall semester has at times produced a semester with as few as 64 days, in contrast with US Department of Education guidelines that presume 75 class days per semester.
   * It was reported that a faculty member commented that faculty with children in area schools would be faced with childcare challenges, and that beginning a semester prior to Labor Day "does not fit in with the Jesuit view of families."
   * It was noted that the Law School begins classes before Labor Day and that securing childcare can be challenging.
   * It was pointed out that some workplaces contract with a third-party childcare provider; arrangements and payments are made directly between the employee and the provider, with some employers reimbursing employees for part or all expenses.
   * It was reported that some faculty have suggested that there should be a differential pay schedule for faculty who have more teaching days during certain semesters.
   * Currently, the Boston College Children's Center closes the week before Labor Day. It was suggested that if BC moves to a start before Labor Day in some years, it would be helpful to align the Children's Center schedule.
   * It was observed that even with the proposed changes to the fall semester, BC would not be in complete compliance with the DOE guidelines regarding total class days.
   * Questions were raised about whether landlords renting to BC students would accommodate a start of the school year before Labor Day. The response was that this had been explored with area landlords, who indicated they would do so.
   * A comment was made that graduate students with families would find the start before Labor Day challenging, due to increased costs of child care and small graduate stipends. If stipends were increased, graduate students would be able to support the change.
   * A member of the Council who was unable to attend reported a conversation with a colleague, who noted the following: (1) that faculty with "significant family overseas" would be adversely affected by starting the fall semester before Labor Day; (2) some professional disciplines convene conferences in late August; (3) the current final exam schedule is also very difficult for "faculty members who are trying to reach families at distant locations by Christmas eve."

Next steps:

1. The Provost's Office will explore the possibility of adding a back-up childcare service to the array of Boston College employee benefits.
2. Larry McLaughlin reviewed proposed policy and guidelines for use of University research facilities and distributed a flowchart summary of the decision process.
   * It was noted that Boston College is a "space-poor" institution. A question was raised about the decision-making process for creating buildings. The Provost responded that if a new building is under consideration, the proposal is reviewed internally among University administrators and evaluated through a capital planning process before being presented to the Board of Trustees.
   * It was noted that the flowchart does not provide for any next steps beyond reevaluation. The Vice Provost for Research explained that after reevaluation, requests can be resubmitted.
   * A question was raised whether the proposed policy and guidelines represented a change or a clarification of existing practice. The response was that these documents represent a clarification, and arise out of a desire for enhanced transparency and improved planning for new faculty hires.
   * Questions were raised about budgeting for classroom space and furniture. It was noted that Dan Bourque, Vice President for Facilities, welcomes faculty participation. Faculty volunteers should contact Don Hafner.
3. Larry McLaughlin noted that the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) has seen a significant increase in proposal submissions over the past several years. OSP needs more time to process proposals, while faculty members want as much time as possible to polish the narrative of the proposal. To manage workflow and ensure sufficient time to review forms, it has been agreed that OSP must be notified (email is preferred) of a pending submission 7 days before the deadline. All forms, budgets, letters of collaboration, etc. and a late stage version of the narrative (not the final version) must be submitted to OSP at least five days prior to the deadline. The latest time for submission of the final version of the proposal narrative will be 12 noon of the day prior to the submission deadline.
4. Don Hafner reviewed freshman and senior survey data accumulated by the University about their college experiences and how they compare to other institutions.
   * A question was raised about the comparison groups used. It was suggested that the data would be more helpful if the comparison institutions were more similar to Boston College.
   * Questions were asked about the survey response rate among BC students. It was reported that for the surveys being discussed, the respondents numbered around 1,500 students for each survey.
   * It was reported that Student Affairs has hired a Director of Health Promotion and has developed programs to support interventions on behalf of individual students and consider how students are socialized into BC's culture.
   * It was reported that the portion of freshmen entering BC as self-identified non-drinkers has been rising, and a question was raised about how the campus culture may influence such students during their time at the University.
   * It was noted that alumni parents play a critical role in defining BC culture as their children matriculate at the University.
   * A comment was made about how faculty can be effectively motivated to increase their interaction with students. It was noted that the reward structure at BC tends to favor scholarship and publications, and teaching. Excellence and leadership in advising, or in other ways that involve substantial interaction with students outside the classroom, do not necessarily seem to be valued to an equal degree.
   * It was noted that BC lacks community spaces in which students and faculty can interact. It was reported that at the Library, "gate count" for student use has increased over time, but has decreased for faculty, who increasingly can access online research materials from their offices and homes.
   * It was reported that the division of Student Affairs would welcome a discussion about how to increase student-faculty interaction widely. It was observed that there are faculty who are intensively engaged with students, but that number is limited.
   * It was suggested that departments should allocate space where undergraduate majors can gather, which would promote impromptu student-faculty interactions.
   * It was suggested that faculty-student interaction might be increased more effectively if there were ways devised to involve students more actively in faculty research and teaching.
5. Provost's Report
   * Bert Garza reported that undergraduate admissions applications were up again this year. While it is too early to report on graduate admissions, that will be reported in a future meeting. Major challenges include how to increase graduate-student stipends, particularly in the face of growing health care costs. It is possible that to preserve stipends, fewer graduate students may be admitted.

The next meeting of the Provost Advisory Council will be on Thursday, March 17, 2011.