

Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of September 23, 2010 meeting

Rosanna DeMarco	Joseph O'Keefe, S.J.	Callista Roy
Bert Garza	Mark Massa, S.J.	Meghan Cawley
Pat DeLeeuw	David Quigley	Harrison Kent
Renee Jones	John Spinard	Diana Pullin
Lillie Albert	Amy Hutton	Tom Wall
Elyce Purcell	Timothy Crawford	Don Hafner
Katie O'Dair	Colleen Griffith	Anita Tien
Judy Gordon	Anthony Annunziato	Stephen Pfohl
Marilyn Matelski	Gilda Morelli	
Thanh Tran	Jenny Baglivo	

1. The summary for the meeting of April 29, 2010 was approved over the summer and 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. Pat DeLeeuw introduced the Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Commitment policy. She explained that the University's Policies and Procedures manual has included the Conflict of Interest Policy in the past, and that the distributed policy does not represent a departure or change. The Conflict of Commitment policy is a restatement of existing policies in the *University Statutes* intended to clarify University expectations about external activities conducted by faculty.
 - The Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Commitment Policy will be included in the electronic faculty annual report instrument that will be introduced later this fall.
 - Concern was expressed that the policy might be seen as punitive by some faculty. It was pointed out that the purpose of the policy is not to eliminate potential conflicts altogether, but to manage them, and that clear communication to faculty about the aim of the policy will be important.
 - It was suggested that instead of "conflict of commitment," the phrase "external activities" be used to communicate that not all external activities may constitute conflicts of commitment.
 - It was suggested that an affirmative paragraph at the opening of the policy might serve to distinguish between external activities that do and do not represent conflicts of commitment.
 - Several members raised questions about the specific content and tone of the document. Members were encouraged to send suggested amendments of the language to Pat DeLeeuw.
 - It was also pointed out that there may be some confusion among faculty whether activities undertaken during summer months may constitute conflicts of commitment.

Next steps:

1. Suggested amendments for language to the policy should be sent to Pat DeLeeuw by October 15.

2. A list of frequently asked questions will be developed, to be appended to the document. Members are asked to send Pat DeLeeuw questions that may be included.
3. The Council discussed the current Academic Calendar. Faculty have noted the adverse pedagogical impact of the difference in the lengths of the fall and spring semesters and of the shortened fall semester when Labor Day occurs late; students have expressed concern that study days in the shortened fall term have been truncated, with some faculty scheduling exams during those days. A review of calendars at other universities was undertaken this spring, and results were shared with the Council.
 - It has been suggested that instead of classes beginning on the first Tuesday after Labor Day, classes might begin on the last Monday of August, or the Tuesday before Labor Day.
 - It was pointed out that some of the colleges and universities that begin earlier have a week-long fall break and/or conclude the fall semester earlier in December.
 - It was also pointed out that Labor Day is a more significant holiday in the Northeast than in other parts of the country.
 - Some students have pointed out that summer jobs are more easily secured when students are able to commit to working up until Labor Day.
 - Faculty with children have pointed out that K-12 schools do not begin until after Labor Day in local communities; were Boston College to begin classes before Labor Day, this would pose challenges to those parents.
 - It was pointed out that in schools at BC that have summer programs, faculty who teach during both the summer and fall will have less time to prepare for the fall semester.
 - It was suggested that one way to deal with the shorter fall semester would be for faculty to develop content that might be delivered in alternative forms, e.g., through Blackboard or other applications.
 - A question was raised as to whether the earlier start would have an impact on operational costs for the University.
 - It was pointed out that incoming first-year students are already on campus for a week prior to classes, and that during that time they are introduced to patterns of student life that may not be constructive.
 - It was reported that some undergraduates prefer to begin the fall semester earlier, and that many summer jobs are over by the first part of August.
 - It was also reported that graduate students by and large prefer to keep the calendar as is for a number of reasons, including start dates of apartment leases, teaching obligations, overseas internships, limits to how many hours graduate students may work in their assistantships, childcare arrangements, etc.
 - A faculty member noted that for classes that meet only once weekly, an abbreviated fall semester has a particularly adverse impact.
 - Some faculty have stated that an earlier start to the fall semester might serve to limit the time that faculty have at their disposal for their research and scholarship.
 - Faculty who teach in clinical settings have noted the detailed arrangements that are part of clinical teaching (e.g., immunizations) and the burden that would fall upon those faculty were the fall semester to begin earlier.
 - A question was raised as to whether a shift in the calendar might constitute an encroachment on the 9-month faculty contract.

- It was suggested that the late start to the academic year only exists as a challenge on those years when Labor Day comes late in September, and that the University community might develop flexible schedules that differentiate between those years and others.
- Faculty in the Languages, Mathematics, and Sciences have been polled to capture the range of opinions about the shorter fall semester.
- It was also noted that short semesters can cause problems for graduate courses that meet only once a week.

Next steps:

1. The Provost, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and the Vice Provost for Graduate Education will meet with students to better understand how students view the fall semester. They also will review the impact of the calendar change with other university constituencies, e.g. Student Affairs.
2. The topic will be discussed at an upcoming Faculty Forum.

4. Provost's Report

- Bert Garza thanked Rosanna DeMarco for agreeing to take on the role of chairing the Provost's Advisory Council and the members of the Council for their willingness to serve.
- The Board of Trustees will meet on September 24. It was reported that the Trustees likely will be pleased with the success of all the schools in concluding the 2009-10 academic year with positive budgets without layoffs.
- It was reported that this semester, an electronic instrument for preparing and submitting faculty annual reports will be introduced to the schools. It is hoped that this will help to develop a more complete picture of faculty activity, and that use of the instrument will reduce the number of times that faculty are asked to provide the same information about their activities.