

**Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of October 28, 2010 meeting**

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Stephen Pfohl
Gilda Morelli
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Arnie Shore
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Callista Roy
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Don Hafner
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1. The summary for the meeting of September 23, 2010 was approved, with one request for an addition to the section on the Academic Calendar that would note the problem that short semesters cause for graduate courses that meet only once per week. The summary, as amended, 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. Anthropology Program: Bert Garza and David Quigley opened the discussion of a possible anthropology program at the university. Both noted the prior discussions in the Council of Deans and the Faculty Forum, and the sentiment that an important next step would be to look to other institutions for models of how to gain the widest curricular benefits across all schools from an anthropology program. Both noted the importance of considering the resource implications of starting a new academic program, because a new program would have to be supported by some combination of new resources and re-purposing of current resources. Both noted concerns expressed in the Faculty Forum that the greater need at the university was support for instruction in quantitative research methodologies, not the qualitative approaches common in social anthropology.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were made:

- The discipline of anthropology incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
- An anthropology program might be organized across school lines, with faculty appointed within various departments who would come together and function as an anthropology “department” in setting curriculum, etc.
- There are already faculty in the university who offer courses similar to anthropology, but there is not much curricular coordination among them, nor effective communication of these offerings to students in other schools and departments.
- A new anthropology program might draw upon these existing resources and provide better coordination.
- A new anthropology program would require at least some re-purposing of existing budgets, yet unless schools are willing to do this, the university will stagnate and be unable to undertake new ventures or adapt to changing circumstances.
- At least some faculty in the Natural Sciences question whether the university should instead be thinking about engineering as a new program possibility, not anthropology.

- The Vice Provost for Graduate Education could play a useful role in fostering greater coordination among existing university courses on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

In an email sent prior to the meeting, a PAC member who could not be present expressed support for the idea of anthropology, but also concern that we provide stronger resources for the extensive study of languages that serious work in anthropology requires.

3. Faculty-elected Committee for the Faculty Handbook: Callista Roy represented the view of some faculty that faculty generally ought to have a greater role in the content of the Faculty Handbook, because of its significance for faculty. An elected faculty committee for this purpose would also respond to a call for a larger faculty role in university governance.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were made:

- The “Handbook” is in fact only a website where information on various policies and procedures at the university are collected and made available; it is not a concrete document that covers all matters of significance to faculty comprehensively.
 - The policies in the Handbook in many instances arose from discussions and recommendations of the Provost’s Advisory Council.
 - If such an elected committee were formed, question would arise about its mandate and role with respect to the Provost’s Advisory Council.
 - There is already an array of university bodies with faculty representatives and input into policies, it has often been difficult to get sufficient faculty candidates to serve on those bodies, and it is not clear that yet another committee would enhance what is accomplished by those other bodies.
 - It was suggested that an alternative to a new Handbook Committee might be for the Provost’s Advisory Council to form a subcommittee from its own membership to take up issues pertinent to the Handbook.
4. NEASC and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes: Joe Burns joined as a guest to explain the expectations that the university’s accreditation agency, NEASC, had set for Boston College, and the comprehensive plan for developing assessment procedures that the President had submitted to NEASC in January 2010. Burns offered comments on the desirability of assessment for continuous improvement of academic programs, and the great flexibility the university’s approach offered to academic programs to specify for themselves what their student-learning goals are, how they propose to assess their students’ progress toward those goals, and how they wish to change their programs to achieve the goals. Burns emphasized that the university was not compelling or expecting any common assessment test or method for all programs, nor would the university be establishing a separate assessment office. The assessment process would reside in departments and schools and respond to their needs.

In the subsequent discussion, the members of the Provost Advisory Council noted that they wished Burns to return to a future Council meeting, to discuss these issues in greater detail.

5. Provost's Report:

- Bert Garza noted that efforts were being made to minimize the disruptions from the construction of the new Stokes Academic Building.
- Bert noted that budgets for future fiscal years were under discussion, and that whatever the specific decisions, schools and departments should anticipate that the former practice of equal across-the-board increases for all programs was no longer viable.

The next meeting of the Provost Advisory Council will be Thursday, November 18, 2010.