

Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of September 27, 2012 meeting

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Stephen Pfohl
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Victoria Pineiro
Vickie Monta
Timothy Crawford
Anthony Annunziato

Patrick Byrne
Larry McLaughlin
James Gips
James Bretzke, S.J.
Alec Peck (for Diana Pullin)
Anita Tien
Don Hafner
Cy Opeil, S.J.
Tom Wall

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1. The summary for the meeting of April 26, 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. Patrick Keating, Executive Vice President, joined the Council to discuss actions being taken at Boston College for the protection of minors and with respect to compliance issues.
 - A committee has been formed to identify and review programs involving minors and to develop policies for such programs. Programs and practices will be documented, and communication and transportation plans will be developed. Also to be developed are training programs for adult supervisors. It was explained that activities in the residence halls and the Rec Plex, and those involving unaccompanied minors, will receive particular attention.
 - Boston College has traditionally followed a model of decentralized compliance management and accountability. Other institutions have opted for a model of centralized compliance oversight. The Provost's and Executive Vice President's offices are cataloging all compliance requirements across the University. It is expected that a University-wide committee will be convened, to provide closer oversight, establish reporting requirements, and thereby improve reporting and monitoring of compliance efforts.
 3. Don Hafner, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, led a discussion about academic integrity at Boston College.
 - It was noted that cultural disparities--particularly those seen in the graduate student population--may lead to different understandings about academic integrity and perceptions of plagiarism.
 - It was suggested that an academic integrity tutorial, on the model of the one that is mandatory for all freshmen in their first semester, should be required of graduate students. However, the content of the tutorial will need to be revised significantly to be relevant for the academic practices and the graduate student population in any specific school. The School of Theology and Ministry has created a tutorial with the assistance of

the eTeaching group that may serve as a model for other schools.

- It was noted that graduate student instructors may not be as experienced in identifying and addressing opportunities and instances of academic dishonesty.
- Student representatives identified early and clear statements of expectations and standards by faculty, such as on course syllabi, as an important factor in reinforcing academic integrity standards at the University. It was generally felt that faculty have discussed academic integrity with their students effectively, and have made good use of the issues raised in the academic integrity tutorial.
- It was noted that both student and faculty education should be a focus of academic integrity efforts.
- Concerns were raised about inconsistent procedures and unclear directions to faculty, advisors, and associate deans regarding actions that should be taken when concerns about academic integrity are raised. It was noted that processes for handling alleged integrity violations differ across schools, and that a balance needs to be struck between accommodating specific academic contexts and ensuring consistency and fairness in such matters.
- It was mentioned that software--SafeAssign--is available to faculty through Blackboard/Vista and can be helpful in identifying instances of plagiarism in essay assignments.
- Concerns were raised about whether completion of a single academic integrity tutorial at the beginning of a student's four years in college constitutes sufficient guidance to students.
- It was pointed out that specific and regular conversations with students are most effective in promoting understanding about academic integrity. It was also suggested that conversations about academic integrity would be most appropriately situated at the department and school level. Department chairs and deans should play key roles in ensuring that academic standards are upheld.

Next steps:

1. The Council of Deans will discuss possible courses of action and follow-up regarding:
 - a. the academic integrity tutorial for undergraduates--and how frequently students should be required to complete it
 - b. the development of a similar, school-specific tutorial for graduate and professional students
 - c. training of faculty (full- and part-time) and graduate student instructors to discuss, identify, and address academic integrity issues
 - d. the possible expanded use of software to support faculty in academic integrity efforts
 - e. how best to enhance proactive conversations between students and faculty to sustain academic integrity
 - f. how to ensure that faculty and deans are clear about processes governing academic integrity violations, and that those processes are effective and consistent

4. Provost's Report

- The academic calendar for 2015-16 has been established. U.S. Department of Education guidelines regarding total hours of instruction for credit-bearing courses in a semester require the University to begin the fall semester before Labor Day. There will be several communications to faculty to advise them of the pre-Labor Day start. For the future, in any year when Labor Day falls later than September 3rd, the fall semester will begin in the week prior to Labor Day.
- Boston College has maintained its #31 ranking by US News and World Report. Areas of continued attention will include the percentage of full- and part-time faculty, the retention of undergraduates, graduation rates, percentage of faculty with a terminal degree in their field, and the percentage of smaller classes.
- In an upcoming meeting of the Provost's Advisory Council, there will be a discussion of the review of deans. Because deans are appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of the President, the Council's input will be forwarded to the President's Office. (Annual performance appraisals are conducted by the Provost.)

In preparation for this discussion, the Provost will distribute a list of some of the criteria employed in the annual performance appraisal of deans, as a way to begin a conversation about effective mechanisms for both aggregated and individual, confidential feedback.