

# Lessons in Leadership, and Life

UGBC holds first-ever campus reunion of former presidents and VPs

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One alumnus talked about getting every penny's worth of a \$24 student activity fee, another about leading a student protest to roll tuition back — by \$5. Some recalled when the Undergraduate Government of Boston College was made up of a handful of idealistic friends and sat in awe as they heard of today's structured organization, which boasts more than 100 cabinet members.

UGBC, the official voice of the BC student body for the last 40 years, held its first-ever reunion of past presidents and vice presidents Nov. 30-Dec. 1. Thirty-five former student leaders returned to campus for the event, and many found BC a much-changed place.

But while the ex-UGBC executives of decades past knew a BC with fewer buildings and a smaller national profile than the one their present-era counterparts experienced, the different generations forged an almost immediate bond.

"It's amazing to me how much we have in common as leaders," reflected Grace Simmons, '05, adding that it was comforting to know the "pulse of the campus" has remained steady.

Sponsored by the Alumni Association and the offices of the Dean for Student Development and the Vice President for Student Affairs, the reunion was conceived as an opportunity for the current UGBC cabinet to hear about, and learn from, the issues and challenges faced by their predecessors. Current president Jenn Castillo, '08 worked with Special Advisor to the Alumni Asso-

ciation Robert Sherwood — a former dean for student development — to make the long-discussed event a reality in just two months.

After a Friday night social hour and dinner, the group participated in a panel discussion the next day, with a spokesman for each of the five decades represented. The sessions were videotaped for posterity. Attendees were also shown the University's recently announced Master Plan [see page 1] to see what the future will hold for their alma mater.

The morning panel on Dec. 1 turned into a group session, with participants passing a microphone around the Yawkey Center's Murray Room, laughing and sharing stories from 1967 to present day.

Michael C. Ryan, '70 was the first student to hold the position of UGBC president, during the 1968-69 academic year. The self-proclaimed "accidental president" said he was elected by a group of friends

who pressured him to run. Now a partner at Cadwalder, Wickersham & Taft in New York City, Ryan has been dubbed a "legend" by many of his successors. His administration created the novel concept of a "student activity fee" to fund events for students.

"It was a time...when students had the feeling that they had a right and a need to speak out about things," Ryan said to the group. "There was an effort at BC, for the first time, to create a credible, serious student voice."

Ryan said he felt gratitude toward those faculty and administrators who had supported such an idea. Reflecting afterwards on the weekend, Ryan said the most memorable part of the reunion for him was sitting next to Senior Vice President James McIntyre at the alumni dinner on Nov. 30. As the director of student activities in 1968, McIntyre came up with the revolutionary concept of executive



Executive Vice President Pat Keating talks with Brandon Lobb, '93 following Keating's presentation on the University's new Master Plan, which took place at the UGBC reunion Dec. 1.



Former student presidents talk about their experiences during the Undergraduate Government of Boston College reunion Dec. 1 in the Murray Conference Room of the Yawkey Center. L-R: Duane Deskins (president 1975-76), Jill Alper (1986-87), Richard Culliton (1990-91) and Grace Simmons (2004-05). (Photos by Lee Pellegrini)

leadership for undergrads at a time many college campuses were cracking down on student activism.

"Jim is a 'true' legend, a terrific educator and a great friend who has played an immeasurable role in the remarkable growth and success of Boston College," said Ryan.

Ronald Iacobucci, '77, the first commuter student elected as UGBC president, recalled tense conversations with then-University President J. Donald Monan, SJ, now University chancellor, on how student activity dollars were spent.

"Now, when we see each other at fundraisers and events, we make it a point to talk as friends," said Iacobucci. "I think, at the time, many students and administrators viewed one other as battling a worthy adversary. We may not have realized what we were gaining through those interactions."

Jill Alper, UGBC vice president in 1986 and president in 1987, remembered the excitement of the "Flutie Years," but also recounted how she caused unrest by asking G. Gordon Liddy, a major figure in the Watergate scandal, to come speak. Although *The Boston Globe* denounced her in a front-page story, she said, administrators ultimately stood by the students' decision to bring Liddy to campus.

Alper, now a Michigan-based political strategist for the Democratic party, said she enjoyed sitting down at the reunion with her vice president Scott Hayward, '87 and flipping through UGBC newsletters and *The Heights* from the 1980s.

"I was shocked at how much we took on and accomplished," she said.

Others, like Duane Deskins, '76, now an assistant US attorney in Ohio, found it difficult to recall his years at BC without reflecting on world issues. Race relations, the busing crisis in Boston and Vietnam made their presence felt on campus, he said.

"It was important for me to run for this job, in the year of the [US] bicentennial, to show that this university, these students did something that couldn't be done in the country," said Deskins, the first African-American elected UGBC president. "If you didn't live through the busing crisis in Boston, you didn't know how bad it could be."

Deskins said the reunion gave

him a chance to reflect how UGBC presidents are intrinsically service-oriented.

"Each and every one of us is committed to service. That has never gone away," said Deskins, pointing to alumni like Timothy Anderson, '73, who organized a nonprofit group, the World Computer Exchange, which provides technology to people in underdeveloped countries.

The leaders also spoke about the changing and evolving responsibility of the UGBC president. Many discussed how managing the growing budget — sometimes upwards of \$750,000 — became their most demanding challenge.

Richard Culliton, '91 recounted how he once had to explain to the deans an expenditure for \$900 to invite a then little-known comedian named Jerry Seinfeld to perform on campus. Culliton admitted that the UGBC was embarrassed when they misspelled Seinfeld's name on the promotional materials.

All the leaders agreed that their work couldn't have been done without support from friends, faculty and a relationship — albeit a tense one at times — with administrators.

Alvernia College President Thomas Flynn, '74, who served as UGBC president in 1973 and 1974, concluded that anyone who held the positions became familiar at an early age "with the pressure and responsibility of what it is to be the person at the top."

"It is an enormous psychological burden at age 19, 20 and 21," Flynn said.

Interviewed after the event, Sherwood said he was proud to welcome the alumni home and glad to see how much they learned from UGBC, calling the reunion "the most gratifying program I have ever been associated with."

"This has really been a profound experience," said Sherwood. "All I can compare it to is discovering an extended family that you never knew existed."

"Obviously these people are all still passionate, love and respect BC. This is a phenomenal institution and if nothing else, the reunion has shown us that."

## Forgét Charity Drive Hits 25

*Continued from page 1*  
of mouth. Employees at Massachusetts General Hospital, The Winter, Wyman Companies and Sika Sarnafil Inc. in Canton also drive gifts to BC to contribute.

Forgét believes the drive appeals to so many because she provides a child's first name and last initial, their age and a short wish list. Gifts are usually in the \$30 range and children range in age from newborn to 18-years-old.

"People feel connected to 'their' child. It's not like handing over a gift and not knowing who gets it or where it is going," said Forgét. "They can see that the child likes Dora [the Explorer] or doesn't like anything red. There's an instant connection."

Throughout next week, a half-dozen volunteers will be on hand to help wrap, load and transport the gifts.

"That's why I don't worry about my own Christmas shopping," Forgét laughed. "Somehow it all gets done. We so easily lose sight of the important things, the things we take for granted."

"This gives me a chance to

stop and think about the less fortunate and how we all can help to make things better. That's what Christmas should be about."

BC faculty and staff can still "adopt" a child by contacting Forgét at ext.2-8875 or paula.forget@bc.edu. For those who want to give a generic gift, sports equipment, large and extra large sweatshirts and gift cards are always popular. Gifts can be dropped off in the basement of Ignacio Hall near the trade shops beginning 8:30 a.m. on Dec. 17 until 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 20. The gifts for DSS can be wrapped, but Italian Home presents should be unwrapped or

### Other campus charity drives:

The Graduate School of Social Work Student Collective **book drive for the McKinley Middle School** ends tomorrow. The McKinley is a special education school in Boston that does not have a library and is in need of books — especially ones that help motivate students to read — for children aged 11 to 14. Collection boxes have been set up in the first-floor lounge of McGuinn Hall. For information, contact Megan

O'Brien at obrienlp@bc.edu.

**Hugs for Heroes Inc.**, is a nonprofit organization created by BC sophomore Mireille Manzone that supports our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq year round. In the last three and a half years, more than six tons of goods and notes of appreciation have been shipped to Army, Navy, and Marine units, many of which were the units of BC graduates or had a connection to the BC.

The organization's goal is to help as many troops as possible feel appreciation from home in the form of notes and items that can make the hardships they endure just a little easier to bear.

Hugs for Heroes is shipping goods this Christmas season and beyond, and can use whatever help you can give. Contact Manzone at manzonem@bc.edu to find out more about donating much needed items, or visit [www.hugsforheroes.com](http://www.hugsforheroes.com). You also can e-mail [hugsforheroes@gmail.com](mailto:hugsforheroes@gmail.com) to be put on a mailing list and receive updates and information on current Hugs for Heroes projects.