

Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of February 26, 2015 Meeting

Can Erbil (Chair)
Katherine O'Dair
John Rakestraw
Hagop Toghramadjian
David Quigley
Patricia DeLeeuw
Thomas Chiles
J. Joseph Burns
Joseph Carroll
Jessica Pesce

1. The summary of the December 4, 2014 meeting 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 them with colleagues.

2. Update on Strategic Planning for the Natural Sciences

Tom Chiles has been working to promote research on campus. In the 18 months that he has been Vice Provost for Research and Academic Planning he has increased the resources available to faculty for their research and scholarship. In addition to Research Expense Grants and Research Incentive Grants, two new funding mechanisms have been created: Ignite Grants and Research Across Departments Grants (RADs). Ignite Grants have two deadlines per year. External evaluators review the grant proposals at the first level, followed by a campus committee. This year both grant cycles were very competitive. Reviews from the external evaluators were positive and grants were awarded across schools. RADs Grants align with paradigm shifts in science funding, which now encourage faculty to collaborate across departments and schools. The goal of these grants is to fund interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary proposals.

The Office of the Vice Provost organized Boston College's first Advancing Research & Scholarship Day this past December. The goal was to bring faculty from across campus together while promoting research on campus, external, and alumni.

Phil Landrigan, head of Mt. Sinai's program in Public Health. The theme of the coming year will most likely be big data, a topic growing in national importance. If anyone knows of faculty who might be interested please let Tom and his colleagues know.

program to its JD program. Vince Rougeau said there were no current plans, but in the future, the Law School might consider a joint public policy and law degree.

David Quigley raised the issue of the four snow days BC has had this year, the highest number since the Blizzard of 1978. He thanked librarians, and facilities staff for their tireless work in keeping BC open. He and Mike Lochhead had a difficult decision on the second day of the third storm, where BC had a delayed opening. The campus was clear by the afternoon on the first day, but late that afternoon, he learned that the MBTA rail service would be closed the next day. In collaboration with others, David decided to have a delayed start the next day, as many faculty and staff would still be able to get to campus and the MBTA system was operating. Ultimately, the B and C lines would be shut down for most of the week.

David thanked everyone for the way they handled the Monday/Thursday schedule switch after the second storm. It went very smoothly. He decided to do this after he heard from affected faculty that those with Monday classes after 4 pm would not see their classes at all from January 12th until February 16th. Some schools switch Monday schedules like this every semester to accommodate for the numerous holidays; Canfield said that Brandeis does this.

A Council member said that the majority of the negative feedback came from graduate students, who were displeased with the message and the messaging. Graduate students felt that the decision and the messaging implied that BC was an undergraduate campus, despite the 5,000 graduate students living on campus. In future, it might be useful to direct people to the website in the ARE alert and put a more detailed message there. David Quigley also reminded faculty that they always have the authority to cancel their own classes if there are concerns for student/faculty safety.

After the four snow days, some on campus received calls from parents asking why the faculty were not making up classes online. The Center for Teaching Excellence has been providing services and tips for faculty on teaching through disruption, but David also hopes that departments will discuss means for keeping up intellectual continuity. Greg Kalsch said that the Board of Chairs in A&S raised a question about times chosen for closing/opening. Before the first blizzard, BC closed at 5 pm, but many classes start at 4:30 pm.

A Council member said that parking was difficult after the storms, especially on the delayed opening day.