

New Course Numbers Add Clarity, Specificity

The Numbering System, Coupled With The New Agora Course Search, Will Make Registration Far Easier

By **The Heights Editorial Board**

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Because of the limited availability of unused numbers in the UIS course numbering system, Boston College will move to the Quali catalog management system for its course numbering and sequencing beginning with the summer 2014 and 2014-15 academic terms. Instead of the current two-letter, three-number course codes, the new system will use codes that have four letters and four numbers, expanding the number of combinations available.

To determine which numbering system to implement in place of UIS, BC created a curriculum management advisory committee to consult other universities' systems and find elements of those systems that would work for BC. The committee's goal was to develop a numbering system that would more accurately reflect course levels and standardize language and common courses. In addition to looking at other institutions' systems, BC also conducted focus groups with students to learn what they did and did not like about the old UIS system, and then repeated this evaluation with the new Quali system.

The technology of the UIS course registration system will remain the same for the time being, though students will see some changes in the Agora portal, including improved course information and schedule sections. Searching for courses will now be more intuitive, with students having the ability to perform searches using keywords and specific days and class times.

For departments—especially those such as English or history in which course offerings change frequently—the transition to the Quali system will allow for much more flexibility when naming new courses, as there will be more available number options for each discipline. As the number of free combinations has dwindled, departments have been forced to reassign numbers from retired courses to new courses, creating confusion when numbers do not necessarily correspond to the difficulty level of a particular course. A course that is considered introductory, with no prerequisites, for example, might be given a number in the 500s, despite the fact that the number clearly does not correspond to the course's level of difficulty.

Students should welcome the change, as well, since the new course information and schedule will increase precision in class and syllabi searches. The University rightly sought students' input

in the focus groups, and the new system should result in improvements to the registration process by making course codes more accurate and specific.