



## BOSTON COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND DEAN OF FACULTIES

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In thanks for/to Jeff and Margaret Flagg

I first met Jeff Flagg when I joined the A&S Dean's office in the Fall of 1985. In fact, Jeff and Peggy Ramirez shared the Gasson office suite with the deans although there was a wall separating the two areas at that time. Within ten minutes of meeting Jeff I knew that he was one of the nicest, gentlest, most caring people I had ever met. I also marveled at the fact that he was teaching French, but that he and Peggy also directed both the entire Junior Year Abroad program and the Fulbright Scholarship preparation program. I was wondering how does one person do all of this. Little did I know at the time that it seems to be a Jesuit tradition to hire someone into a full-time position and then tell them how great they would be taking on some additional responsibility for the sake of the students. And Jeff would never say "no" to such a request.

One day, Jeff asked me if I would like to join him and his wife for lunch at their favorite restaurant, the Lyons dining hall. I was trying to imagine what Jeff's wife would be like. I was thinking she would be like him: scholarly, reserved, thoughtful. I was a little concerned that she would want to talk about French philosophy and film and that I would not be able to hold up my end of the conversation.

Then I met Margaret. Conversation was not a problem. I remember saying to myself, "Who is this smart, snarky, funny bundle of energy who seems to know everything about the history, politics and cultural institutions of Irish Catholic Boston?" As reserved as Jeff was, that was how excited Margaret was. I remember thinking that this marriage was never going to work out.

What I overlooked of course was the deep and abiding love and care they had for their students, their friends and for each other. The Heights article about their 50 year love affair captures it beautifully. We can still find them dining, together, in the Lyons dining hall almost every day.

Over the past few years, Jeff has invited me to lead a class on Alexis de Toqueville in one of his French literature courses. Though my French is more or less limited to "Bon Jour" delivered in a thick Boston accent, he was extremely enthusiastic and supportive of my halting efforts to help his students understand how a social scientist reads Tocqueville. I gradually came to see that this not a casual add-on to his class. Rather it was Jeff's effort to be sure that his students understood not only the vocabulary and grammar, but also what the author was trying to say and the cultural background from which his analysis flowed. In other words, in the true liberal arts tradition he wanted them to engage in the creative act of translating a meaningful thought from one language

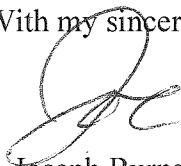
and culture to another. Fr. Bresnahan who zealously defended the Jesuit liberal arts tradition during the Harvard Law School controversy of 1900 would be very pleased with Prof. Jeff Flagg. As should his students. My visit to Jeff's class has become for me one of the things I look forward to most each fall.

Finally, as an amateur historian of Boston College, I have come to understand how critically important people like Jeff and Margaret have been in the development of our modern university. For its first hundred years Boston College was an Irish Catholic commuter school devoted to helping its working class "Day Scholars" become educated citizens and take their place in the professions and in the Boston Irish Catholic community. It was members of the Boston Irish Catholic community like Jeff and Margaret Flagg, Tom O'Connor, John Donovan and John Mahoney who went on to higher level graduate studies in academic fields and then committed themselves and their careers to educating Boston College students and building this institution. They started the movement from the basic classical education of the old Boston College toward the more sophisticated, multicultural, multi-disciplinary education we have today.

When Jeff and Margaret first started teaching here there were few students or even faculty who traveled abroad, spoke other languages, or had a sophisticated understanding of different cultures. There were very few students who studied abroad junior year, and even fewer who would think of applying for a national scholarship program like Fulbright. They were the ones who had the vision and expertise to expand the learning opportunities for our students and the commitment to encourage students to take advantage of them. When they started it would have been almost inconceivable that eventually half of Boston College students would study abroad in Europe and all over the world. The critical role they played in creating the modern Boston College should not be overlooked just because they are such genuine human beings and such wonderful teachers.

Margaret and Jeff Flagg are warm, wonderful, caring people. They are great, devoted and supportive teachers. They are strong, active links to the traditional Boston Irish Catholic community. They took it upon themselves to help develop the institutions of our modern national research university. They are a huge blessing to all of us who have the honor of being their colleagues, a blessing for which I am eternally grateful.

With my sincere admiration and appreciation,



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