

age points of error don't matter; what matters is learning a quantitative technique called "dimensional analysis."

The technique, simply put, requires converting the basic dimensions and units of information that you have about a scenario — a cruise ship's change in velocity, say, and the distance it traveled — into an answer that's described with different dimensions and units — such as the ship's deceleration, which is measured as change in velocity over time squared.

The class doesn't know how long it took the ship to come to rest after hitting the pier. But the ship's speedometer gives them the initial velocity, and some Internet searching reveals the ship's length in meters. Armed with just that information, the class uses dimensional analysis to find the cruise ship's rate of deceleration — only about 0.1 meter per second squared.

"Anybody getting ejected out of that windshield?" Cohen asks with a smirk. "That's a gentle breeze. No one would be spilling their drinks."

While the movies often play fast and loose with the laws of physics, Cohen isn't out to poke holes in Hollywood blockbusters. After all, it doesn't take a physics professor to laugh away a plan to destroy an Earth-bound, Texas-sized asteroid by planting a nuclear bomb inside of it. And besides, says Cohen, a bona fide movie buff, technical accuracy isn't what makes movies fun.

But a little physics can help. Olga Cuevas-Gomez (CAS'10), who took the course last fall, says that *X-Men* is one of her family's favorite movies. "Now, every time we watch it, there's a new physics concept that I try to explain to them," says Cuevas-Gomez. "They never get it, but they pretend they care." **CB**

CLASS OF 2012 BREAKS BU RECORDS

LARGEST APPLICANT POOL SHOWS JUMP AMONG MINORITIES

BOSTON UNIVERSITY continued its upward trend in high school applications this year, breaking last year's record of 33,894 by more than 4,000. The 37,964 high school students who applied to BU's Class of 2012 represent a 12.1 percent increase over last year.

The increase is evenly distributed across all schools and colleges, geographic areas, and ethnicities, according to Laurie Pohl, vice president for enrollment and student affairs. "BU is hot right now," she says.

The jump in minority applicants was particularly notable. African-American students submitted 2,018 applications, up 23 percent from last year, and 2,995 Hispanic and Latino students applied, an increase of 21.9 percent.

"We have put tremendous efforts into making good on BU's tradition of being an open and inclusive place," Pohl says. "We want our underrepresented minority students to find a welcoming and academically challenging community where they will have successful careers."

Pohl also notes that nationwide, the pool of eighteen-year-olds graduating from high school is bigger, and students are, on average, applying to more colleges. "High school guidance counselors encourage students to apply to four schools at a minimum," she says, "and most students apply to six, seven, or more." Pohl expects that within the next year or two, the number of applicants will top off and eventually decrease. "We're seeing the last generation of baby boomers' kids graduate," she says, "and pretty soon we'll experience an overall decline."

But in the African-American and Hispanic communities, the number of high school graduates — particularly first-generation graduates — is expected to increase. In anticipation of this trend, BU has been recruiting heavily in the last decade from states with large Hispanic populations, most notably California, Florida, and Texas.

"In this last year alone, we saw a 21 percent increase in applications from Florida," Pohl says. The state with the most applicants is New York, which saw a 13 percent increase in applications.

The University received 3,812 international applications this year — up 29 percent — from more than 100 foreign countries, the majority from China, India, and Korea. Domestically, students applied from all fifty states.

Other statistics for the Class of 2012 remain virtually unchanged from past years. Female applicants account for 59.5 percent of the total, a .3 percent increase from last year. Average SAT scores in critical reading and math, at 1250, are ten points lower. The average high school GPA (3.5) saw a .05 increase, and average class rank (top 18 percent) decreased by one percent.

Students were notified of their acceptance to BU by April 1, and they must accept by May 1. The University will admit about 4,200 freshmen to the Class of 2012. **VW**



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