

The figure skating club won this year's collegiate championship in April.

The National Champions You Might Not Know

BU's figure skaters bring it all home, too

Commonwealth Avenue didn't close down. There was no parade. And no professional teams came knocking to offer lucrative contracts. But that doesn't mean the members of Boston University's figure skating club aren't national champions.

WEB EXTRA Watch the skating team practice their routines at www.bu.edu/bostonia.

The club, twenty-three members strong, traveled to Colorado Springs in mid-April for the U.S. Figure Skating Intercollegiate Team Championships, and for the first time came home with the big prize.

"It was amazing, because everyone skated so well," says Schuyler Eldridge (ENG'12).

While the team's celebration was more modest than that of BU's other championship skating team, the victory was no less sweet for the figure skaters.

"We've got our trophy," says Sarah Stone (SAR'12). "And we've got our pride."

The Ruler Lady

FORMATTING MAVEN Martha Khan is the last hurdle between Ph.D.s and graduation

MARTHA KHAN'S RULER goes back — way back. With her trusty measuring stick, the records officer at the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences has scrutinized the margins of thousands of dissertations and theses in her role as the gatekeeper for graduate students and doctoral candidates on their way to degree-dom. Since 1978, Khan has checked each student's academic crown jewel for proper spacing, font consistency, pagination, and even effective titling.

"I don't think people anticipate the amount of time that's spent doing the format," Khan says. "They're concentrating, and rightly so, on content. But formatting can be a little tricky. People are better at it than they used to be, but there will probably never be a perfect dissertation."

While Mugar Memorial Library is the last entity to sign off on a completed dissertation or thesis, it's Khan's job to help suss out errors that might result in that dreaded phone call or e-mail asking for revisions or even a full reprint.

"I like to review the dissertation, rather than have the student printing it out on the final paper, turning it in, thinking they're finished, and then it goes to the library and they have a lot of revisions," says Khan, who has worked at BU for forty-three years. "To me, that's not a great way to end your career and a lot of hard work."

Brendan McDermott, the University's thesis and dissertation coordinator at Mugar, scrutinizes some 700 manuscripts a year. He says about 10 percent require revisions. Misspellings, particularly on the title page, are the most common error.

"They rely too much on spell-checker," says ten-year veteran McDermott. "I've had thirteen or fourteen cases where people have misspelled their own name."

Checking dissertations is just one of Khan's responsibilities — "a small sideline," she says, to overseeing registration and certifying students for graduation — but it is the most visible to students and the most enjoyable for Khan; she still receives e-mails from former charges announcing weddings and births.

"I always think the appearance of the dissertation should reflect the quality of the work and the research that's gone into it," Khan says. "Everybody thinks it's a little fussy. But when they leave here, I want them to have a good feeling and experience — and to know that they're finished." CALEB DANILOFF

Martha Khan has been measuring the margins on graduate dissertations since 1978.



ROBIN BERGHAUS