



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

December 10, 2020
Audio/Video Conference

The following Trustees were present:

Mohan Boodram
John Barrett III
Brenda Burdick
JD Chesloff
Justin Daniels

Susan Gold
Frederick Keator
Karen Kowalczyk

Denise Marshall
Robert Reilly
Kathleen Therrien

MCLA Staff in attendance:

President James Birge
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Daniel Colonno, Chief of Police
Catherine Holbrook, VP of Student Affairs

As allowed by executive order of the Governor of Massachusetts, in compliance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and 15A, Section 9, and with a quorum present in-person and via audio/video-conference, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on December 10, 2020 with Board Chair Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

For purposes of recording, it was noted that the Board Development session was held at 4:30 p.m. and Trustees were provided an overview of MCLA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the Fall 2020 semester and planning for the spring 2021 semester. Attending this session were Trustees Boodram, Burdick, Chesloff, Daniels, Gold, Kowalczyk, Marshall, Reilly and Therrien, and presenting were VPs Holbrook and Puc, and Dr. Jacqueline Krzanik.

Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 8, 2020

Trustee Burdick presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting of December 8, 2020.

Sabbatical applications were presented to the Committee. The Committee approved waiving the reading of the individual sabbatical applications presented to the Committee.

The following faculty members applied for sabbatical in upcoming 2020 and 2021 semesters:

- Dr. Tom Byrne, Professor of Psychology, Fall 2021
- Dr. Sharon Claffey, Associate Professor of Psychology, Spring 2022
- Dr. David Cupery, Associate Professor of Political Science, Fall 2021
- Dr. Anthony Daly, Professor of History, Spring 2022
- Dr. Michael Dilthey, Professor of Music, Fall 2021
- Dr. Amber Engelson, Associate Professor of English, Spring 2022
- Dr. Anne Goodwin, Professor of Biology, Fall 2021
- Dr. Kailai Huang, Professor of History, Fall 2021
- Mr. Greg Scheckler, Professor of Art, Spring 2022
- Dr. Dan Shustack, Professor of Environmental Studies, Spring 2022
- Dr. Kebra Ward, Associate Professor of Physics, Academic Year 2021 - 2022
- Dr. Jennifer Zoltanski, Associate Professor of Sociology, Academic Year 2021 – 2022

Sabbatical plans for each were reviewed, and the committee discussed course coverage practices during these absences. All applicants for sabbatical were recommended for approval by VP of Academic Affairs Adrienne Wootters and President Birge, and approved by the Academic Affairs Committee.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll call vote, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve sabbatical in the 2020 and 2021 time periods to the aforementioned faculty

The Committee heard an update from Dean Janis on the revised core curriculum will be implemented in fall 2021. As part of core changes, the first-year student experience will be adjusted with the introduction of a first-year seminar. Marketing and Communications staff will be engaged to introduce the revised core to the community.

A three-year action plan is being developed for the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) with a focus on developing a cohort program and new initiatives. A call has been placed for summer courses to be conducted fully on-line in summer 2021. As allowed by the State Authorization Reciprocity Act designation, all online summer coursed may be offered nationwide.

A dual-enrollment grant will allow the College to offer seats in existing courses to high school students. Funds from Title 3 have been used to establish two credit recovery courses for students who have fallen behind allowing them to remain on track for degree completion.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Academic Technologies (AT) staff have done an outstanding job with remote teaching. A majority of faculty have completed online class training at this time. Staffing of AT was discussed highlighting the hiring of an assistant in the division.

At the next meeting of the Committee, Professor Stroud will be invited to present and discuss the DESE accreditation.

Dean O'Bryant provided an update on the work of the Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE) including the challenges posed by the pandemic and remote learning. Year over year, MCLA has seen a 50% increase in the number of students with learning differences, which is equivalent to 15% of the student body.

CSSE staff continue to work closely with colleagues to combat the impacts of the pandemic and address the needs of the student body. Success coaching with students has proven effective, leading to the hiring of a staff member for this specific role. Staff also worked with faculty to address student absences and academic concerns. Staff work continues with the Men of Color and Women of Color Initiatives.

Dean O'Bryant highlighted the work being done by Student Financial Services to connect students of color to funds that may be available to assist with need.

President Birge provided the Committee an update on the impact and operations during the pandemic. Faculty and students have pivoted to full remote learning for the remainder of the semester, a decision that has proved to be propitious as COVID-19 cases spike in Berkshire County. Staff have moved to remote work until January 4, 2021, with office coverage provided on a rotating basis throughout campus.

President Birge commented on the potential for a supplemental stimulus package out of Congress that will assist universities and college, and the availability of vaccines.

The College continues to plan for a return to campus for the spring semester, and anticipate it will look like the fall semester with hybrid learning across the curriculum.

President Birge also expressed to the Committee, his concern for the strain that employees and students are facing as a result of the pandemic.

Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 3, 2020

Reporting of the Enrollment Management Committee meeting of December 3 was deferred to next meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Executive Committee Chair Report on the Meetings of December 1 and 10, 2020

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Executive Committee of December 1 and 10, 2020. The President's goals were reviewed and each goal was assigned to a committee member who would monitor the action being taken in support of that goal, any unexpected obstacles being faced,

and progress towards specified benchmarks, as applicable. The following assignments were agreed upon:

- Executive Searches: Chair Boodram, Vice-Chair Burdick, Trustees Chesloff and Kowalczyk
- Enrollment Goals: Trustee Reilly and Chair Boodram
- Facilities/Capital Projects: Trustee Kowalczyk
- Institutional Dashboards: Chair Boodram
- Budget/Deficit Reduction: Trustee Kowalczyk
- Fundraising/Campaign Readiness: Vice-Chair Burdick
- Equity and Diversity: Trustee Chesloff

Opportunities will be sought to provide periodic feedback to President Birge over the course of the year in anticipation of the year-end performance evaluation to be prepared by the Board and submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

The three executive searches were reviewed and Committee Chairs were invited to participate in the interviewing of finalist candidates in early spring:

- VP, Finance and Administration: Trustee Kowalczyk
- VP, Student Affairs: Trustee Chesloff
- VP, Academic Affairs: Vice-Chair Burdick

In the meeting of December 10, the Committee heard plans for commencement for the classes of 2020 and 2021 scheduled for May 2021. Commencement speaker for the class of 2020 will be Mary Dana Hinton. Dr. Hinton and Jenn Smith have been selected to receive honorary doctoral (HD) degrees.

For the class of 2021, the commencement speaker and HD recipients have not been selected yet. A list of proposed recipients was reviewed.

Plans for commencement continue to be for an in-person ceremony, which will pivot to virtual dependent upon gathering restrictions from the state, virus resurgence and vaccine availability.

President Birge will approach 2021 potential degree recipients to determine interest, and then will be presented to the Board for final discussion and approval.

Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 1, 2020

Trustee Kowalczyk presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of December 1, 2020. Mr. Cellana presented the first quarter FY21 financial report, which, to date, is better than anticipated. Most relevant from an income side is the expectation of level funding from the State, which is helpful to the bottom line based on budget of \$1M. CARES act funding of \$700k has not

been recognized as of yet, which is timing related with the expectation to be recognized in the second quarter. Cost savings recognized are due to open positions and faculty cost decreases.

Mr. Cellana presented update on FY21 financial forecast including actuals for four months. Level funding provides a \$1M benefit in the forecast. On the expense side, expected COVID testing in the spring is in now reflected in the forecast. The current forecast is a \$1M loss vs. a budgeted loss of \$2.5M.

Mr. Cellana provided a Small Capital Repairs Project update. Seven of the 13 planned projects are now complete. Three additional projects will begin this week. These projects are coming in under budget as more competitive bids are being received. Additional funds are expected to be in the \$250k range and more projects will be identified to use these funds. At this point all funds are anticipated to be spent by June 30, 2021.

Mr. Cellana discussed a recent financial security intrusion on a College banking account that occurred on September 29 and was discovered on October 6. An ACH withdrawal was performed and \$10k was used to pay credit cards. The bank was notified and acted quickly to restore funds to the College. Procedures have been updated to ensure that all ACH activity will be uploaded to the bank. Management is confident that these new procedures will prevent this type of breach from happening again.

Mr. Cellana discussed MSCBA Bonds and the availability to the College of \$1M. The Committee discussed concerns with taking on additional debt if not needed and the availability of funds. This item will be presented as a formal agenda item at future Committee meeting to discuss and vote on a resolution to bring to the Board

President Birge discussed the Aramark dining services contract negotiations as Aramark approached the College seeking financial relief due to less students on campus. This opportunity will be used to clarify and draft a new contract, with Aramark asking for a two-year extension on the contract.

Aramark's current grants represent an initial five-year contract and then additional five-year contract. There are some discrepancies in the amortization of the grants to the College and auditors and legal are advising.

Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 10, 2020

VP Holbrook presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of December 10, 2020, at which Justin Daniels was welcomed as Student Trustee.

The Committee reviewed the 2019 Clery report which will be presented by Chief Colonno at this meeting. Trustees discussed the data and three-year trends particularly around rapes and assaults on campus.

Student leaders Shannon Prouty and Justin Daniels introduced themselves to the Committee members and presented their goals. Mr. Daniels shared that his primary goal is to represent students here and offer input to the board on student experiences.

Ms. Prouty shared her goals of wanting greater student involvement and to advocate for BLM and diversity and inclusion of students on campus.

The Committee discussed the student experience and heard a brief summary of campus living and learning, and the move-out process. A proactive approach to testing is being taken at move-out time and before it became mandated by state.

Chief Colonno presented the College's annual Clery Report (2020 Annual Security and Fire Safety Report) for reporting year 2019. He provided a summary of the reporting requirements and the Clery Act and noted that the timeline to submit the report had been extended to January 14 2021 as a result of the pandemic. MCLA's report was filed on December 8 and provided to the campus community on December 9.

Trustee Reilly departed the meeting.

Approval of Minutes of Committee Meetings

Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the following meeting minutes and all actions contained therein:

- Board of Trustees of October 22, 2020
- Executive Committee of October 22 and December 1, 2020
- Enrollment Management Committee of December 3, 2020
- Student Affairs Committee of October 22, 2020
- Academic Affairs of December 3, 2020
- Fiscal Affairs of December 1, 2020

Chairperson's Report

Chair Boodram provided the Chairperson's Report beginning with state required trustee training. There are still two more full series of the 8, one-hour sessions planned. The concern about the timing of these session being mid-day was heard. Matt Noyes of the DHE has created a survey which will be shared allowing you to provide input on the future sessions. Further information on future sessions will be shared as the schedule is developed. Training must be complete by November 2021.

President's Report

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board, and began by welcoming newly appointed student trustee, Justin Daniels.

President Birge reviewed the development of the college's approach to COVID-19. A surplus of approximately 150 COVID-19 tests were donated to the North Adams Public Schools. Discussion were had with North Adams Mayor Tom Bernard with regard to use of campus housing for emergency first responders should the need arise.

MCLA's control plan called for all students to move to remote learning after the Thanksgiving break, which has proven to be helpful as cases in the county are on the rise. Employees pivoted to remote work with in-person coverage managed by division leaders. Other employees, such as maintainers, power plant, facilities, residence hall directors, library staff, continue to report to campus for in-person work as needed

With regard to the FY21 budget, the House and Senate have agreed to higher levels of appropriation for higher education, and awaits final approval. With full funding of FY21, we anticipate a reduction in budgeted loss of about \$1.5M.

President Birge summarized a racially motivated incident that happened to a student off campus. Both North Adams and Campus police have been involved, but no arrests have been made. He also related two local incidents of Zoom bombing that were hate or race driven attacks. MCLA has engaged Compass to conduct a train the trainer session for anti-racism work.

As a result of committee work on campus policing, a public safety oversight committee has been formed, and is waiting on an MSCA union representative appointment. This committee will be charged with researching training, and reviewing incidents that may be racist in nature and how to avoid them.

President Birge presented Attachment A, Resolution in Support of Level-Funding for Public Higher Education, for approval. Following the reading of the resolution, upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to approve the Resolution in Support of Level-Funding for Public Higher Education as presented.

With no other business being brought before the meeting, upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Resolution in Support of Level-Funding for Public Higher Education

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is confronted with some of the most difficult challenges it has faced in our lifetimes and the continuing public health crisis and its economic fallout affects every corner of our state and most deeply impacts those who were already struggling;

WHEREAS, in past recessions, public higher education has received cuts in state aid, even as it has served as a refuge for people of all ages, a tool for economic growth, and an invaluable opportunity for the residents of the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS, the ability of colleges to raise tuition and fees to compensate for lack of state funding has led to crushing and unsustainable student debt and is, particularly during a pandemic, an unfair and inappropriate avenue to offset reductions in state aid;

WHEREAS, public higher education is indispensable to the economic vitality of our Commonwealth and to the tens of thousands of students, especially low-income students, and students of color, who rely on an affordable and high-quality public higher education system;

WHEREAS, the long-term health of our economy and our students' futures are at risk if we allow our public institutions of higher education to suffer irreparable damage during what we all hope and expect to be a relatively short-term crisis;

WHEREAS, faculty and staff in community colleges, state universities and the University of Massachusetts system are experiencing the elimination of programs, service cuts, and increased use of part-time faculty and staff; and

WHEREAS, any potential funding cuts are hitting a system of public higher education that prior to COVID-19 was already confronting a decades-long history of being chronically under-resourced which has made the financial consequences of COVID-19 particularly devastating for our students and campuses;

WHEREAS, the state has already provided limited immediate relief to our colleges and universities by level funding state services, including public education, through October 2020 which has aided in their re-opening and helped to prevent some of the worst potential cuts to student services, programs, staff, and faculty employment;

WHEREAS, maintaining level funding for the remainder of the fiscal year will strengthen the ability of those colleges and universities to weather the COVID-19 crisis and reemerge as a crucial and strong contributor to our recovery;

WHEREAS the stability of our local economies and our economic recovery post-COVID-19 depend heavily on the ability to maintain strong employment now and to ensure the economic benefits the public higher education system engenders including the tax revenue that a healthy economy produces;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts urges the Legislature to provide, at a minimum, level-funding for the FY21 to each of the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities.