



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

April 1, 2021

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:

James F. Birge, President
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

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 April 1, 2021 with Board Chair Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

For purposes of recording, it was noted that the Board Development session was held at 4:45 p.m. and Trustees were provided an overview of MCLA Foundations proposed fundraising campaign. 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.

Executive Committee Chair Report on the Meetings of March 26 and April 1, 2021

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Executive Committee meetings of March 26 and April 1, 2021.

At the March 25 meeting, President Birge provided an update on COVID-19 impacts on campus. At that meeting he presented his decision to “lockdown” residents in the Townhouses as a cluster of positives cases were seen. As you know from email communications, the decision has now been made to pivot to distance learning and to close all residence halls on campus as of April 11. This decision was discussed at this committee meeting earlier today.

At the meeting of March 25, President Birge presented Ty Allan Jackson as commencement speaker for the class of 2021. He also recommended Mr. Jackson be conferred an honorary doctorate of humane letters. The committee recommends to the board, approval of this HD recipient.

Both the class of 2020 and 2021 commencement ceremonies will be conducted virtually. You may recall that Mary Dana Hinton was selected as the commencement speaker for the class of 2020. Dr. Hinton and Jenn Smith were both approved last year as HD recipients as part of the class of 2020 exercises.

Upon motion duly made and second, following a roll call vote, it was:

VOTED: to approve the conferral of honorary doctoral degrees upon Ty Allan Jackson and Mr. Steven Boyd.

At today's Executive Committee meeting President Birge also provided an update on the finalized Vice President searches for Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and Administration and Finance. Offers have been accepted for all three positions.

- Dr. Jeannette Smith will join MCLA as Vice President of Student Affairs on June 28.
- Dr. Richard Glejzer will join as Vice President of Academic Affairs in mid-July.
- Mr. Joseph DaSilva will join as Vice President Administration and Finance on June 7.

Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of March 9, 2021

Trustee Burdick presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting of March 9, 2021.

VP Wootters reviewed the academic major name change for a B.S. in Community Health Education to a B.S. in Public Health and Community Health Education. This revision does not change the major's curriculum and was approved by the DHE.

There are currently three open faculty positions in the biology department. Two searches are in progress and an offer has been made for one position.

The Committee heard the recommendations for faculty reappointments, tenure and tenure with promotions, which are provided in detail in the minutes of this meeting.

The committee voted to recommend reappointment with tenure, reappointment with promotion to associate professor, and reappointment with promotion to full professor all faculty members presented.

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

VOTED: to approve tenure and promotion to associate professor for:

Dr. David Cupery, Department of Political Science
Dr. Hannah Noel, Department of English and Communications
Dr. Ruby Vega, Department of Psychology
Dr. Kebra Ward, Department of Physics;

and to approve reappointment and promotion to associate professor for:

Dr. Jerome Socolof, Department of Arts Management
Prof. Jeremy Winchester, Department of Theatre.

President Birge provided an update on the vice president search for Academic Affairs, which will be narrowed down to four finalists. Virtual interviews will conclude this week.

The searches for VP of Student Affairs and VP of Finance and Administration are also nearing completion. The VPSA search was accelerated as a result of the withdrawal of two candidates. A candidate is on campus for the SA position and an offer is anticipated to be made this week.

The faculty emeritus requests have been postponed as a result of the Early Retirement/Separation Incentive Plan (ERIP) that is being offered to unit and non-unit employees. The deadline for employees to express interest in ERIP is April 1 and they are able to withdraw interest by April 30.

With regard to Commencement, President Birge stated that exercises for the classes of 2020 and 2021 will be conducted virtually on May 15 and 16.

Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of March 11, 2021

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Enrollment Management Committee meeting of March 11, 2021

Ms. Hollins provided an update for the Office of Admission including a review of the new student funnel and yield tactics. New student inquiries are up approximately 17% year over year.

Virtual college fairs are being held to attract new students. This format allows staff to meet students and enables the gathering of data as participant information is required to register for the fairs.

Student applications are down about 1.5% with 1,358 received to date. Accepted students are at 1,070, which is an increase of 15% year over year. Enrolled transfer students are at three compared to 12 at the same time last year. An increase is anticipated in transfer once in-person learning announcements are made,

President Birge stated that MCLA intends to be fully in-person for the fall 2021 semester, but announcement of this is pending the approval of Governor Baker. Community colleges have announced that they will be fully remote in the fall.

Ms. Hollins reviewed yield tactics which were more fully discussed at the trustees' retreat. Virtual tours and on-campus visits are being conducted, with a focus on safety for students, families and staff. An instant decision day was held at Berkshire Community College to gain access to transfer students who are not engaged in virtual opportunities to connect with MCLA.

Admission staff continue to utilize the technology to recruit new and engage existing students. Targeted advertisements and geofencing are planned in an upcoming campaign. And one-to-one student appointments continue.

Ms. Boyer reviewed virtual accepted students week. Students will be able to participate in virtual classes, a welcome session, and resource fair, as well as sessions for athletics, financial aid, campus activities, housing, diversity, and a family panel. Students who attend two or more of these sessions will be awarded a \$500 virtual visit scholarship.

Ms. Howland provided a student financial services update. FAFSA filings are down across the country, and MCLA is experiencing the same trend. New student FAFSA reviews are down 8%, and returning student reviews are down 9%, year over year. State DHE, EOE and OFSA offices are working together to address these declines.

There are currently two requests from students for additional funding; however, there is concern that these requests will be forthcoming closer to student decision dates.

MCLA is not experiencing an increase in DOE verification of student FAFSA filings, which continues at a rate of about 20%. Staff continue to work with students encouraging them to complete their FAFSA filings.

President Birge provided an update on the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that is expected to be signed which includes approximately \$40B for higher education. These funds will be disseminated 50% direct to students and 50% for institution relief. MCLA is anticipating \$4MM from the ARP.

VP Puc provided an overview of the three to five-year planning cycle including enrollment trends, 10-year enrollment history, technology and data analytics, new markets and programs, vendor relationships, staffing, and financial aid access and equity.

The committee discussed the impact of virtual recruitment, and what changes made to recruit during the pandemic that will remain post-pandemic.

VP Puc stated that the New England Board of Higher Education has allowed MCLA to offer reduced tuition (as is done for New York residents) to other states surrounding Massachusetts. There is also a renewed interest in rural campuses.

President Birge commented on the core revisions made for fall 2021 and how these distinguish MCLA as the public liberal arts college in Massachusetts.

Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of March 23, 2021

Trustee Kowalczyk presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of March 23, 2021. The second quarter report for FY21 was reviewed. Of note, level funding was appropriated by the state and an increase in grants offset IT expenses. Negative impacts include the losses of room and board revenue of \$315k, \$100k from outside events, and \$100k from the Blue and Gold athletic team fundraiser.

Savings were seen in the salary lines with full-time employee compensation down \$679K and special employee compensation down \$371K. These consist of retirement payouts, open positions and pension/insurance expenses. Limited travel due to COVID-19 restrictions resulted in a savings of \$102K. Operations services and education services are also contributing to savings of \$570K and \$380, respectively.

CARES Act funding (Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund – HEERF) contributed positively \$1.4M in round one, and \$2.3M in round 2, and an estimated \$3.85M is anticipated in round 3.

The forecast for FY21 is on a positive trend and is attributable to a fully funded state appropriation, savings from open positions, active expense reductions, increased COVID testing, and CARES act funding.

Small capital projects were reviewed. Total funding available from DCAMM is \$1.2M. Most projects are complete or are nearing completion at this time. These projects are beneficial to the College as they offset projects in the operating budget.

The first pass of FY2 budget was presented to the Committee. The first pass does not include COVID-19 HEERF funding, and stabilization funding and retirement savings are not reflected in the FY22 budget. This pass assumes tuition and fees remain flat, as well.

Loans that the College holds with Berkshire Bank were discussed with regarding to paying off the debt of \$500k, and securing a higher interest rate on the CD used to secure the loan. There was no action taken on this item.

Mr. Joseph DaSilva was offered and accepted the position of Vice President of Administration and Finance and will join the College on June 7.

The offering to employees of an early retirement/separating incentive plan (ERIP) was discussed. The plan is available to employees with 20 years or more of service to the College, and offers a

\$25k incentive to those who indicate interest and are eligible. The potential cost is estimated at \$700k and would be anticipated to be recovered in expenses in FY22.

Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of April 1, 2021

Trustee Chesloff presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of April 1, 2021.

An update on the College's Food Pantry was provided by students Shelby Dempsey, Meaghan Murphy and DeAnna Wardwell, and Professor Spencer Moser.

Trustee Chesloff congratulated Ms. Dempsey on her recognition as a recipient of the 29 Who Shine for her work in the food pantry.

In summary, the food pantry is now offering gift cards in addition to the general supplies in the food pantry. An online pickup service was created to ensure students have access to food pantry resources. Technology was used to gather information from students on their true needs and using that feedback to provide for those needs.

The food pantry presence was added in Canvas that provides a single point for information regarding resources available to students including food, medical, and mental health supports; application links for the food pantry, gift card and monetary donations; and announcements. Additional links to resources outside the campus community are also available to SNAP and other benefits students can apply for. This one stop Canvas page is private to those enrolled and provides a place that fosters community and centralizes student needs. Work continues toward eliminating the stigma around need, food in this particular case.

The committee was provided an overview of the history and evolution of the food pantry, which emerged from course work in a 2017 class. The Pantry has since moved from Mr. Moser's closet to a dedicated space that has allowed for considerable expansion of services including meal vouchers for the dining hall. Work has been done with the development office to secure grants and establish a process for alumni to support gift cards offered through the pantry.

The committee heard an update on COVID-19, which President Birge will cover during his report.

Students in attendance and Trustee Daniels provided his student perspective on move-out and the shift to remote learning. He commented that many students are relieved and feel that completing the semester from home will just be easier, and alleviate concerns about more positive cases on campus. Many students are upset that they have been in quarantine for a fair amount of time and now are being sent home. They understand the reasons, but are frustrated. He expressed that students know this is not the fault of MCLA and they are not mad at administration; they are mad at the situation.

Mr. Daniels also stated that many students are worried about work study and employment. They are also trying to figure out how to get home, and in some cases, how to get back to campus for their belongings then return home again. Again, he stated frustration with the situation.

A HEIF Grant is being utilized to work with public safety on community policing. Renz Consulting has been retained and will work with MCLA to bridge the gap on relationships between campus and campus police on a six-month contract. Beginning in April, the consultant will hold eight to ten listening sessions with various campus community groups, and begin assessment of underlying issues and campus disconnects. A curriculum specific to MCLA will then be developed.

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 December 10, 2020
- Executive Committee of March 26 and April 1, 2021
- Enrollment Management Committee of December 3, 2020 and March 9, 2021
- Student Affairs Committee of April 1, 2021
- Academic Affairs of March 11, 2021
- Fiscal Affairs of March 23, 2021

Chairperson's Report

Chair Boodram provided the Chairperson's Report beginning with a discussion of his service as a Trustee and asked each to consider what it is that motivates them to be a member of MCLA's board of trustees.

Chair Boodram next introduced Lisa Donovan and Erica Baretto, MCLA's director and coordinator of the Institute for the Arts and Humanities; and interns Declan McDermott, Andrew Thomas, Destiny Rivera and Brianna Christie, who discussed their work for the Institute of Arts and Humanities, which is grant funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. They were joined by students, Drew Thomas, Declan McDermott, Destiny Rivera and Brianna Christie, who spoke about their internships with IAH and the effect this involvement has had on both their personal community impact and their college careers.

President's Report

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board, and began by thanking the student presenters and commending them for their contributions to the MCLA community.

President Birge then reviewed the College's pivot to remote learning for the remainder of the spring semester as a result of an on-campus outbreak of COVID-19 positive cases. There are currently 28 students in isolation with COVID-19. The College has reached peak capacity for quarantine and isolation rooms, and the number of students impacted has stressed the College's

ability to satisfactorily provide the services needed for students to remain in their rooms for the required 10-14 days. The quality of education provided was also a main point of consideration when determining whether or not to lock-down all residence halls for two weeks and conduct remote learning on-campus. The risk of spread in this situation still existed as students would have to visit the cafeteria and testing site during the lockdown.

The decision to move to full remote learning was done in consultation with Chair Boodram and Commissioner Santiago. As of April 5, all classes will pivot to online and students will move out of residence for the remainder of the semester. Special circumstance will be considered for students who need safe housing. This move is estimated to result in \$430k refunds to students for room and board. This refund will be absorbed through the anticipated budget surplus resulting from HEERF round 3 funding, and the College anticipates ending the year fiscally balanced.

Bargaining began with MSCA and will proceed for several months. Non-economic matters will be addressed during negotiations, but there is a need for economic parameters to ensure productive bargaining.

The Executive Leadership Institute created last year for state universities and colleges has completed this year's session, and is seeking applicants for the coming session. Gina Puc and Theresa O'Bryant completed the first session and were pleased with the program. President Birge has nominated Christopher MacDonald-Dennis and Kayla Hollins to participate in the next session.

Employees with 20 or more years of service in the state system were offered an early retirement/separation incentive program (ERIP), which would award them \$25k should they be eligible to elect to retire or separate from the College by June 30, 2021. There currently eight employees who have expressed interest. The expense for this FY is estimated to be \$400k with savings in FY22 estimated at \$410k. Final numbers as of the April 30 deadline will be shared at a future board meeting.

Faculty seeking emeritus status will be presented to the board at the June 10 meetings as the ERIP delays timing of retirement notice.

With regard to student conduct resulting in the spread of the virus on campus, President Birge stated that the student conduct process will be engaged once the transition off campus has completed, and students found in violation of the Trailblazer Agreement will be held accountable.

Students in quarantine and isolation remain healthy, with only two exhibiting mild symptoms of COVID-19.

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 6:49 p.m.