



Academic Affairs Committee Meeting

October 5, 2021

President's Offices, 87 Blackinton St.

Audio/Video Conference

The following Trustees were present:

Brenda Burdick
Mohan Boodram*
Robert Reilly*
Susan Gold*

MCLA Staff in attendance:

James F. Birge, President
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Richard Glejzer, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Guodong Wang, Assistant Professor of Computer Science
Shawn McIntosh, Assistant Professor of Digital Journalism and Communications
Nicole Porter, Assistant Professor of Biology

*Denotes remote participation

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 Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees with Committee Chair Burdick presiding.

Chair Burdick called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Tenure Candidacy

Tenure candidates presenting at this session were:

- Guodong Wang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Computer Science Department
- Shawn McIntosh, Assistant Professor of Digital Journalism and Communications, English and Communications Department
- Nicole Porter, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Biology Department

Each tenure candidate introduced themselves to the Committee members, provided an overview of their educational background, teaching, scholarly work including publications and major presentations, and service, and responded to questions from the Trustees.

Dr. Porther reviewed her position with the College as an assistant professor in the Biology Department, and her role as Coordinator for Public and Community Health Programs. Her teaching includes all public health courses in the major. Dr. Porther highlighted her work with the Women of Color Initiative, a program she started at the College. She discussed the Undergraduate Research Conference and the research work she has conducted with students, including a recent study of the impact of COVID-19 on opioid morbidity and mortality rates within Berkshire County.

Dr. Porther reviewed her biology research of the antimicrobial properties of a particular plant, which she is growing in the College's greenhouse. This biomedical field work examines the sedative effect on zebra fish and the potential for its use in treatment of human conditions such as epilepsy.

In response to questions regarding the student research, Dr. Porther stated that their research is presented at URC. In addition, it is her goal to have further use of the data and to have students seek to be published in undergrad journals.

Mr. McIntosh reviewed his position with the College as an assistant professor in the English and Communications Department. He highlighted his work with the student newspaper to expose students to an environment that emulates the real world of a newspaper, and discussed his work to establish a web news program for students.

Mr. McIntosh reviewed his work for curriculum revision within the English and Communications Department, which resulted in the creation of the communications major. He discussed his student recruitment efforts and the increased interest he has seen in the communications major. He reviewed his roles relative to the Ellen Bernstein Scholarship and as a member of the honors advisory board.

In response to questions regarding students evolving to social media vs. legacy type media, Mr. McIntosh commented his thoughts on the students' lack of a critical understanding of media providing the example of students knowing how to use certain aspects of social media, but not truly understanding coding and web development.

Mr. McIntosh discussed his work around VR storytelling through education to journalism, and the partnership with the Berkshire Innovation Center.

In response to a question from Trustees regarding the absence of a Ph.D. on Mr. McIntosh's resume, Mr. McIntosh noted that his progress toward degree completion continues. He stated that there had been issues with his institutional review board that resulted in a hold up and that he should be offering his defense by the end of 2021.

President Birge commented on the tenure process noting that Mr. McIntosh had been notified that a degree was needed before submitting materials for tenure. He also reminded attendees of contractual obligations as outlined in article 20 which state that a Ph.D. is a requirement of employment and at the time of hire in 2015, Mr. McIntosh agreed to a one-year completion of this degree.

Mr. McIntosh explained there was also an issue in the IRB process that resulted in alteration to the research work and removal of some interviews to address the IRB issue. IRB approval is pending as netnographic work was provided in place of ethnographic work which eliminated privacy issues. He further explained that as he became involved in a new major, and coauthored a text book, he allowed this work to precede his work toward degree completion.

Dr. Wang reviewed his position with the College as an assistant professor in the Computer Science Department. He discussed the research on the internet including wireless communications and software used to actively manage large networks.

He discussed his research prior to joining MCLA and his work sponsored by NASA and the USAF. He reviewed the list of papers he has published and the research he continues to conduct as a member of the College. To date, Dr. Wang has 40 citations for publications.

Dr. Wang reviewed his involvement as a reviewer of peer research and his efforts to lead the creation of an Information Technology concentration in the Computer Science Department. His work includes the design of over 50 hands on projects that he believes deepens the understanding for students.

Dr. Wang discussed his role as advisor and his committee service for College governance. He reviewed his work relative to the development of an IT minor and assisting faculty with the redesign of the electrical engineering program.

In response to questions regarding the redesign of the electrical engineering concentration, Dr. Wang highlighted the basic requirements for electrical engineering and his work with members of a local company to design a program that is compatible with business needs.

Trustee Reilly strongly encouraged Dr. Wang to pursue the process of becoming a senior member of IEEE, and becoming a fellow based on the work that he has done.

Faculty members departed the meeting.

Initiatives and Updates

VP Glejzer provided an overview of the College's return to in-person teaching highlighting the preparation work of Dean Janis and former VP Wootters. In-person learning and the classroom experience were prioritized and very few courses were designed for virtual and/or online delivery.

There have been some complexities to arise around faculty seeking exemptions to teach online. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, and all requests made for exemptions not related to religious or medical reasons have been denied. Faculty members at MCLA have been willingly accepting of the vaccine and masking mandates with a 99% rate of vaccination among this group.

Students requesting to participate in courses via online methods have been required to make the request through the College's accommodation process. Reasonable accommodations are made where possible.

VP Glejzer discussed the use of Canvas software and how it can be used to inform online learning. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty use of Canvas was under 50%. At this point in time all faculty have had experience with Canvas and this allows students to enter a class experience with some consistency. Building upon this will be explored as opportunities are considered.

MCLA received NECHE limited approval to offer up to 50% of our courses in an online environment. While the in-person classroom experience remains a priority for undergraduate study, online is useful in the DGCE space as an application to offer the College's MBA program fully online will be submitted in the coming months.

VP Glejzer provided other examples the pandemic has had on teaching, and the ability for faculty to enhance learning opportunities for students.

International study programming was discussed with additional efforts within the division being placed on expanding these opportunities for students.

Career Services will begin reporting to the VP of Academic Affairs. There has been a long-standing position opening in the department which provides an opportunity to expand career services for students. opportunities.

In response to questions regarding international study, VP Glejzer stated the need for time to develop international partners and to work with faculty who have connections that exist already with faculty in other institutions who can help advance this work at MCLA.

President Birge commented on the College's existing international study program which consists largely of travel study programs, and the longer-term experience program that VP Glejzer has presented. He also suggested that when developing this broader program, faculty should be considered for opportunities to instruct internationally.

It was noted that international study programs for the spring semester have been canceled as a result of safety considerations.

Other Business

VP Glejzer stated that discussions continue with the Education Department to address the latest review and recommendations by DHE.

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 9:50 a.m.