



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of February 2, 2024
MS Teams
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Brenda Burdick, Chair, John Barrett, Mohan Boodram

Members Absent

Frederick Keator, Denise Marshall

Others in Attendance

James Birge, President, Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

All participants attended virtually.

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 via audio/video-conference, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees with Committee Chair Burdick presiding was called to order at 8:32 a.m.

Commencement Speaker and Honorary Degree Recipients

President Birge began the discussion of commencement speaker and honorary degree candidates for the Class of 2024 Commencement exercises.

Dr. Katherine Foster Warren '82 was invited to serve as commencement speaker as recommended in the prior meeting of this committee. However, Dr. Warren is unavailable and declined the invitation. An invitation to preside as commencement speaker was extended to, and accepted by, Ms. Shannon Holsey, President of the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians.

Candidate names for consideration as recipients of an honorary degree from MCLA were provided, and solicited from Trustees, in advance of the meeting. As is customary, the commencement speaker is included in the list of recommendations. While the commencement speaker selection resides with the President, the awarding of honorary degrees is decided by the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Barrett expressed concern with the process of notification and selection of commencement speaker and candidates for an honorary degree. The President's Office maintains a perpetual list of candidates recommended for honorary degree consideration. This list comes from many sources including, but not limited to, past recommendations from Executive Committee and Board of Trustees meetings, individual trustees, staff, alumni relations, and the President. Dr. Birge commented on the candidate selection and expressed the importance of diversity in the candidates to ensure they represent the College's student body.

Trustee Barrett reviewed his letter of recommendation nominating Anne Nemetz-Carlson to be considered as an honorary degree recipient. He stated his support for Senator Paul Mark, Brigadier General Jeannine Ryder, and Ms. Shannon Holsey.

Chair Burdick remarked on the full list of candidates presented and stated her support for Ms. Holsey, Senator Mark, Ms. Ryder, and Ms. Nemetz-Carlson.

Trustee Boodram commented on the candidates stating his agreement with those put forward in the materials provided. He expressed concern with the focus on local candidates considering the College's mission as a state-wide institution. In response, Dr. Birge provided more information on the nomination of Mr. Brian Boyles, Executive Director of Mass Humanities.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, with no further discussion, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to recommend that MCLA's Board of Trustees approve Shannon Holsey, Paul Mark, Brian Boyles, and Anne Nemetz-Carlson as recipients of an Honorary Doctorate to be awarded at the Class of 2024 Commencement exercises.

With no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:49 a.m.