



MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

MINUTES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

February 13, 2025

**Murdock Hall, Rm 208, 375 Church St., North Adams, MA
and Zoom Audio/Video Conference**

Trustees in attendance:

Mohan Boodram*	Jean Clarke-Mitchell	Denise Marshall
John Barrett III*	William Garrity	Darlene Rodowicz
Brenda Burdick	Frederick Keator*	Yvonne Spicer*

Trustees Absent:

Buffy Lord

MCLA Staff in attendance:

James F. Birge	President
Lynette Bond	Dean, Division of Graduate & Continuing Education (DGCE)
Jana Boyer	Director of Enrollment Operations
Joseph DaSilva	Vice President for Administration & Finance
Jason Canales	Assistant Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research
Curt Cellana*	Comptroller
Carolyn Dehner	Dean of Academic Affairs
Jennifer Dix *	Budget Manager
Richard Glejzer	Provost
Kelli Kozak	Clerk
Joshua Mendel	Chief of Staff
Ara Phoenixx	Program Coordinator for Gender & Sexuality
Jeannette Smith*	Vice President of Student of Affairs
Robert Ziomek	Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Other in Attendance:

Sajaira Hudson '25	Student
Elizabeth Frost*	Interim Title IX Administrator, Grand River Solutions

*Denotes virtual 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 Board of Trustees of Massachusetts

College of Liberal Arts met on February 13, 2025 with Chair Brenda Burdick presiding. Chair Burdick called the meeting to order at 5:30p.m.

Chair Burdick reviewed the items in the consent agenda as presented and asked if there were items in the meeting materials that members wish to be removed from consent and discussed individually. Hearing none, Chair Burdick then asked for corrections to the minutes as provided from the prior meetings and reports listed on the agenda. Minutes should be amended to note: Dr. Mendel was the clerk for the Academic Affairs meeting, not Ms. Lescarbeau. Also, President Birge was present for all meetings. He had been marked absent on some.

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

- VOTED:** To approve the consent agenda as presented noting the above amendments
- i. Board of Trustees Minutes (October 24, 2024 and December 12, 2024)
 - ii. Academic Affairs (December 11, 2024 and January 29, 2025)
 - iii. Student Affairs Committee (January 30, 2025)
 - iv. Executive Committee of the Board (no meeting)
 - v. Enrollment Management Committee (February 3, 2025)
 - vi. Fiscal Affairs Committee (January 28, 2025)

Title IX Training

Chair Burdick introduced Dr. Elizabeth Frost the Interim Title IX Coordinator and Equal Opportunity Administrator from Grand River Solutions who presented Title IX training as required to the Board.

Dr. Frost reviewed Title IX and Clery Act history as well as noting the 2020 definition renewal on January 9, 2025. She then detailed what behaviors and prohibited conduct are covered under equal opportunity act and definitions of those as well as what classes are protected. She detailed obligations, goals and jurisdictions and noted remedies and support available. .

She further noted reporting, investigation, hearing, determination, appeal and formal resolution processes and what constitutes a formal complaint. She also explained the informal resolution process and the third option which the complainant is choosing not to move forward with the option to revisit in the future. Supportive measures are still offered.

Dr. Frost detailed the roles in the investigative process and also reporting responsibilities and ways to report. Dr. Frost noted the resources available on campus as well as our connections to Elizabeth Freeman and Brien Centers and our EAP. She provided their contact info as well. There were questions from the Trustees on process and also the roll back to 2020 requirements. Chair Burdick and the Trustees thanked Dr. Frost for her presentation and she left the meeting.

Strategic Plan Review and Action

Ms. Boyer, Mr. Connelly and Dr. Dehner presented on changes as requested by the Trustees. After the board retreat the recommended changes to the strategic plan have been incorporated. Goal 1 was updated to expand student population and outreach to politicians. They also added language regarding support for neurodivergent students and campus climate. There were also minor changes to voice to create a cohesive document. They were also cognizant of language structure around program directives. Based on the recommendations of the President and the Strategic Planning Committee, Chair Burdick call for a motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented in our Board Materials. Discussion followed on the reporting and tracking process. President Birge noted that he and the chair will update board on an ongoing basis and there will also be a cross-campus team who supports the implementation.

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

VOTED: To approve the Strategic Plan as presented

Chair Burdick thanked the Committee for their work on this process. President Birge also noted that there was a large committee, and it was a significant project for our staff.

Faculty, Staff & Students Update

President Birge then introduced the Faculty, Staff & Students Update. Having already heard from Faculty in our Board Development Session, Chair Burdick welcomed student Sajaira Hudson to discuss the First Gen Student Committee and Dean Lynette Bond to discuss current programming in our Division of Graduate and Continuing Education.

First Gen Student Committee

Student Sajaira Hudson

Ms. Hudson noted that she is a Senior major theatre, planning to grad in 25, she has been a student leader and enjoys making change and participating in campus leadership. She focuses on first gen student life and that it is an open and recognizable part of our student body. She also noted the positives of a liberal arts education and its impact on her as well as the positives of the campus community.

Discussion followed regarding student engagement, leadership, personal growth as a student. Ms. Hudson also noted her long-term goal is education and performing arts. In response to a question from President Birge, Ms. Hudson detailed potential improvements to campus life – she noted that the school supports students, but also there are challenges with a small school. She also noted potential for communications improvements particularly in promoting events.

DGCE Programming

Dean Lynette Bond

Dean Bond detailed DGCE programs and focus for growth. She detailed new technology, marketing campaigns, new graduate catalog, significant web updates and Canvas software on boarding. The Master of Education program is largest with 60 students. They are focused on emergency licensure upgrades to full licenses. They are also working with Foundation on

potential for funding for this program. Other programs included MBA, Leadership CAGS, Dual enrollment and early college with the high schools. Summer classes are another area of strength. Plans for future include expansion to region outside the Berkshires

Fiscal Report

Trustee Marshall then provided a review of the fiscal reporting from the January 28th Fiscal Affairs committee:

1. Shaun Heimann, First Vice President, Francis Investment Consulting Group, Inc. of Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network presented how the college's investment portfolios have been performing over the past six months. The main investment account started with \$10M and has grown to \$12M. The other account that started with \$2M is estimated to generate approximately \$285K in interest income through Dec 25.
2. Sean LeBlanc, Vice President, Adams Community Investment Services presented on how the 3-month ladder U.S Treasury Securities have been performing. Our initial investment of \$6M has grown to \$6.5M.
3. VP DaSilva presented the FY25 Budget Actual report. As of December 31, 2024 the budget is tracking slightly down to projections due to timing issues and negative variance in tuition and fees. Lower enrollment of 31 students for the fall and lower enrollment for the spring semesters will put pressure on the budget for the remainder of the year.
4. Mr. DaSilva also presented the FY25 forecast budget projection revealing the effects of lower enrollment for both fall and spring semesters, and projected savings in expense items with a projection of a \$447,000 shortfall at year end. The staff is working on making adjustments during the year so that by year end there will be a balanced budget.
5. VP DaSilva also reviewed the three remaining capital facilities improvements projects that will be completed by this March. This will exhaust all the remaining funds in the FY24-28 DCAMM Capital Repairs.

The Trustees then had various questions on the Fiscal Report. It was discussed that TRIO and Success funds provide some support. TRIO is uncertain as it is a federal grant. There are other grants that may provide budget relief.

Discussion of activities to reduce budget shortfall, adding revenue sources, and controlling costs. Projection on potential loss of federal funds. Financial Aid is an area of deep potential impact. It remains unclear what the outcome is for federal funding but we continue to monitor. Pres Birge noted that we are working with private donors to discuss this impact as well.

President's Report: President Birge then presented the President's Report:

Welcome Kelli Kozak as new Secretary to the Board and Executive Assistant to the President

Campagna Kleefeld Center for Creativity Update

- Agreement signed
- First distribution to MCLA Foundation in March
- Delegation meeting January 21st
- Neighborhood meeting on January 30

- Groundbreaking in Fall, working with architects

Trustee Barret asked if it has been approved by Trustees. The agreement has been approved by the Foundation as a separate entity and the owner of the project but not the MCLA trustees. Trustee Barrett noted a state law that requires the Trustees to approve a gift to the college. President Birge will follow up on the legal requirements.

There was further discussion that Gallery 51 programming will continue but the physical space will no longer be rented. There is a benefit to bringing the operations to campus for students.

Trustee Garrity noted a very positive student response to the gift overall. Trustee Barrett noted that he felt he was not fully informed on benefit to students.

Board Nominations - Expiring terms include: Barrett, Boodram, Keator, Marshall. PENC is Meeting in March to review new nominees.

Executive Orders – President Birge noted there is confusion and anxiety on campus based on current federal orders, similar at other area colleges. The Communications Task Force was created to help with the flow of information to students and campus and to provide supporting communications.

Success Funds – Must be spent by end of September 25. These funds allow us to support emergency funds for students as well as staff positions for student support (Ass't Dir 1st gen, success coaches, academic advisers). It also includes transportation and housing, technology upgrades that benefit students such as accessibility upgrades to webpage. The Governor's FY26 budget includes SUCCESS funding.

State EO/Title IX plan - Executive orders require reversion to 2020 guidance – we had to immediately revert our website to the 2020 guidelines. DHE is working on uniform guidance for Boards on approving reversion to 2020, we anticipate having guidance on April.

President Birge also noted the faculty speakers from the development sessions. These strategies create a distinct form of education that allows us to engage students more deeply. Tenure supports them in long term development. He also detailed the “Breaking Bread” program by student Esmeray Smith and how programs like this integrate liberal arts ideals and are so important.

President Birge noted that a brief reception will be held in the MERC - Multicultural Education Resource Center after the meeting.

Chair's Report

Chair Burdick then presented the Chair's Report noting that Chair Boodram is in conversation with Dr. Mel Netzhammer, Chancellor at Washington State University – Vancouver, as the external consultant for the President's 5-year evaluation. We expect to come to a final agreement with Dr. Netzhammer in the coming weeks. Once there are more details we will share it with the Board.

Chair Burdick asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. Hearing none she requested a motion to adjourn. Upon motion duly made and seconded following a roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:16p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelli Kozak
Secretary to the Board of Trustees