

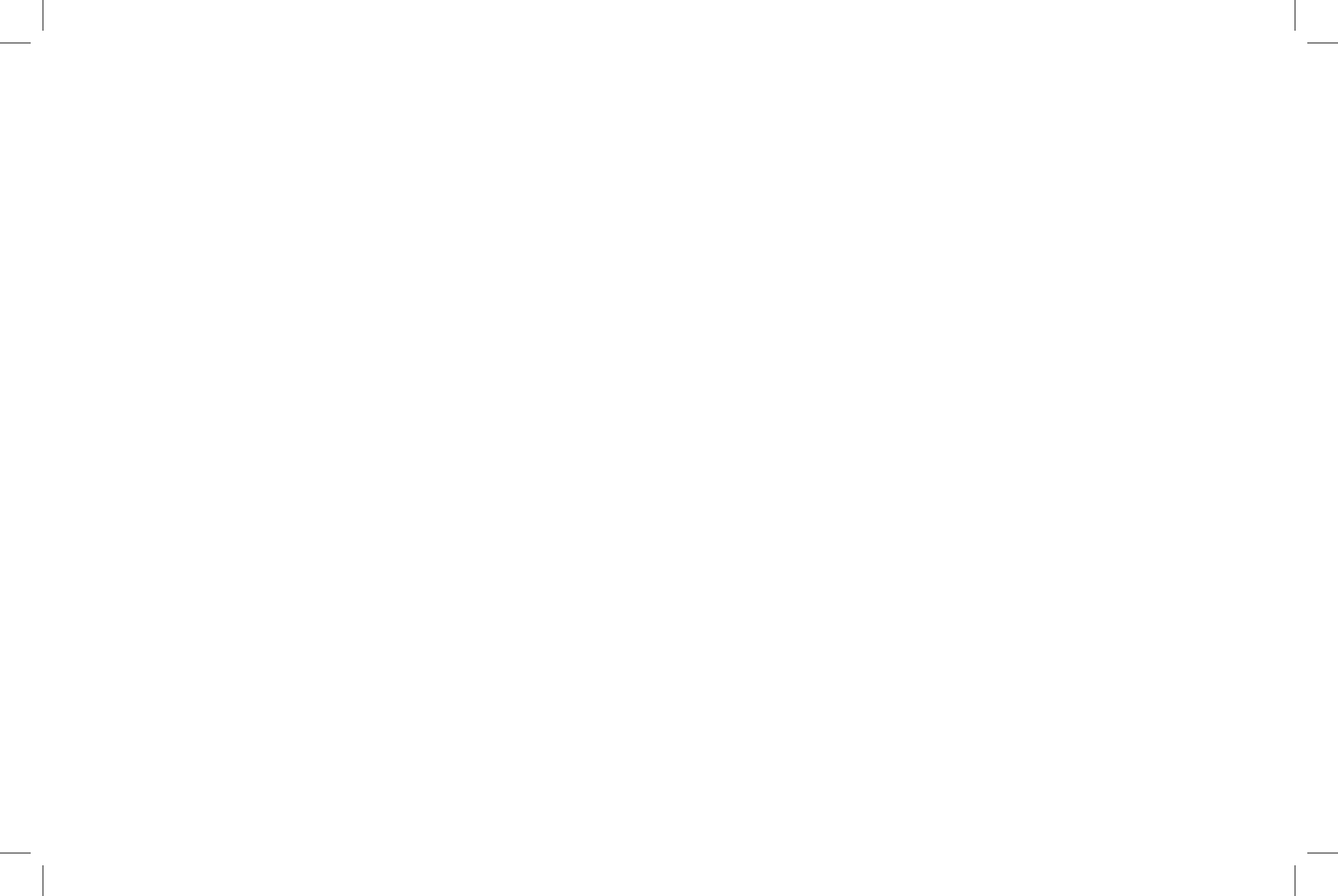


20  
26

127TH ANNUAL

**MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
COMMENCEMENT**

SATURDAY, MAY 16 | 11 A.M.  
AMSLER CAMPUS CENTER  
NORTH ADAMS, MA



## Processional

**Opening Performance** ..... *Don't Stop Me Now* by Queen  
Naomi Blake, Matthew Boulware McKnight, Howard Brown, Rory DiVenuto,  
Helen Kahn, Alexia Moses, Kathleen Najarian, Jaden Nesmith, and Dylan Schenck

**Greetings** ..... Dr. James F. Birge, *President*  
Eva Bassallo, *Class of 2026*  
Peter Fekete, *Master of Education 2026*

**Conferring of Honorary Degrees** ..... Dr. James F. Birge, *President*

**Commencement Address** ..... Michael Bobbitt  
President & CEO of Opera America

**Presentation of Candidates** ..... Provost Richard Glejzer

**Closing** ..... Dr. James F. Birge, *President*

## Recessional

## TRADITION OF THE GATES

Historically, European universities were often located in walled cities or towns, requiring students to pass through gates or arches to enter the university grounds. The gates symbolized the transition from the secular world to the world of learning, marking a crucial milestone in a student's academic journey. This tradition was carried over when universities were founded in the United States, and over time, the practice of passing through the gates became associated with two essential events: Convocation and Commencement.

Convocation, held at the beginning of the academic year, is a formal ceremony welcoming new students to the college community. Commencement, held at the end of the academic year, is a graduation ceremony where students receive their degrees and are recognized for their academic achievements. Passing through the gates at Convocation and Commencement serves as a symbolic way of marking the beginning and end of a student's academic journey, reminding them of the significance of education and the role that universities play in shaping individuals and society.

Today, this tradition continues at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and passing through the campus gates remains a profound and deeply meaningful ritual for students past and present. In 1894 the institution was founded as the North Adams Normal School to provide teacher training to students in North Adams. The first education teachers who attended the Normal School passed through the gates of Murdock Hall, the original North Adams Normal School building that still stands on the MCLA campus today.

As MCLA has grown and evolved over the years, the long-standing gate procession ceremony at Convocation and Commencement has remained a paramount component of the institution's identity. The gates of Murdock Hall serve as a reminder of MCLA's roots in teacher education, the important role that the college has played in the Commonwealth, and the transformative power of a liberal arts education.

# GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

To the members of the class of 2026:

Congratulations on reaching this milestone achievement in your educational lives, receiving your college degree!

You came to MCLA during a time of great change and uncertainty in the world, and you stayed the course. Throughout your time as an MCLA student, you have shown us your grit, determination, and resilient spirit. You have overcome challenges, made lifelong friends, discovered your purpose, and grown both personally and professionally into the amazing individuals you are today. I am honored that MCLA was a part of that journey and proud that we provided this pathway into the next phase of your lives.

This commencement holds special meaning for me as well. After many years of proud service to this institution, this is my final commencement as president of MCLA. I can think of no better way to close this chapter than by celebrating all of you. You represent everything this college stands for, and watching you cross this stage fills me with tremendous pride and optimism for the future.

Today I welcome you into MCLA's family of alumni. This is a strong and knowledgeable group that will be your connection to your years at MCLA. I encourage you to use the various networks available to you as part of our Alumni Relations program.

Please also take a moment to thank your Trailblazer Team, faculty, staff, family, friends, and even yourself, for the years of support and hard work to get to this place. It is my hope that you take that sense of teamwork and camaraderie to share with others as you move forward in your chosen path.

On behalf of the Trustees, faculty, staff, and administrators of MCLA, I offer my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for a bright and impactful future.

James F. Birge, Ph.D.  
*President*

# GREETINGS FROM THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION

Dear MCLA Class of 2026,

It seems most appropriate to begin this message with, “Congratulations!”, on behalf of MCLA’s faculty. We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments. AND this day is more than a celebration of what you have accomplished, what you have earned through your hard work and willingness to challenge yourself. It is also a celebration of what you have given to this community. And so this message is both “Congratulations!” and “Thank you!”

Thank you for pushing yourself to your limits, and sometimes beyond; for showing up to class and engaging in hard conversations; for making time to think and explore while working to support yourself and your loved ones; for competing on athletic fields, performing in the theatre, crafting works of art, music, writing, and research; for bringing your full self to this community, with all of your curiosity and questions, your demands and complaints and laughter and joy. Thank you for creating spaces of belonging for yourselves and for those around you. Thank you for challenging us - your professors - and MCLA as an institution. Without you, we would be less, in so many ways.

Because of what you’ve gained at and given to MCLA, you are part of this community, and you will remain so. You are entering a world full of challenges, of pain and heartache and countless injustices that you will not be able to fix all by yourself. And you do not have to. Lean on each other. Connect with those around you. Ask for help when you need it. Give yourself time and space to dream. And then, in small steps, begin to build that dream into reality. None of this is easy. And, in the wise words of Octavia E. Butler, visionary, dreamer, and builder of worlds: “There’s no single answer that will solve all of our future problems. There’s no magic bullet. Instead, there are thousands of answers – at least. You can be one of them if you choose to be.”

With gratitude and hope,  
Kerri Leyda Nicoll, MDiv, MSW, PhD  
*Professor of Social Work*  
*President, MCLA Faculty Association*

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With gratitude and humility, we respectfully acknowledge that Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts stands on the ancestral homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, who are the Indigenous peoples of this land. Following tremendous hardship after being forced from their valued homelands, they continued as a sovereign Tribal Nation in Wisconsin, which is where they reside today. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

— Land Acknowledgment from the  
Stockbridge-Munsee Community



# HONOR SOCIETIES AND SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

## ALANA

Kente Cloth

## ALL ACADEMIC SCHOLAR ATHLETES

Gold Sash with MCLA and MASCAC Insignias

## ALPHA CHI NATIONAL COLLEGE HONOR SOCIETY

Gold Medallion on a Blue and Green Cord

## ALPHA LAMBDA DELTA FIRST YEAR NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Gold, Red, White Cords

## CHI ALPHA SIGMA NATIONAL COLLEGE ATHLETE HONOR SOCIETY

Bronze Medallion

## DELTA MU DELTA BUSINESS HONOR SOCIETY

Purple, Gold Cords

## MULTICULTURAL ADVANCEMENT

Black, Green, Red, and Yellow multi-color Cords

## PHI ALPHA THETA HISTORY PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY

Madonna Red and Blue with Multi-Colors  
Tassel Cords

## PI GAMMA MU HONOR SOCIETY

Blue and White Cords

## PI SIGMA ALPHA POLITICAL SCIENCE HONOR SOCIETY

Red, White, and Black Multi-Colored Tassel Cords

## PSI CHI PSYCHOLOGY HONOR SOCIETY

Gold and Blue Cords

## RHO PI SIGMA NATIONAL RESIDENCE HALL HONORARY

Blue, White Cords

## SIGMA PI SIGMA PHYSICS HONOR SOCIETY

White and Green Cord

## SIGMA TAU DELTA ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

Red and Black

## STUDENT PHILANTHROPY PROGRAM

Blue and Gold Cord

## WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES MINOR

Purple Cords

## STUDENT VOLUNTEER

Silver Cords

## STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Red and Blue

# HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

## **Mohan Boodram** | Doctor of Public Service

Mohan Boodram has dedicated more than three decades to expanding access and equity in higher education, and his ties to MCLA run deep. He served as a Trustee of the College for thirteen years, including three years as Chair of the Board, and continues his engagement with the institution as a member of the MCLA Foundation Board of Directors. Throughout his tenure, he was a steadfast advocate for affordability, inclusion, and the enduring value of a public liberal arts education.

Boodram's professional career spans senior leadership positions at some of the nation's most distinguished academic institutions. He served as Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid at the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Associate Dean for Enrollment and Student Services at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at Harvard Medical School. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics from Yale University and a Master of Arts in Statistics from Harvard University.

## **Dr. Mary K. Grant** | Doctor of Public Service

Dr. Mary K. Grant is a nationally recognized leader in public higher education and a proud alumna of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, where she served as president for thirteen years. In that role, she advanced civic learning, student success, and institutional growth, leaving a lasting impact on the College and the North Adams community. She currently serves as president of Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), the nation's only independent public college of art and design, where she champions the essential role of creativity in education and civic life.

Dr. Grant has also served as chancellor of the University of North Carolina Asheville and as president and CEO of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. A first-generation college graduate, she has spent her career expanding access and opportunity and is a passionate advocate for equity, inclusion, and the transformative power of public higher education. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Welfare Policy from Brandeis University and has received honorary degrees from Williams College and Eastern Connecticut State University.

# HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENT & COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

## **Michael Bobbitt** | Doctor of Fine Arts

Michael J. Bobbitt is a nationally recognized arts executive, producer, and artist whose career bridges public policy, organizational transformation, and creative practice. He serves as president and CEO of OPERA America, the national service organization dedicated to supporting opera companies and artists across the country. Before joining OPERA America, Bobbitt served as executive director of the Mass Cultural Council, where he led strategy and operations for a \$29.7 billion creative economy, secured more than \$60 million in COVID relief funding for Massachusetts arts organizations, and successfully advocated for the arts to be embedded in statewide health, education, and economic policy.

Prior to his public service, Bobbitt led two producing theaters, including New Repertory Theatre in Massachusetts and Adventure Theatre MTC in Maryland, where he commissioned more than 50 new works and pioneered sensory-friendly and autism-inclusive performances that became a national model. An award-nominated playwright, director, and choreographer, his work has been produced at the Kennedy Center, Ford's Theatre, Washington National Opera, La Jolla Playhouse, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company, among others. He is the recipient of the Kennedy Center Gold Medallion and has been invested in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. He holds an M.B.A. in arts innovation and a B.A. summa cum laude in interdisciplinary studies, with executive education at Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Business School. MCLA's conferral of the Doctor of Fine Arts continues an honor previously bestowed upon him by Dean College.

## ART

Shyane Gladu  
Jenni Murphy

Enaya A. Ogletree  
Max Sweeney

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## ARTS MANAGEMENT

Conall Eoni Mannion  
Jonny Tobey

Stephanie Trotto

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## BIOLOGY

Elizabeth Brown  
Lyn Corbett  
Cinderella Khoury

Abigail Kline  
Hailey Peabody  
Grace Stewart

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## BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Cameron Alibozek  
Edward Bonney  
Sean Callahan  
Eleana Casey  
Michael P. Cellana  
Stephen Leonard Donnelly II  
Makayla M. Duquette  
Joshua Hemstock  
Brandon Hyte  
Kumar Lewis

Jacob James Malburg  
Troy Andrew Michalak  
Connor Murray  
Connor Nagy  
Averin Paradise  
Jaxen Potter  
Thomas Rice  
Stephen Wayne Riley Jr.  
Ryan Rush-Booth  
Sukeigh Sukiennik

## CHEMISTRY

Tyler Patrick Pettit

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## COMMUNICATIONS

Anthony Andolina  
Tonimarie Basil  
Ainslie Lafko

Benjamin MacFadzen  
Kyle Manzolini  
Lucas Smith

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## COMPUTER SCIENCE

Brandon Scott Barde  
Ryan J. Frazer  
William Garrity  
Bryan M Hall

Declan O'Brien  
Ella Smith  
Kaylee Strayer  
Dakota Turney

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## EDUCATION

Abby Bird  
Maggie Helene Closinski  
Kionna Hayes

Lauren Kimball  
Mary Joanne Kipp  
Erin Marie Streck

## ENGLISH

Caitie “Kai” Amuso  
Ashlyn Faith Bill  
Colby Crawford  
Quinn Goldstein Daugherty  
Annemargaret Furgal  
Elizabeth Vickery Haight  
James Julian  
Lauren Kimball  
Joseph King  
Freya Langley

Matthew R. Lewellyn  
Laura Lewis  
Michael Lynch  
Avery Manzolini  
Brigette Marcil  
Juno G.A. Post  
Elliott Pratt  
Natalie Rowan  
Clarke Stading  
Casey Tereza Vieira

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## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Eric DuPont  
William Flynn  
Austin Meyette  
Zachary Ryan Morin

Mo Piantoni  
Madison Pratt  
Madeleine Straw  
Hudson L. Todd

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## HEALTH SCIENCES

Francesca Alcime  
Mariama Bayo  
Emma Beckwith  
Samantha Depson  
Eva Raine Eberwein

Michael Harris  
Stephanie Laconto-Doherty  
Audrey Melson  
Simeon Jericho Mercier  
Jaci E. Tart

## HISTORY

Veronia Bella  
George Gratton

Zachary Turner

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## INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Norah Barber  
Andrew Callahan  
Tea Caravello  
Monica Jean Carpenter  
Kaiya Cocliff  
Ella Formel  
Porscha Hamilton

Rosaliz Hernandez-O'Neil  
Evan Hines  
Chelsea Krutiak  
Catherine Patriquin  
Kristopher Safford  
Anna Howland White

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## MATHEMATICS

Sam Broderick

Tania Reppucci

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## MUSIC, INDUSTRY AND PRODUCTION

Jacob Bluestein  
Helen Kahn

Joseph King  
Adam Loubsky-Lonergan

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## PHILOSOPHY

Evie Ross

## PHYSICS

Sam Broderick  
Tea Caravello

Eric DuPont

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## POLITICAL SCIENCE

Allie Bayer  
Charles Edward Tumavicus Darling

Connor Diehl  
Daniel Izyk

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## PSYCHOLOGY

Ty Jacob Aubin  
Joseph Matthew Barboza  
Eva Bassallo  
Mackenzie Beckwith  
Kevin Blake Jr.  
Katherine Burdick  
Callie Cook  
Blake Cribbs  
Abby Farnum  
Justine Lee

Emma Elaine Matthews  
Jaydence Meribela  
Shannon O'Brien  
Zabion Powell  
Connor Rarick  
Haley Salzarulo  
Jayna Marie Schmohl  
Gianna Tarantino  
Craig Williams

## RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGY

Makayla M. Canino  
Darius Ahmad Cicero  
Lily Angelina Fortin  
Cidnee Frymire  
Thomas Hickey  
Jasmine Hooper

Rylee Joy  
Allyson Elizabeth Krzanik  
Averie McGrath  
Katrina L. Nakaya  
Alexis Pingelski

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## SOCIOLOGY

Francesca Alcime  
Emily Castle  
Cacey Desruisseaux  
Paige Dufur  
Logan Leja

Angelle Mann-Russell  
Ali Ponder  
Christopher Gessit Vargas  
Michael Scott Wormuth Jr  
Kacie Lynn Yerrick

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## THEATRE

Howard Brown  
Kathleen Elizabeth Najarian  
Max Murray

Ahmed Moustafa Reda  
Jaden Nesmith

## CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED GRADUATE STUDIES

Daniel J. Gibbs  
Olivia Marie Harrison  
Hudson L. Todd  
Colin Klepetar

Whitney Ann McRobbie  
Marie L. Prizzi  
Ivelisse A Valdez Cuesta

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## MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Sarah Lipinski  
Masooma Mukhtari  
Kelly Ott  
Lloyd Peters

Paul Roeder Jr.  
Thomas Thurston  
Aleasia Yeaton

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## MASTER OF EDUCATION

Ryan P. Biros  
Alexandra Kjeldgaard Case  
Sam Davis  
Peter Malcolm Fekete  
Rebecca Geary  
Erin Kinnas

Richellmarie E. Luckey  
Stacie Morris  
Brittany Schilling  
Erin Marie Smith  
Amanda Terzigni  
Alexis Rose Vachereau

*Conferral of a degree occurs when the registrar finalizes the student's academic record and confirms that all requirements have been satisfied. Participation in the Commencement ceremony does not constitute conferral of the degree. Similarly, inclusion of a student's name in such publications as the Commencement program does not confirm eligibility for the degree.*





# MCLA

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
375 CHURCH STREET  
NORTH ADAMS, MA 01247