



**Minutes of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Thursday, September 10, 2015
Murdock 218**

The following Trustees were present:

Tyler Fairbank, Chair
Will Dudley, Vice Chair
Mohan Boodram
Lisa Chamberlain
JD Chesloff
Shirley Edgerton
Susan Gold
Buffy Lord
Denise Marshall
Nicholas Hernigle, Student Trustee

Others present:

Jim Clemmer, Interim President
Denise Richardello, Executive Vice President
Bernadette Alden, Director of Marketing and Communications
Cynthia Brown, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Laura Brown, Director of Fiscal Affairs
Marianne Drake, Chief Advancement Officer and President, MCLA Foundation Inc.
Cathy Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs
Monica Joslin, Dean of Academic Affairs
Chuck Kimberling, Director of Facilities
Curt King, Chief Information Officer
Theresa O'Bryant, Associate Dean of Students
Jennifer Perkins, Director, Office of Trustee Relations,
MA Department of Higher Education
Steve Pesola, Web and Applications Manager
Beth Petri, Director of Financial Aid
Gina Puc, Director of Admission
James Stakenas, Vice President of Administration & Finance
Ginger Menard, Clerk

Complying with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and 15A, Section 9, and with a quorum present, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met at 5:30 p.m. at Murdock Hall on September 10, 2015 with Board Chair Fairbank presiding.

Chair Fairbank called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. He extended a welcome to Nicholas Hernigle, the Student Trustee for the coming year and Jennifer Perkins from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Approval of the Minutes of the June 4, 2015, Annual meeting of the Board of Trustees

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the June 4, 2015, meeting of the Board and all actions contained therein.

Approval of the Minutes of the July 9, 2015, meeting of the Executive Committee

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the July 9, 2015, meeting of the Executive Committee and all actions contained therein.

Approval of the Minutes of the August 8, 2015, meeting of the Board of Trustees

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the August 8, 2015, meeting of the Board and all actions contained therein.

Report and Approval of Minutes of the September 3, 2015, meeting of the Fiscal Affairs Committees

Trustee Marshall presented the report on behalf of the committee. There are three action items to bring before the full Board for a vote.

A budget for FY2016 has been submitted to the Board reflective of the current lack of funding for Collective Bargaining. Because of this gap, division budgets have been reduced by 5%, with the exception of Financial Aid, and a transfer from reserves is included in order to present a balanced budget.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the projected Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts budget for Fiscal Year 2016

Trustee Marshall reviewed some equipment needs on campus that will require the borrowing of additional funds. The College has recently retired some debt so a loan to cover these needs would not increase the debt load. The proposed borrowing will fund TV studio equipment, IT network equipment, Bowman Hall furniture, Physics Optics, and Fire Safety equipment for the Feigenbaum Center for Science & Innovation

The College has been approved by Berkshire Bank for a loan of up to \$1 million at an interest rate of 2.5%.

The College's total debt ratio including the proposed borrowing is below 2% which is well within the recommended state guidelines of a debt ration of less than 5%.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the borrowing of up to \$1 million from Berkshire Bank for recommended equipment needs

Trustee Marshall then presented an update on campus projects, including needed repairs to the Campus Safety Building, enhanced campus lighting, and expansion of the Fitness Center. These projects are critical to both Campus aesthetics and safety and require new capital. The total for these recommended projects is \$1,220,000. Funds will be available to borrow from the MSCBA in January 2016.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED: To approve the borrowing of \$1.2 million from the MSCBA to support campus projects

The FY15 4th quarter report showed both revenue and expenses within expected levels for the Fourth Quarter. The fiscal year ended with expenses slightly higher than revenue mostly as a result of the Governor's 9C cuts.

The College is undergoing a state audit as well with the auditors scheduled to return again in the fall.

In conjunction with PACE (Partnership to Advance Collaboration and Efficiency), Follett has been contracted as the bookstore vendor for all of the state universities. The contract includes metrics, goals, and price matching as well flexibility on open hours as determined by the College for special events.

Trustee Marshall shared that Jennifer Macksey, Director of Student Accounts, has accepted a new position and will be leaving MCLA. She extended her thanks to Jen for her exceptional work. Trustee Marshall then thanked Vice President Stakenas for his many years of steadfast service. He has been fiscally prudent and has been instrumental in establishing MCLA's solid financial footing noting including building of the College reserves from approximately \$150,000 to over \$13 million.

Trustee Chesloff added that a new member of the Fiscal Affairs Committee he found the information presented to be extremely detailed and transparent and detailed which provides a level of comfort to him, as a Trustee, knowing that the process is well thought out.

Chairperson's Report

Chair Fairbank extended his thanks on behalf of the Board to Interim President Clemmer for his work these last few weeks after stepping into the position on August 14.

Earlier today the College held a ribbon cutting for the newly renovated Bowman Hall. It was a terrific event and the culmination of 90 million invested in the campus over the last 10 years.

The Search Committee had its first meeting in August. David Mead-Fox of Korn Ferry will return to campus on September 24 to hold additional meetings with various campus constituencies. The committee will hold meetings again in October to review the pool of candidates and conduct the first round of confidential in-person interviews.

President's Report

Interim President Clemmer noted that he would provide a few brief updates and will then ask staff to present brief overviews on each of their divisions.

He offered his thanks to the many volunteers involved in making First Days a smooth and welcoming experience for incoming students and their families.

Returning to MCLA as Interim President he is reminded of the tremendously high quality of our faculty and staff. He announced that Lawrence (Larry) Behan will be joining the team as the new Vice President of Administration & Finance and shared that Jim Stakenas has offered his assistance, as needed, during the transition.

It is exciting to have Bowman Hall back on line and the students are taking advantage of all that the building has to offer.

There is a great deal of work being done regarding future programs as move forward to address the upcoming needs in the academic marketplace.

Interim President Clemmer shared his observations of the College's strengths and areas for improvement during his first few weeks in his position. Our strengths include a dedication to MCLA's mission and providing a strong liberal arts education, a strong sense of community, the extraordinary faculty and staff, and the high level of the student body including their energy to learn, diversity, and academic achievements

As improvements he would like to see more urgency around areas that need some change along willingness to change and adapt so that the College can be more receptive to the pace

of change and expectations of our students and their families. The focus must shift to being proactive rather than reactive.

Each division then provided a brief overview.

Academic Affairs

Vice President Brown and Dean Joslin shared that six new faculty have joined the College with five on tenure track and one terminal contract.

Program development remains a critical issue as we move forward. An Optics concentration in Physics will be added. A rolling three year plan for program development has been created in conjunction with the strategic planning cycle and available resources. A Health Sciences major is in process, the Business Department is looking at the development of one or two new majors, and the Education Department has developed a “4+1 program” which will allow students to immediately enter into a graduate program. In Fine & Performing Arts a dance minor is being developed in conjunction with colleagues from Williams College where they have a Dance Chair but no major.

A minor in Entrepreneurial Studies is being developed with the assistance of Dave Eve. This would be a program available to all other students regardless of their major.

A Retention Plan is in process with a focus on student success and persistence examining why students withdraw as well profiling the path of a successful student. A group of faculty and staff have met to evaluate retention data and create a plan with new goals and targets.

As part of the College’s increased retention efforts an additional hour per week as been included in the First Year Experience course to allow students to focus on transition issues. Students also now have the ability to access their grades at any point throughout the semester and we will continue to identify ways to use technology as a tool for teaching and advising.

Expanded advising efforts are being advanced in collaboration with CSSE and academic affairs and advising fellows are being established to serve as contacts for academic departments.

Trustee Chesloff encouraged that connections be made with local employers in conjunction with program development. He noted the forecast of jobs in the area, especially regarding engineering, and the importance of providing the necessary programs that will allow graduates to stay in the area.

Vice President Brown noted that this initial program development plan is based on resources already in place and that they are exploring the possibility of new programs, such as engineering, based on the reallocation of, or additional resources.

MCLA has model programs and a well-developed pipeline for teacher education. This will need to expand in the STEM fields as the state moves to a new four year math requirement and new science standards.

Administration & Finance

Vice President Stakenas shared the list of projects that were completed from the 2007 bond including the Feigenbaum Center for Science & Innovation, the renovation of Bowman Hall, and upgrades and planning on technology and infrastructure. The College is in a strong position for upcoming opportunities based on the foundation that has been set with the implementation of the Campus Master Plan and a strong working relationship with the Division of Capital Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). Curt King, Chief Information Officer, is in the process of drafting the next three year technology plan.

Vice President Stakenas expressed his great pride in working with such exceptional team including Laurie Brown, Curt King, and Chuck Kimberling along with his entire Administration & Finance staff.

Chair Fairbank offered his gratitude on behalf of the Board of Trustees for his service and dedication to MCLA and especially for his tenacity in his stewardship of the College's finances and obtaining of funding for its infrastructure. He noted that with the budget challenges over the years it is especially too impressive to have built a reserve.

Advancement

Marianne Drake, Chief Advancement Officer and President of the MCLA Foundation reported on behalf of the Advancement Office which encompasses fundraising, institutional advancement, alumni relations, and the MCLA Foundation.

Of note is the closing of the College's first Capital Campaign on June 30, 2015. The campaign exceeded its goal of \$22.5 million and raised \$30.5 million. She extend her gratitude to the Trustees for their unwavering support throughout the campaign and offer a special note of thanks to Trustee Susan Gold who was instrumental in the success of the campaign with her guidance and counsel.

The campaign not only brought in gifts but it raised the profile of the college as well. Though the capital campaign is over, the important job of fundraising has not ended. The focus will now be on the Unrestricted Scholarship Initiative and a Resource Development Committee will be established to assist with this important need.

The Advancement Office also works closely with Beth Petri, Director of Financial Aid, to steward the gifts and track endowed funds, an intensive process, and they are grateful for her partnership in this process.

Student Affairs

Vice President Holbrook shared that she has been at the College for just over 2 months joining a division that had established leadership for a long time. During the transition the staff not only kept things moving but they also stepped up and served in interim roles to keep the forward momentum. She especially wants to recognize Theresa O'Bryant, Celia Norcross, and Lyndsay Isham-Morton for their critical roles during this time.

MCLA's new Director of Athletics, Laura Mooney, has developed a "one team" concept to unite the various teams and has worked to increase the involvement of our athletes within the campus community.

The department also implemented the new requirement of education students on Title IX issues including sexual assault awareness and prevention. Students received training via software but the tracking of student completion was done manually. By July of 2015 only nine students had not yet complied with the training.

Student Affairs is collaborating with Academic Affairs to work in the critical issue of retention. As mentioned earlier an additional weekly seminar hour to the First Year Experience, providing another tool to connect students and assist in their non-academic transitions as well. Curriculum for the seminar is based on a survey of students and best practices and covers issues such as alcohol and drug education and additional Title IX education.

Vice President Holbrook will employ evidence based intentionality to determine additional needs and programs with a particular focus on high impact practices. This will also allow the freedom to move away from processes/programs that are not working or may need to evolve. She will also set up a series of informal lunches and dinners with smaller groups of first year students to engage with them and gather feedback about their experience.

Staff professional development will also be a focus this year and she is meeting with each staff member to understand their challenges goals for their areas as well as their personal goals.

External Relations & Enrollment Management

Executive Vice President Richardello reported on promotion of the College along with new student recruitment.

Current statistics show that 70% of perspective students identify potential colleges based on websites and that there around 3 to 5 seconds only to grab their interest. With this in mind Bernadette Alden, Director of Marketing & Communication, and Steve Pesola, Web & Applications Manager, have significantly overcalled the homepage to provide a more dynamic, up-to-date, and interactive experience. Academic Department pages have been updated and enhanced along with Admissions, Financial Aid, and other pages focused on perspective students. The communications team is continuing to work with various departments to ensure that all pages are updated and easy to navigate.

For 2015 the College welcomed 450 new students including transfers and readmits. 25% of these students have received academic merit scholarships.

Admissions met their application and acceptance goals but the yield of students selecting MCLA dropped due to various national trends including tuition discounts at private institutions, a higher rate of anticipated financial contribution by families, and students opting to stay closer to home. The optimal zone for most recruitment is students within a hundred mile radius. As the college age population in this region is decreasing Admissions will be expanding its recruitment footprint. We are also working on implementing transfer articulation agreements with community colleges in upstate NY.

In order to further identify why accepted students did not attend MCLA we contracted with Edu-Ventures to administer a student questionnaire. From this a number of issues were identified such as the website, campus facilities, the surrounding area, and the financial aid package.

As a follow up to Strategic Planning, campus focus groups were held to improve campus visits. As with website visits, students tend to make decisions about a campus they are visiting within the first 5 to 10 minutes of stepping on campus.

Interim President Clemmer thanked everyone for their reports. He reminded everyone that enrollment and retention cross all divisions. The goals of each division are aligned with strategic planning and we will continue to keep an eye on graduation rates as well to ensure that students who choose MCLA are successful.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 p.m.