



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

September 17, 2020
Murdock Hall Room 208
Audio/Video Conference

The following Trustees were present:

Mohan Boodram
John Barrett III
Brenda Burdick
JD Chesloff

Susan Gold
Frederick Keator
Karen Kowalczyk

Denise Marshall
Robert Reilly
Kathleen Therrien

MCLA staff in attendance:

President James Birge
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Ian Bergeron, Associate Dean of Information Technology
Gina Puc, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives

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 September 17, 2020 with Board Chair Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Executive Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of September 17, 2020

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Executive Committee of September 17, 2020. The committee reviewed the memorandum of understanding between the College and MCLA Foundation, Inc. The MOU, as presented, holds no changes from the prior MOU. The Committee voted to approve the MOU, and to authorize Chair Boodram to sign the MOU on behalf of MCLA.

Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of September 10, 2020

Trustee Reilly presented the report of the Enrollment Management Committee of September 10, 2020. The minutes of the September 10, 2020 meeting of the Enrollment Management Committee were read for the Trustees.

Fall 2020 undergraduate enrollment is at an 18% decrease from last year. This is predominately due to the after effects of the pandemic, and is in line with trends seen nationally at institutions like MCLA.

For new student recruitment, there were 1,862 applications received for Fall 2020. Of those, 1,379 students were accepted with 269 new students enrolling. Out of the 269 new students, 178 are first year and the remaining are transfer or reenrolled students. These number are in line with projections which take into account the uncertainty resulting from the pandemic.

MCLA's first time/full time student retention rate for the 2019 fall cohort was 73%.

An overview of the admissions funnel, which consists of many steps from developing leads and prospects, to acceptance and matriculation of students, was provided.

Priorities for the Enrollment Management division include equity and inclusion initiatives to review the financial aid awarding process and a proposal to conduct "test blind" awarding. The use of SAT score in consideration of applications has been suspended due to multiple COVID-19 related complications.

Student communications efforts will focus on providing a consistent experience for students throughout their college career. A master calendar of communications with students has been developed to align messages throughout the cycle.

The Committee heard an overview of recruitment plans for Fall 2021, which will primarily be conducted remotely due to pandemic restrictions.

In the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education program there are 69 students in four cohorts for Fall 2020. These programs are seeing the impact of employers reducing their expenses by eliminating tuition assistance for employees.

An update was provided on MCLA's financial aid student profile noting that the trend nationally is a decrease in FAFSA filings. The impact of unemployment due to the pandemic is anticipated to be seen in the 2020 FASFA applications that will be based on 2019 income.

The CARES Act distribution block grants occurred in July based on Pell eligibility. Management is carefully monitoring institutional aid spend and watching for fluctuations due to students moving to a fully remote platform.

A summary of the College's return to campus activity was provided. Enrollment at this point is stable having seen an 18% decline in total against a projection of 20%. Classrooms were outfitted with improved technology, and cleaning schedules and wayfinding signage placement are being refined as needed. To-date, there have been no major student conduct issues and there are no active cases of COVID on campus.

Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of September 15, 2020

Trustee Kowalczyk presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of September 15, 2020. The committee reviewed the 4th quarter FY20 report budget vs. actual variance. Net revenue was -\$722k against a budget of \$8k. The revenue deficit was the result of refunds given to students as the college pivoted to a remote learning environment.

The financial statements for the campus center renovation project were provide separate of the overall financial reports.

Trustee Kowalczyk reviewed the revenue variances and expenses. On the revenue side, state funding was over budget by \$730k. Fees were under budget by \$1.79m, of which \$1.5m was a result of student refunds that also saw offsetting costs as activities decreased. Grants income was over budget by \$294k and is related to skills capital and public safety grant expenses, and some offsetting grants of the new radiology program. Miscellaneous revenue line items include an Aramark grant of \$3m received in March 2019. There was an additional \$1.5m received from Aramark. This revenue will be recognized over 10 years.

On the expense side, the full-time employees line was under budget by \$654k mainly due to open positions, with related decreases in pension and insurance benefits. Travel was under budget by \$174k due to spring travel cancelations amid the pandemic. Special employee compensation was over budget by \$303k and is made up of part-time and adjunct positions. Work is underway with the registrar to bring this in line. Operational expenses were under budget by \$630k due in large part to reduced student meal expenses. Equipment purchases and IT expenses were over budget by \$715k in total. This includes the skills capital grant items for the radiology program, fall remote learning purchases, and security and outfitting of classrooms. Some expenses over \$50k will be capitalized.

The Committee reviewed the FY21 budget which is projected for a \$2.5m deficit. This budget is not changed from the budget as approved including the vote to use reserve funding up to \$2.5m. The 1st quarter was updated to include two months actuals and the remaining 10 months projections. There is a slight increase in enrollment, particularly in out of state students, which helped to offset a loss of residential students. Some flux in meal plans remains.

The campus center project was reviewed. Funding total was \$8.5m with actual costs of \$7.3m resulting in an expected profit of \$1.2m. Funding for this project includes MSCBA borrowings of approximately \$1m that was approved by the board in April 2019. This funding was not drawn upon. The Committee agreed to remain in a holding pattern for the MSCBA funds.

Trustees discussed further the MSCBA funding, the process for going to market to secure the bond funding, and whether or not the College should take on additional long-term debt. There is no urgency to go to the bond market for this borrowing; however, it is important to note that this

offering is part of three state institutions, not just MCLA. Options for debt restructure were discussed.

Small capital projects funded by DCAMM for \$975k were reviewed. These funds must be spent in FY21 and were supplemental FY20 funding. Various projects have been identified including the Freel Library roof which was previously funded at 80% and will now be fully funded.

The Committee heard an update on the current audits being conducted by the State and O'Connor & Drew. The state audit has been quiet and is taking longer than expected due to COVID related issues. This audit is a follow-up on deficiencies noted in the state audit performed three years ago in the areas of fixed assets, procurement credit card policies, and related internal controls. It was noted that fixed assets over \$1k must be tracked.

The fiscal audit by O'Connor & Drew is in process. At this point there are no comments or issues of concern and no major adjustments.

Trustee Keator expressed concern that he had not seen FY21 budget report prior to it being presented by the Fiscal Affairs Committee for Board approval.

Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of September 17, 2020

Trustee Chesloff presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of September 17, 2020. The committee time was spent largely discussing the impact of the pandemic on student residential living.

Students all reside in single units to help mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Meal plans have been modified to accommodate state guidelines and provide options for limited dining and to-go meals. All students were required to sign MCLA's Trailblazer Agreement that explains the student's responsibilities for maintaining as safe an environment as possible for all members of the campus community. Protocols for social distancing are being followed by students.

All residential students are required to participate in COVID-19 testing that began on arrival to campus at the start of the semester, continue weekly for the month of September, and then occur weekly for 20% of the student body, randomized, over the remainder of the semester on campus.

Guidelines have been established for clubs and organizations and must abide by state guidelines for gathering size. The fitness center is open, but is seeing low utilization likely because of good weather.

The group also discussed student mental health.

The newly revised student code of conduct program was presented. Updates were to be done to review for best practices, ensure students better understand the conduct program, and to establish mission, goals and outcomes.

Approval of Minutes of Committee Meetings

Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the following meeting minutes and all actions contained therein:

- Board of Trustees of June 18, 2020
- Enrollment Management Committee of September 10, 2020
- Fiscal Affairs of September 15, 2020

Chairperson's Report

Chair Boodram provided the Chairperson's Report beginning with a discussion of the College's mission. He asked Trustees to keep the mission in mind as they conduct their work as members of the College's Board and Committees.

Chair Boodram also commented on the state's equity first agenda, which states that Massachusetts' system of public higher education will enhance social mobility, particularly for those underrepresented throughout all levels of education. He asked that Trustees consider this as well as they serve the College community.

Trustees were provided with disclosure and confidentiality agreement, and were asked to return these completed to Ms. Lescarbeau.

MCLA Website Presentation

Mr. Ian Bergeron presented an overview of the newly launched website. He reviewed the improved branding completed through work with Simpson Scarborough. He highlighted the mobile friendly format, the ease of back end maintenance, and ADA compliance of the upgraded website.

President's Report

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board beginning by recognizing Trustee Marshall with a Presidential Bowtie Pin for her service as Chair of the Board of Trustees.

He commented on the return to campus, which has gone well, and the planning efforts that went in to the successful return. Faculty and staff were offered remote work exemptions for their own or an immediate family member's underlying health issues, and for childcare issues. As a result, 34% of faculty and 15% of staff continue to work remotely.

Courses are being taught in blended on-line and in-person formats, which will continue until Thanksgiving. At that time, students will vacate the residence halls and complete their courses remotely over two weeks.

COVID-19 testing and contact tracing have gone well. To date there have been three positive cases, which have been managed through isolation and contact tracing with no known spread. Commuters, faculty and staff have been offered optional COVID testing.

U.S. News and World Report rankings have been issued and MCLA has ranked #9 in the country for public liberal arts schools, which is the 8th year the College has placed in the top ten. MCLA ranked #47 on the social mobility index, with only eight public institutions ranking above MCLA in this category.

Executive searches will be conducted for the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, and Student Affairs.

MCLA Dashboard

VP Puc provided an overview of the data proposed for a dashboard for the Board and Committees. Data is available from federal and state sources, through accreditation and memberships, college guides, supporting organizations, and the DHE dashboard.

Data reviewed included:

- Total, full-time, under grad, grad and minority enrollment
- Admissions applicants, new students, yield rate, minority freshmen and transfers enrollment, average high school GPA, and average SAT
- Freshmen retention, four-year, six-year and transfer graduation rates
- State appropriation, revenue and expense, endowment assets, and average tuitions
- Total student aid, institutional scholarship aid, aid receipts, Pell grant aid receipts, and student loan indebtedness

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 7:18 p.m.