



*My College. Right from the Start.*

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, October 5, 2011**

**Admissions Office Conference Room**

The following Trustees were present:

William Dudley, Chair  
Jane Allen  
Steve Crowe  
Susan Gold  
Dick Lamb  
Dr. Eugene Leibowitz  
Joelle McDonough

Others present:

Mary Grant, President  
Cynthia Brown, Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Monica Joslin, Dean of Academic Affairs  
Maria Bartini, Professor of Psychology  
Ann Billetz, Professor of Biology  
Rosanne Denhard, Professor of English  
Thomas Bernard, Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 a.m. by Trustee Dudley.

**Strategic Planning**

President Grant presented an update and overview of the College's strategic planning process. She informed the committee that a Strategic Planning Task Force has been working on a new plan since January. She outlined the process of campus input that informed the development of the plan. Finally, she outlined the goals that will guide MCLA over the next cycle of planning:

- Excellence in Teaching and Learning
- Supportive and Inclusive Community
- Responsive and Intentional Stewardship
- Public Purpose and Engagement

An initial series of strategies and tactics have been developed to support these goals. It is understood that the strategies and tactics will evolve over time.

Trustee Dudley commented on the strength of MCLA's planning process, and the quality of the planning document.

President Grant acknowledged the good work and dedicated participation of the task force. She thanked Trustee Leibowitz for representing the Trustees on the task force.

The strategic plan will be presented to the campus at a meeting on October 26, and will then be shared with the Board for endorsement at the October 27 meeting.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** Unanimously to advance the MCLA Strategic Plan to the full board for approval at the October 27 Board of Trustees meeting.

### **Presentation from Undergraduate Research faculty leaders**

Vice President Brown introduced professors Maria Bartini, Ann Billetz, and Rosanne Denhard, who provided an overview on undergraduate research at MCLA.

Professor Denhard noted that participating in undergraduate research is a positive factor in preparing students for graduate study and careers. Presenting that research at conferences makes students more conversant in their areas of study, and introduces them to ideas from other disciplines as well. She informed the committee that a group of students will represent MCLA at a Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) regional research conference at Keene State University in late October. This conference follows on the first northeast regional conference hosted at MCLA in October 2010.

Professor Billetz provided an overview of MCLA's annual Undergraduate Research Conference (URC). She noted that the conference began with a modest presentation in 2002, and by 2010 had been established as a campus day of engagement that featured 250 students presenting posters, papers, and performances, and art works. In addition, MCLA students also participate in regional and national conferences.

Professor Billetz informed the committee that she, along with professors Bartini and Denhard, represented MCLA at a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded, COPLAC-sponsored conference on institutionalizing undergraduate research. At the conference, the participants discussed ways to mentor students, incorporate undergraduate research into the faculty workload and tenure planning, and funding opportunities to support undergraduate research. Each campus group left the conference with a timeline of goals to advance the undergraduate research program at their respective institutions.

Professor Bartini discussed some of the short- to mid-term goals related to MCLA's timeline. These included strengthening the undergraduate research infrastructure by establishing a campus office of undergraduate research; enhancing the culture of undergraduate research by providing information to veteran faculty about how to integrate undergraduate research into their courses, and asserting undergraduate research as an essential value to new faculty; and developing an expanded assessment plan to measure the progress of MCLA's undergraduate research program.

Professor Bartini also discussed a grant from the Teagle Foundation secured by COPLAC to support "distance mentored" undergraduate research. This model would leverage the expertise among the various COPLAC institutions by providing opportunities for faculty from one COPLAC school to mentor students at another COPLAC institution.

The committee discussed the undergraduate research program at MCLA, and the Undergraduate Research Conference scheduled for April 19, 2012. They thanked the faculty members for their leadership of this important work.

### **Faculty searches overview**

Vice President Brown informed the committee that search process work is underway to recruit faculty in several departments. She noted that the decision about which searches to advance reflects departmental needs assessments as well as a review of enrollment within departments.

In an increased effort to create a diverse applicant pool during the search process, Vice President Brown and the various search committees are consulting with multicultural and international faculty members to provide perspectives on the process and engage their professional networks.

### **Vision Project update**

Vice President Brown discussed MCLA's work with the Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (AMCOA) group organized under the auspices of the Department of Higher Education (DHE) Vision Project. AMCOA is a statewide assessment team working on identifying promising practices in assessment and evaluation processes. In August, Dr. Peggy Maki, the statewide consultant for assessment visited MCLA, and the College hosted an AMOCA conference planning meeting in September.

As MCLA connects with AMCOA and the Vision Project, it is important to showcase MCLA's existing culture of evaluation as well as the range of strong assessment practices already in place at the College.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.