Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
Of

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
North Adams, Massachusetts
by
An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit to the Campus
November 3—6, 2013

The members of the team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page to the Team Report
Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: November 5, 2013

Name of Institution Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

1. **History**   Year chartered or authorized 1894   Year first degrees awarded 1897

2. **Type of control:** ☒ State   ☐ City   ☐ Other; specify:

       ☐ Private, not-for-profit   ☐ Religious Group; specify:

       ☐ Proprietary   ☐ Other; specify:

3. **Degree level:**
    ☐ Associate   ☒ Baccalaureate   ☒ Masters   ☐ Professional   ☐ Doctorate

4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention[a]	Graduation[b]	# Degrees[c]
Associate						
Baccalaureate	1,374	342	1516.0	79%	57%	359
Graduate	21	157	87.7	80% PMBA 77% MED	85% PMBA 67% MED	22 PMBA 35 MED

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year   (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate   (c) no. of degrees awarded most recent year

5. **Number of current faculty:**   Full time 87   Part-time 80   FTE: 113.4

6. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2013)
    (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

Revenues		**Expenditures**	
Tuition	$9.548	Instruction	$12.080
Gov't Appropriations	$16.461	Research	
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	$5.352	General	$16.875
Auxiliary Enterprises	$8.033	Auxiliary Enterprises	$8.373
Other	$1.636	Other	$5.287
Total	$41.030	Total	$42.615

7. **Number of off-campus locations:**
    In-state 0   Other U.S. 0   International 0   Total _____

8. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:
Programs offered entirely on-line <u>0</u>   Programs offered 50-99% on-line <u>0</u>

9. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?
☒   No   ☐   Yes; specify program(s):

_____

10. Other characteristics: Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts is the designated liberal arts college of the nine-campus Massachusetts State University System.

Introduction

MCLA was founded in 1894 as the North Adams Normal School, with the primary mission of educating teachers for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In 1932 it was designated as the State Teachers College at North Adams and authorized to offer the four-year B.S. in Education. In 1937 the Master of Education was added. The name was changed again in 1960, when the institution became North Adams State College, and degrees in liberal arts and professional fields such as business were added. During this time the college also grew substantially, from 800 to more than 2000 students. Facilities, faculty and staff were also expanded during the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1997, the college adopted a new mission statement, establishing its identity as a public liberal arts college. This change was confirmed when the state legislature changed the name to the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and formally designated the institution as the state's public liberal arts college. Following these actions, in 1999 the college was admitted to the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). In 2010, an act of the legislature converted the Massachusetts State Colleges (of which MCLA was one) into the Massachusetts State University System, reporting ultimately to the Board of Higher Education.

Currently, MCLA serves 1428 FTE undergraduate and 88 FTE graduate students.

The name changes, revisions in mission, growth in numbers of students served, and various acts of the legislature form the foundation for the NEASC/CIHE decennial review reported here. But the noteworthy changes that have happened at MCLA over the last 10 years are not captured fully in any of the Standards under which the review is organized or in the bare outlines of historical milestones such as those recited above.

These changes deserve to be placed here to form the context of this review. Ten years ago at the last review the college had gone through a period of administrative turnover and budget uncertainty. The surrounding community was suffering economically and was detached from the college. State financial support was problematic and had recently been reduced. There was not consistent strong advocacy from the legislature or the state board of education, perhaps due to lack of clarity about what the public liberal arts mission could mean for the Commonwealth. Enrollment was wavering; the faculty and staff were willing to develop the mission of the college but uncertain as to what it meant or how viable it would be.

Today the college is a respected and integral member of the Berkshire County community, a valued member of the Massachusetts State University System, a voice in the national higher education dialogue, and a thriving community of involved students, faculty and staff. The focus is clearly on student success and community engagement. Evidence for the change includes a talented student body which is involved in community leadership, service learning, undergraduate research and other high impact activities; an involved Board of Trustees; a very large number of enthusiastic community partners; a successful capital campaign; a brand-new science building funded by state bonds; an energetic faculty and staff, all of whom are carrying out multiple roles in service of the mission. The public of Berkshire County and beyond clearly values MCLA and is invested in its success.

Some of the change is fueled by external factors, including the progressive comeback of North Adams, due to visionary civic, cultural and economic developments such as the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA). But much of the change is due to the leadership of the college, and the thoughtful forging of multiple connections on campus, within the larger community (including social service agencies, businesses, political entities and alumni); and with individuals and national groups such as COPLAC and Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U).

There are certainly still areas where more work needs to be done. We outline several of them in this report. Further, the Commonwealth's financial future and commitment to public higher education are always in play. The demographic reality of western Massachusetts and indeed the Northeast is not encouraging. However, MCLA is in an incomparably stronger position today than it has been in some time. It is a result to be celebrated.

Standard One: Mission and Purposes

The 2003 Visiting Team report for MCLA suggested that "MCLA should continue to articulate and advocate for its public liberal arts mission, realizing that its mission is a distinctive strength rather than an institutional characteristic that must be explained away or apologized for."

It is clear that over the last 10 years the college has heeded this advice. The adoption of a revised mission statement in March 2013 by the Board of Trustees, and its endorsement and acceptance by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, are but the culminating public confirmation of a process that has been underway since (even before) the last NEASC Team Visit. The college has involved itself over the last year in the formal mission review process, which allowed the faculty, staff, students and wider community to reflect on MCLA's many achievements of the past 10 years and set its sights on new goals.

From 2003-2013, MCLA has explored and experimented with the proper role for itself as a public liberal arts college for today and tomorrow. The college continued to strengthen the implications of its distinctive character, engaged in ongoing dialogue and planning with its surrounding community, assessed and reported on the capacities and achievements of students and alumni, and become a well-regarded leader in regional and national higher education. At every stage these activities and initiatives have been evaluated, formally or informally, and decisions made whether to enhance, maintain, or discontinue them. Appropriate follow-up activities have been managed. The result is a continually growing confidence in the mission, the journey, and the companions on the journey.

The results have exceeded expectations. The 2003 visiting team came at a time of considerable change and the accompanying opportunity – and risk – of making choices in setting institutional direction. The team foresaw these risks – they worried about funding, Trustee and Commonwealth understanding of an ongoing liberal arts mission, and whether students would continue to embrace this model of higher education.

At this point in the journey, this visiting team of 2013 is able to say that the risks were well worth it. The way forward also has near-term milestones, connected with community partnerships, assessment of student learning, and the promotion of various academic disciplines, notably in STEM fields. This is a remarkable achievement given the challenges of demographics, funding, technology, and other factors indicating that we are in a period of disruptive change across higher education.

Our concerns are largely connected with this larger context of disruptive change. The management and leadership of the college, the participation of faculty, staff, students and community, plus supportive state partners, have brought MCLA to a point of confidence and clear direction for the future through institutionally effective practices. We encourage their steadfast adherence to them in potentially turbulent times.

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

At the time of their last NEASC accreditation in 2003, the visiting team report noted that since adopting its new mission in 1997, and following formal strategic planning reports in 1993, 1998, 2001 and 2002, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts stood poised to embark on a new round of planning under new leadership. They have done that and are able to report strong institutional practice in planning and evaluation.

Under the leadership of their president, the college convened a strategic planning committee with broad campus representation. The result was a plan focused on four goals: academic excellence, increasing enrollments, strengthened student life programs, and improvement of the college's financial position. Annual planning retreats for the entire campus following Commencement allowed for an open review of the planning process, shared information about progress on goals and ideas for further progress. The retreats included speakers of national prominence to inspire and inform the campus. These efforts served to build community and also to help integrate planning across the campus, addressing a concern raised in 2003 that planning tended to be compartmentalized.

As the planning process matured and became more integral to campus culture, the president transitioned the oversight of the plan to her cabinet. That transition facilitated decision-making regarding allocation of resources to implement the plan. This model has produced impressive results in a time of declining state support, but some faculty feel that decisions about implementation priorities would benefit from greater faculty voice.

At the 2010 strategic planning retreat, the president reviewed the many achievements that have come from the 2003 plan including increased enrollment, addition of new academic programs, some increases in faculty and improved external relations. The president convened a new Strategic Planning Task Force in 2011 to develop a refreshed strategic plan resulting in updated goals for the next phase of the college's development: excellence in teaching and learning, supportive and inclusive community, responsive and intentional stewardship, and public purpose/engagement. These goals are known and well-understood by the campus at large.

Planning achievements are publicized in the annual <u>President's Report</u> and in the alumni magazine.

Other planning accomplishments include completion of a facilities master plan (2007), a technology plan (2012), a development plan (2010, 2012), and the Freel Library plan (2013). The establishment of a Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE) is a good example of how the college planning process has resulted in a strategic reorganization, reassignment of facilities and staffing changes to address an important need to recruit and retain students in a student success model. This highly successful reorganization resulted from the college's annual action planning and "prototyping" process.

There are other good examples of how the college has successfully implemented the results of its planning in ways important to the future of the college. A Chief Information Officer position was created in response to planning efforts, and that office has led to creation of an IT master plan for infrastructure improvements needed to fulfill the college's teaching mission. A noteworthy success of MCLA's strategic planning and facilities master planning was the opening of the impressive Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation in 2013 and the upcoming renovation of Bowman Hall. The science center is the first new academic building at MCLA in 40 years. These new facilities were driven by intentional enrollment growth in STEM disciplines and the addition of the new Chemistry major, one of several new academic programs. These new facilities will further strengthen the growing emphasis on undergraduate research, an important high impact practice linking back to the college's engagement in AAC&U's LEAP (Liberal Education and America's Promise) program.

Evaluation--Program review and assessment
The 2003 NEASC team report recommended that "MCLA should establish without delay policies and a cycle for formal academic program review. Simultaneously, departments—e.g., through annual reports—should be encouraged to discuss what their own strengths and areas of concern are and, to the greatest extent possible, link these to an evidentiary base." The process implemented involves both a self-study report, and an external reviewer's report. The college reports that "every academic program and administrative area develops action plans annually, and aligns its budget requests to the strategic plan." This visiting team report indicates that all academic programs are now on a 7-year cycle of program review, and that those reviews have been conducted, an impressive accomplishment.

Evaluation and assessment have become accepted practices across the campus. Program review and related assessment activities are supported by the Assessment Advisory Group (AAG), which meets six times per year to discuss and review initiatives and findings and to recommend improvements in the process. In 2010, an Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning was hired with grant funding from the Davis Educational Foundation. That position, which is now being funded as part of the regular budget, has helped address a major concern in the 2003 report that the college was not able to generate and use data important to planning and assessment without someone to lead assessment efforts in the academic areas. The Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs work closely with the Associate Dean, department chairs and core domain leaders to report and follow up on assessment results. While the college reports variation among departments in assessment and implementation of results, overall this work represents a

substantial achievement. Some college programs have achieved accreditation by the state or professional associations. Examples include athletic training (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Educations—CAATE), education (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education—ESE).

There has been extensive review of administrative units across the college using hired consultants, benchmarking surveys and internal analysis that have led to reorganization, revised position descriptions and new assignments. Of particular importance in these challenging times, outside expertise has been sought in support of Admissions and Financial Aid. More generally, a review of the Student Affairs Division by an outside consultant, for example, resulted in a move of Athletics to that division. Other units that utilized outside consultants have included Facilities, Human Resources, Information Technology, and the business functions of Administration and Finance.

Reports on student success come from use of a broad array of tools including the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), alumni and other surveys. These data have helped MCLA to benchmark against other schools, including members of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP) keeps and shares survey and assessment data broadly with unit heads and committees as needed in support of decision- making.

MCLA has addressed a 2003 concern about the need for faculty and staff development in this area through the Faculty Center, the Center for Academic Technology, and support for faculty to attend off-campus assessment workshops by NEEAN, AAC&U and Advancing the Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (AMCOA), among others. While work remains to be done (there are still members of the community who question the need and participate reluctantly), there is clearly an impressive culture of planning, assessment, evaluation and action that guides institutional decisions in important areas like student success and retention, staffing and facilities.

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

The organization and governance of MCLA are adequate to accomplish its mission. Since the last decennial review, the president and the Board have cultivated a supportive and inclusive culture among campus constituencies. This culture shift has re-established campus trust, spirit and pride. It has been instrumental in opening campus communications and creating a cooperative campus work ethic. The shift seems to have been accomplished by the creation of many intersecting webs of interpersonal relationships, fostering a "can do" attitude focused on serving students' needs.

This attitude has spread itself to the student body, the Board of Trustees, the Foundation board, and the surrounding local, regional and state communities. It has also fostered connections between MCLA and local and regional business and industry. There are established and developing webs of business and community groups to partner with MCLA on important

cooperative ventures of service learning, undergraduate research, graduate education, degree completion, arts and culture, and many others.

MCLA is to be commended for having a very involved and effective Board of Trustees, which:

- Concerns itself with details of the college's operation, including the educational program, students, finances and facilities;
- Has embarked on a consistent series of Board development activities to increase effectiveness;
- Has sought and obtained replacement members with appropriate skill sets and commitment to the college.

The culture of trustee development continues to be a matter of deep attention by both the Board and the President and is important to the institution's future. MCLA would be well served to codify these practices to ensure that the activities that have resulted in an engaged board continue.

The four labor contracts: two for faculty (full-time and part-time) one of which covers teaching during the day and the other covering teaching in the Graduate and Continuing Education division; one for professional administrators; and one for clerical, maintenance and public safety staff, set out clear lines of authority, inclusion and practice. The administration respects the contract guidelines through its everyday practices. The full-time faculty contract enumerates five governance committees, including the All-College Committee, that consider curriculum, graduate education, academic policies and student affairs. Faculty, students and staff are represented on all these committees and they appear to function smoothly. There are also many other ad hoc groups through which plans and ideas are exchanged, for example the Strategic Planning Task Force, the Student Success and Retention Task Force, and others. Faculty, staff and students populate all these groups. There appear to be multiple channels for members of the community to express their opinions on all topics. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to make their views known formally and informally, and student opinions are gathered through a regular program of assessment by such instruments as NSSE.

The college functions within a statewide system with many components; thus there is a broader context of accountability, statewide priorities, and the need to navigate through them with due regard to the mission of the campus, regional needs, and the statewide directions of higher education. The president and the Board are to be commended and encouraged in this work.

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Introduction
MCLA is committed to "intensive engagement" with students, consistent with its mission of being the public liberal arts institution for Massachusetts. Evidence includes adherence to the goals of the AAC&U LEAP initiative (Liberal Education and America's Promise). These goals include essential learning outcomes such as knowledge across major fields of inquiry,

intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. Adherence to these goals is shown by relatively small class sizes, an extensive program of high impact practices such as internships, undergraduate research and service learning, leadership development opportunities, and a robust effort at assessing the effectiveness of these activities.

The college has also added new majors over the review period, often in consultation with the community as to its needs. These new majors include art, arts management, athletic training, chemistry, environmental studies, political science and public policy, and at the graduate level, the Professional MBA. Enrollments in the STEM fields have increased from 21% in 2008 to 32% in 2012, with further increases expected with the opening of the new science building this year. This is a creditable response to community needs.

The college has a system of academic administration and shared governance, including a curriculum committee and an academic policy committee. Policies and decisions by these bodies are reached by clear and well-documented processes. The Registrar is the repository for such policies. While policies are now posted online, more could be done to assure that the community is aware of them.

Program review is arranged through a seven-year cycle.

The self-study dramatically underplays the assessment of learning outcomes throughout the academic program. The assessment audit appendix to the self-study provides a map for assessment, specifying each program's learning outcomes, the types of evidence that should be considered, and who would carry out the assessments. However the visit showed evidence far beyond this. The outcome-level assessments are scheduled each semester by rotation, with results used for program improvements; for example, the recent review of writing. Results are archived by the Associate Dean for Assessment and Planning. Wide dissemination and sharing of the results would enhance further the campus culture of assessment and data.

There is work yet to be done. Some learning outcomes are developed but couched in terms that make them difficult to measure objectively. There could be more periodic monitoring of learning outcomes to be able to react more quickly to results that need improvement, for example, to the 30% of students that fall below "proficient" in an area.

The academic programs are coherent and seem to have an appropriate level of rigor. The differential expectations from undergraduate to graduate are apparent, as can be inferred from the syllabi that were reviewed. The academic program has a strong multi-tier foundational common core. As discussed further in Standard 7, an area of concern is information literacy and information technology across the curriculum and an effort to expand these important skills and topics is needed.

Resources to support the college's academic programs seem sufficient and will be enhanced by the excellent advancement program over time. This has been a very thorough process by faculty and staff to assess several learning management systems, led by the Academic technology Group. Canvas™ was selected.

Undergraduate Degree Programs and General Education

MCLA is primarily an undergraduate institution. Students must complete 120 credits to graduate. Their residency requirements seem appropriate. The academic programs meet the college mission: they prepare their graduates "to be practical problem solvers and engaged, resilient global citizens by offering comprehensive major and minor programs to prepare students for graduate study, the workforce, and civic life." The visit supports what the self-study reported. The college offers 19 undergraduate majors and several other specialized programs through 14 academic departments. These programs are properly sequenced to ensure graduated learning as students progress. MCLA reports that the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has formally approved all degree programs. Graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice, its principal information resources (in principle), and its interrelatedness with other areas.

The college's general education requirements are substantial. Since the last NEASC self-study, they have fully implemented a three-tier core curriculum (the Core). It includes:

I) Fundamental skills in writing, mathematics, computer information, and world language (First-year students may test out of any of these courses.)
II) Lower-division courses within four domains (Human Heritage, Self and Society, Science and Technology, and Creative Arts), that promote interdisciplinary learning and inquiry within the domain. (Students select two courses from each domain, for a total of 25 credits.)
III) Courses range from interdisciplinary topics to broadly conceived introductory courses in a major. (Tier III courses, designed for juniors and seniors, are interdisciplinary, project-based courses that serve as capstones.)

In addition to the three-tier general education requirements, new students at MCLA are assisted with the transition to college-level study through a sequence of first year experience (FYE) courses. FYE faculty present courses designed to deliver content knowledge and develop students' essential skills, especially college-level writing and editing, as well as general strategies for college success. Each incoming first year student takes at least one course with this designation.

Oversight of the Core is carried out by the Dean of Academic Affairs and faculty Domain Leaders, who coordinate both the efforts of their colleagues and assessment of the program elements. These assessments are well-planned and executed in an ongoing fashion. Greater discussion among the faculty of enhanced collegial support for the Domain Leaders might enhance their ability to adequately and appropriately enforce the policies of this program.

Graduate Degree Programs

MCLA offers two graduate programs leading to degrees (a Master of Education (M.Ed.) and a Professional Master of Business Administration (PMBA)) and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS) in Education. The M.Ed. and CAGS are reviewed by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education for consistency with current government regulations regarding education degrees and certificates. All graduate education programs have substantial curriculum mapping, learning outcomes and assessment processes.

The PMBA is designed as a professional part-time cohort model. It is specifically for working adults, and was designed in consultation with community partners who requested the opportunity for such a degree. The program consists of 45 credit hours; up to 15 credits of required foundational courses may be waived for students with undergraduate business degrees or proficiency that can be otherwise be demonstrated. The required 15 credits of foundational courses cover economics, management, marketing, statistics, and accounting. The additional 30 credits include courses in management, finance, marketing, operations, social responsibility, three elective topics and an integrative capstone. The degree provides an advanced mastery of the complex field of business.

The learning objectives for this program are appropriate to the PMBA. Admission to the PMBA is based on the applicant's 5-year work history, submission of an extensive e-portfolio, and scores from either the GMAT or GRE. These credentials are assessed by the faculty to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the program. The program appears sufficient to prepare students for professional practice involving the application or transmission of knowledge gained through the academic program. The integrative capstone is in place to ensure that students who complete the graduate program can demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and skills identified by the program objective.

Faculty in the PMBA have created a solid set of learning outcomes which are shared with students and used to guide the program. Students select an artifact for each learning outcome that they believe best shows their mastery. The student is also required to submit a reflection paper that analyzes the artifact and how it fulfills the learning outcome. In this way, the student creates an e-portfolio of artifacts and reflection papers.

Enrollment in the PMBA is in accordance with expectations and the plan. There is some concern that MCLA will run out of students within the catchment area over the next few years. There will need to be strategies to draw students from outside the local area, changed modes of delivery, or there may be a need to put the program on hold and go on to another offering.

Faculty research and scholarship in this area was not specifically assessed. If it is in line with faculty activity across MCLA, some faculty are active and others less so. On the other hand, the work with e-portfolios could be the basis for scholarly presentation to peers, in Boyer's typology of the scholarship of application or of pedagogy. The engagement with the community also could be a notable faculty strength worthy of collegial presentation and acknowledgement.

Assessment of Student Learning
Support of assessment of learning at MCLA is provided by full-time staff in the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP), alongside faculty measurement of student learning and a seven-year program review cycle. Institutional assessment procedures are reviewed for effectiveness by the Assessment Advisory Group (AAG). The AAG is composed of faculty and administrators, and is charged with examining assessment data to determine the extent to which those data meet the College's strategic goals. The AAG makes recommendations to the President on assessment matters.

The college has substantial assessment processes in place that go beyond what was evidenced in the self-study. Those processes were created through collaborative efforts of the administration and faculty. Administrative support is in place to support these processes. However, not all programs or faculty have "bought in" to the existing assessment processes and resources. The college should endeavor to create a greater culture of assessment for both curricular and co-curricular programs.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit
The college's practices and conventions for the award of academic credit are appropriately within the mainstream of American higher education. Decisions regarding policies for the award of credit are made through well-established governance processes and documented clearly in the Office of the Registrar. Overall policies are coherent and reflect community norms, as well as compliance with Commission's policy.

The college in 2012 defined a credit hour as one hour of classroom time and two hours of other work (or the equivalent) weekly, over the 15-week semester. Undergraduate students typically register for 15 credits per semester. In fall 2013, approximately 58% of students carried a load of between 15 and 18 credits and 3% were over-pointing (19 or more credits). The standard 5-course (15 credit) workload means that the typical undergraduate should be expected to devote approximately 45 hours per week to core academics. Given the considerable commitment the college has to education that extends beyond classroom, studio, and lab experiences to co-curricular activities, service within Berkshire County, and considerable activity within student life, the workload of students who are carrying more than 18 credits may be unsustainable. We believe the college should reconsider the current overload policy.

This issue may be further exacerbated because the credit hour policy is not uniformly understood by campus constituencies. Students report that a weekly workload is 5-6 hours for a three-credit course (3 hours in class + 2-3 hours outside class); for 5 courses (15 credits) this equals a weekly academic workload of approximately 25-30 hours. But some faculty report the appropriate workload as no less than 12 hours (3 hours in class + 9 hours outside class); for 5 courses this equals a weekly academic workload of approximately 60 hours. Regular reminders and discussion of the approved college definition and its inclusion, for example, in the Catalog, would help to produce a more coherent campus culture about workload.

The college has appropriate and detailed policies for the awarding of credit in both its undergraduate and graduate offerings, as well as for awarding of credits for internships, teaching assistantships, and its programs with alternative schedules. These policies are archived by the Registrar and most are clearly expressed in the course catalog and on the website, including, for example, grading policies, graduation requirements, policies on academic standing, and appeals of probationary or warning status, etc. (Some policies that govern relatively unusual situations are publicized by the Registrar or academic affairs on an as-needed basis.)

Governance and Policies
New course proposals submitted to governance committees address both the types of exams and assignments used to measure student learning outcomes and to assign grades and credits. In addition, they require listing of a department's rationale for adding the offering, learning

objectives and pedagogy, as well as the bases for student evaluation. No explicit discussion of workload expectations is required on the form.

Syllabi for existing courses are archived by each department or program after review by the chair or director. No further systematic review of syllabi is conducted, although the academic administration has access to the syllabus archive. Graduate syllabi are uniformly models of clarity and clearly express the work required and learning goals for each course. Undergraduate syllabi range across a broader spectrum, from clear statements of policy and workload to simpler statements of a schedule of topics. A more systematic and uniform approach would enhance students' abilities to engage in intentional self-reflection about their studies. The college has held some workshops on syllabus construction and design, and more might facilitate college-wide improvement. The college should consider documenting expected syllabus content for faculty, staff and students (e.g., textbook or other reading materials, learning outcomes, course calendar, college mission statement, etc.).

Transfer policies are particularly well documented, and the college strives to be a transfer-friendly institution. Students who submit transcripts from previous study are provided with a Transfer Credit Analysis upon admission, to inform their decision to matriculate. Clear articulation agreements exist with a variety of institutions and with the MassTransfer system (Massachusetts Community Colleges transfer agreement). The analysis includes coherent statements of transfer policies and both detailed and summary indication of credits suitable for transfer. All transfer policies are available both in the Catalog and on the website.

Institutional Effectiveness
From an assessment standpoint, the college has committed significant resources, including the hiring of an associate dean for assessment. She is clearly intended to be the hub around which all assessment revolves and an expansion of the role to be more proactive regarding the collection, analysis and wider internal/public dissemination of assessment results could be beneficial to the college. The public's view of MCLA would be furthered by disclosure of their extensive set of policies and assessment results, and discussion on campus will further the culture of assessment, which still needs to continue its robust development.

Standard Five: Faculty

Introduction
MCLA currently offers 19 baccalaureate degrees serving 1428 FTE undergraduate students. It also offers 3 graduate degrees (M.Ed., PMBA, CAGS) serving 88 FTE graduate students. As reported in the self-study (table 5.1), students are served by 85 full-time and 88 part-time faculty members (this includes day and evening faculty) (table 5.1). Faculty participate in teaching, advising, creative activity, scholarly research and service to the college and to the community.

As of FY 13, 59 full-time faculty members are tenured; 64 of 85 teaching faculty hold doctoral degrees. 21 out of 85 hold a master's degree. Of the faculty 67% (57 of 85) hold the rank of full or associate professor. Of the holders of the doctoral degree, 47 of 64 hold the rank of full or associate professor and 17 of the 64 hold the rank of assistant professor.

Contractual rights, obligations and responsibilities of faculty are outlined in the Agreement between the Board of Higher Education and the Massachusetts State College Association (MSCA). The Division of Graduate and Continuing Education is governed by a separate collective bargaining agreement (DGCE Agreement) that outlines conditions of service for part-time, evening and all graduate teaching and summer teaching faculty.

The full-time undergraduate teaching faculty is supplemented by 87 part-time adjuncts. Of these, 54 members teach during the day and the remaining teach in the graduate programs and Continuing Education classes in the evening. Adjusting the numbers of faculty per program, and keeping a due proportion of part-time instructors, is a continuing challenge at a time of new programs and enrollment shifts among established majors.

The faculty is expected to advise students on all aspects of academic success and engagement. Regular office hours are specified in the contract. Faculty monitor graduate student progress through meetings with academic advisors ad the Education Department Graduate Curriculum Committee or the Professional MBA Advisory Group. Other non-teaching responsibilities include but are not limited to attending open houses and scholarship brunches and otherwise interacting with prospective and incoming students.

Procedures for recruitment and appointment of qualified faculty are outlined in the MSCA and DGCE Agreements. More specific steps are delineated in the faculty handbook, college affirmative action plan, and the department chair's handbook. MCLA is to be recognized for increasing the diversity of its faculty through recent hires. New college faculty members participate in formal orientations organized by the HR office together with Academic Affairs and support from other divisions on campus. Part-time faculty appointments are based on the recommendation of the department chair on a course by course basis. Salary and other conditions of faculty appointment are spelled out in the MSCA/DGCE Agreements.

Teaching and Advising
MCLA has a dedicated, enthusiastic and caring faculty. Teaching and workload activity equivalent to 12 credits per semester is set forth in the MSCA/DGCE Agreements, and the faculty balance their obligations among teaching, advising, scholarly activities and community involvement. Faculty play active roles in all aspects of campus life through various committees and councils to guide academic programs, instructional methodology, assessment, program integrity and enhancement. Widening the understanding of active learning, assessment and strategic planning is integral to the continuing success of MCLA. Involvement of faculty has also been crucial in planning of the new Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation, which opened in October 2013.

Per the Agreements, faculty serve on governance committees, e.g., the Curriculum Committee, Academic Policies Committee and All-College Committee. Faculty originate and design all new academic programs. These are reviewed by their respective departments and then are forwarded to the college governance process for assurance of program efficacy, integrity and consonance with the college mission and strategic plan. New degree programs are then submitted to the

college's Board of Trustees and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for final approval. Programs may also apply for external accreditation by professional groups.

In the past several years, in accordance with the college's strategic planning efforts, new majors have been added in Art, Arts Management, Chemistry, Athletic Training, Political Science/Public Policy, and the Professional MBA. This is a commendable list.

Service and Professional Development
Faculty are fully involved in the evaluation of colleagues for reappointment, promotion and tenure. Workshops for faculty evaluators and candidates for evaluation are conducted regularly by the faculty association and the Academic Affairs Office. Teaching activity, student and peer evaluation of teaching effectiveness, student advising and continuing scholarship activities are weighed in the evaluation process as outlined in the MSCA and DGCE Agreements, and the Peer Evaluation Committee Handbook, the Committee on Tenure Handbook, and the Portfolio Handbook. The department chairperson conducts classroom observation and makes a separate recommendation to the Dean and the VP for Academic Affairs.

With regard to professional development, MCLA provides limited travel funds for professional development conferences, workshops and seminars to present papers. Internally, roundtables are held to address pedagogy and teaching methods. The Faculty Center publishes a monthly newsletter on student success and pedagogy. Other publications dedicated to teaching, research and creative activity include "The Mind's Eye," a peer-reviewed journal. Faculty also support student research, scholarship and creative achievement, as evidenced by the Honors Program, undergraduate research symposia, TechFest, travel courses, service learning, and an extensive internship program.

Some faculty are involved in ongoing research, scholarly and creative activities that result in peer-reviewed publications. The VP for Academic Affairs provides incentive awards and tangible support for faculty to pursue these activities. The MSCA Agreement also provides resources in the form of grants and awards from the Dean of Academic Affairs Office to support these initiatives. While the President's Annual Report lists faculty scholarly accomplishments, including presentations and awards, there does not seem to be a systematic collection of faculty achievements in this area. Also, it must be said that MCLA's innovative activities in high impact learning provide a rich vein for faculty to mine in service of Boyer's schema (scholarship of application, scholarship of pedagogy, etc.) and communicate to their peers, and there are venues such as COPLAC and AAC&U, plus for example the Council on Undergraduate Research and Campus Compact (Service Learning), that provide regional and national venues for peer-reviewed presentation and publication. MCLA has much to contribute and could be better represented by its faculty in those venues.

Periodic ethics training is mandated by the state Ethic Commission. Faculty must abide by Federal, state and MCLA rules on the use of human subjects in their research and creative activities. Faculty have organized the Academic Technology Advisory Group, which has demonstrated its effectiveness in the selection of a learning management system and of e-portfolio software.

The Center for Student Success and Engagement also provides academic, career and financial advising to all students. Faculty are partners with student affairs and administration to ensure academic integrity through academic peer review processes, assessment of student work, and course-level and department-level reinforcement of learning outcomes.

Many faculty are enthusiastic supporters of the college's efforts toward program and student assessment. Programs like English, Education and History have a productive and significant track record. In addition, assessment of the Core program is noted and laudable. Each domain within the Core is evaluated and assessed on meeting established learning outcomes and goals. While excellent progress has been made in establishing the culture of assessment at MCLA, a significant next step will be the use of assessment feedback to enhance or effect changes in the classroom.

Standard Six: Students

Admission, Retention, and Graduation

As stated in the self-study, as a public university campus, MCLA's baseline undergraduate admissions standards are determined by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. The staff in the Admissions and Financial Aid areas work collaboratively and responsively to enroll and retain students consistent with these standards and with their mission. They have worked hard to capture and communicate the spirit of the campus in order to attract students most likely to be successful and satisfied.

MCLA's student body is typical of a traditional residential liberal arts college. In FY13, according to the forms provided by MCLA, there are 1495.3 undergraduate FTE, headcount 1408 full-time and 192 part-time, down about 2.8% from the previous year. The undergraduate student body is primarily traditional-age; residence on campus is required for the first three years. Graduate FTE is 106.3, headcount is 55 full-time and 144 part-time, up 34.7% from the previous year. Graduate student numbers are expected to stabilize next year.

The most currently reported retention rate is 75% for the 2011F cohort, projected to be 79% for the following cohort. Graduation rate is 47% for the 2006F cohort, projected to be 57% for the 2007 cohort. The retention rate for the most recent reported year (2012) for first-time full-time on-campus students is 76%; for athletes, 87%; ALANA students 71%; and STEM majors, 75%. These are commendable results, congruent with the context that MCLA provides.

Several students with whom the Visiting Team met gave examples of the important role that the Admissions Counselor played in the decision process. The members of the Admissions Team involve the larger community in these efforts and report receiving significant assistance from the faculty. The members of the Athletic Department, the coaches in particular, work in collaboration with the Admissions team and are prepared to continue to assist with the enrollment effort. Student athletes are retained at a comparatively high level at MCLA and appear to be a continued strong market. Given the high retention rates of student athletes, the strong facilities and the commitment of the coaching staff to recruitment, MCLA may want to

explore ways to cultivate desirable new geographic markets with the assistance of the Athletic Department staff.

Like colleges and universities across the country and especially in the northeast where the high school population is declining, MCLA is focused on student enrollment. During the last ten years, MCLA has increased its inquiries and applications and enrollment has grown. The highest undergraduate enrollment was in 2010. The senior leadership team has secured the appropriate consultation from Maguire Associates to develop strategies to build on this recent success. The College has aggressive enrollment goals and a plan to achieve them. There are measurable objectives in place to monitor progress throughout the admission cycle. However, a comprehensive enrollment management plan is yet to be developed to assure that MCLA capitalizes on all its strengths (including financial aid and student retention) to meet its ambitious enrollment goals.

As stated below, MCLA offers the appropriate services and programs to assist students to be successful. These focus on transition, academic and social support. There are also the appropriate counseling and health services in place.

Student Services
Student services are conceptualized, described, organized and delivered consistent with the mission, values and strategic goals of the institution. Student Affairs staff is appropriately trained and experienced. The Student Affairs team members demonstrate expertise in their own areas of responsibility. They operate across departments in concert with the institutional commitment to student-centeredness and student development consistent with the strategic plan. Expectations seem to be clearly communicated and accountability appears to be strong. The staff members meet regularly and engage in team-building and professional development activities. There is clearly strong leadership at the senior level of Student Affairs, a vibrant collaborative spirit and a deep commitment to the success of the students and the institution.

Evidence suggests that Student Affairs and Academic Affairs work together to offer students a cohesive set of experiences and services designed to promote holistic student development. Particularly noteworthy are the "high impact practices" described in the self-study that engage students in experiences recognized by scholars and practitioners to prompt college student satisfaction, skill development and retention.

During the visit, students highlighted a campus culture of involvement, the ease with which they are able to make connections and the commitment of "so many people" to their growth and development. Two students gave examples of faculty, administrators and staff attending their co-curricular programs and how meaningful that was to them. Students used phrases like "family atmosphere" to describe the MCLA campus and how the attention they received was "confidence-building." Members of the administration describe the campus as student-centered. This focus on students is something about which the community agrees and which students perceive as a distinctive characteristic. This characteristic was described by students in the open forum as very appealing to prospective students. Several indicated that it ended up being the deciding factor for their matriculation.

One student indicated that she came to MCLA with very high expectations and these expectations were exceeded: in her words they were "met plus more." Other students indicated that they chose MCLA for its relative affordability. Some of their parents insisted that they apply and some even insisted that they come. One student shared that his mother chose MCLA for him for financial reasons over an institution outside the area. He was disappointed with this choice and reluctant to come. Upon matriculating and becoming familiar with the opportunities available, this student and others with whom the team spoke were delighted with all that MCLA offers. All the students with whom the team spoke described the ease with which they have access to faculty, to leadership, to programs superior to those offered at their friends' and siblings' colleges. Accessibility and affordability are not just Admissions tag lines but everyday realities of student experience.

There is great value for students at MCLA. The opportunities for leadership are multilevel and intentionally designed by the Student Affairs staff to promote development. The staff and students speak about entry points of involvement, for example in the residence halls, again pointing to accessibility. As students gain experiences they assume positions of leadership, for example, as student managers in service activities, in intramural programs, as peer advisors, or as resident assistants, that allow them to develop skills and grow in confidence. Students describe opportunities to engage in "high impact" practices like service and travel that further promote their development.

The first year experience program is well-conceptualized, developed and delivered. Students speak with fondness about "First Days" and transitioning to their college. Student Affairs staff are attuned and responsive to the needs of their students. There is an investment of resources into this important process for both students and parents. A transfer student with whom the Visiting Team met spoke eloquently about the special attention to the transfer experience in both Orientation and Housing and Residential Life. Transfers are an important population for MCLA and Student Affairs has taken the time to distinguish them from first time students in the transition process.

MCLA integrates student support services under the Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE). The self-study describes CSSE as empowering students to succeed. This collaborative approach is an example of current best practice and is consistent with the methods, values and goals described in the Division of Student Affairs Mission Statement. The theme of collaborative practice is evidenced throughout student services and the work of the team of professionals is impressive. There is great potential in this area. The self-study articulates well the next steps for the CSSE.

The Student Affairs staff demonstrates an ability to marshal resources to deliver programs and activities consistent with professional standards and comparable to those offered at institutions with far greater financial, facility and personnel resources. The staff accomplishes their goals with a professional passion and commitment and a noteworthy ability to work together. Staff members display a "can do" attitude and appear to be excellent problem-solvers and strategists. This is evident in the renovations and upgrades in facilities like the residence halls and the athletic facilities. In a competitive marketplace where colleges and universities are investing tremendous resources into student life facilities, MCLA has kept pace by upgrading aspects of a

facility like a residence hall entry or the gym bleachers. One staff member mentioned that senior Student Affairs administrators are excellent at breaking projects into manageable fundable chunks. This allows for progress toward the achievement of goals.

Like the faculty, the Student Affairs staff wears "many hats." Their job descriptions include diverse responsibilities. For example, there are staff members in the athletic department staff who coach a team, manage an administrative function and deliver a non-varsity recreational or educational program. The Associate Dean provides some legal counsel to MCLA in addition to fulfilling her Student Affairs role. Juggling many duties appears to be a characteristic of all who work at the College.

The co-curricular program is impressive in its focus on achievement, leadership and service. The service program was highlighted as strong by several administrators, faculty and students. One student with whom the Visiting Team met indicated that it was a highlight of her experience.

Student Affairs staff keep current in the field through membership in the appropriate professional organizations, consultation with colleagues at similar institutions and the reading of professional journals. Their practices, policies and procedures are consistent with professional standards. There is an expectation from the senior Student Affairs leaders that departments engage in assessment activities and there is evidence that these efforts are underway. It will be important that the expectation continues and that further work is done on the development of learning goals and outcomes. Utilizing national surveys like CIRP and NSSE and other instruments that allow MCLA to benchmark itself against like institutions will be helpful to inform practice and priorities.

Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources

MCLA provides for library and technology needs related to the academic program through its library and library staff, the Center for Academic Technology, and Computer Support Services. Each of these units engages in regular planning, both to coordinate their efforts and to align them with the overall college planning goals.

The Library focuses largely on providing access to key information sources in a variety of formats, providing reference and instruction services, along with other outreach and awareness efforts. The Center for Academic Technology identifies and deploys various technologies in support of the academic program. Computer Support Services focuses on core infrastructure and support for various devices attached to the network. Communication and collaboration among these three groups occurs regularly and consistently through various committees, standing meetings, and informal encounters enabled by proximity. While staffing for the Center for Academic Technology and Computer Support Services appears to be adequate, staffing in the library is a concern.

Since the last NEASC visit, MCLA has made significant strides in ensuring that its uses of library resources and technology are aligned in support of the academic mission. Noteworthy highlights include:

The library has engaged in a systematic and thorough strategic planning process as part of the overall campus planning process, and has developed thoughtful and appropriate plans for addressing issues in the physical organization of the library, with a vision of developing a learning commons to adapt to changing student study habits, new formats, and the need for new types of programming that will require the entire library building to be the focus of campus strategic attention.

The library has also identified a need to restore funding in its acquisition budget, which was reduced significantly due to changes in the appropriation from the Commonwealth's bureau charged with library support. While MCLA has made efforts to rebuild partially this fund out of its own budget, available resources may not be adequate to serve the current curriculum and this merits further investigation.

There is also a need to more fully engage the campus in efforts to integrate instruction in information literacy into the curriculum. Librarians make themselves available to provide in-class instruction. In FY12 the library reported a decline in requests for this service from faculty who choose to focus limited class time on content-oriented instruction. FY13 data show an increase, with 35 classes served and attendance of 434. In addition, while library staff has been added to address pressing needs for digital services and support for academic technology, resources are still needed to support MCLA's information literacy goal.

As part of its planning efforts, the library has taken good advantage of benchmarking and assessment efforts to both place its current practices into a broader context of peer schools, and to have its planning efforts be driven by assessment data.

Through judicious use of scarce resources, the library has been able to provide access to materials through the use of consortia, through grant funding, and in formats that are preferred by students.

Through a deliberate and consultative process, the Academic Technology Advisory Group selected new platforms for a course management system and a student portfolio system. This process has resulted both in a new set of resources that will support the academic program and its assessment efforts in important ways, and also increases confidence in the group's ability to serve the academic program. The Academic Technology Advisory Group has developed a sense of confidence in its ability to ensure a strong connection between the work of the Academic Technology Center and the academic program and it now could play more of a leadership role fostering innovation and the diffusion of successful innovations into campus-wide activity.

The annual day-long Tech Fest provides a well-received professional development opportunity for faculty to learn about new technologies and new pedagogies.

Training in both library use and technology is made available to both students and faculty, and the Center for Academic Technology is leading the way in re-thinking how it delivers instruction, taking advantage of on-line methods that are more convenient and do not impinge on class time. The Library recently launched LibGuides as a way to improve awareness of available

resources, and has worked with the Center for Academic Technology on ways to integrate this into the increasingly popular course management system.

Evaluation efforts within the three primary units are uneven. The library engages in regular and systematic assessment of its services, and uses the results to inform its planning efforts. Evaluation efforts within Computer Support Services and the Center for Academic Technology are not as fully developed.

Finally, as noted in the report on Standard Eight, funding is needed for MCLA's IT Strategic Plan to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure, in particular in the area of its wireless network, is in place.

Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources

The MCLA campus consists of twenty-one buildings. While faculty and administrative spaces can be found throughout the campus, buildings can be placed into one of several categories including instructional (5 buildings with 58 spaces), residential (3 buildings with 1039 beds), campus and community life (12 buildings) and athletics (1 building and associated fields).

Since the last accreditation visit, the MCLA Foundation and the Commonwealth have made significant investments in facilities and infrastructure. Several major renovations, including Murdock Hall (predominantly classrooms and offices), were completed. In addition a new building, the Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation, was opened in the fall of 2013. This new building, MCLA's first new building in 40 years, is 65,000 square feet and houses classrooms, labs and research spaces for the sciences. The building is spacious, well-appointed and welcoming to students, community members, faculty and staff. The classrooms and labs are comfortable and functional. Funds from the Center for Science and Innovation bond issued included funding for a major renovation of Bowman Hall (classrooms and offices). With this second renovation, MCLA will have been able to make major improvements to three of the college's main academic buildings.

The MCLA Foundation has also purchased and subsequently leased or gifted property to MCLA adjacent to the campus and in the community. These spaces include the Institutional Advancement building for example. This has allowed MCLA to expand its facilities without needing to take on significant additional debt. However, some of the buildings, due to their age and condition, have increased the college's deferred maintenance portfolio.

In addition to a strong relationship with the MCLA Foundation, MCLA has strong ties to the community. These include a good working relationship with MASS MoCA – including a lease arrangement for the 2013-2014 academic year while Bowman Hall is being renovated. This arrangement is allowing MCLA students in the arts to take classes at the MASS MoCA campus.

Ownership of MCLA facilities lies primarily with outside agencies and organizations. Ten academic, administrative and operational buildings are owned by the Massachusetts state Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), three residential buildings are owned by the Massachusetts State College Building Authority (MSCBA) and eight properties

are leased to MCLA through the MCLA Foundation, Inc. The Zavattaro Athletic Complex and accompanying land are controlled by the college. This complex arrangement of ownership, coupled with the unique funding mechanisms of the Commonwealth for higher education, complicate the college's ability to plan and make changes.

Nonetheless, MCLA has made excellent progress on its physical plant since the college's last accreditation review. The new Center for Science and Innovation is evidence of the state's commitment to the institution. Renovations to Murdock Hall, the residence halls and other spaces on campus have improved the overall facilities for students.

MCLA has a solid track record since the last accreditation visit regarding facilities master planning, information technology hardware planning and related activities. This work has allowed the college to capitalize on funding sources as they come available.

In 2007, MCLA created a Master Plan that identified a number of key strategic goals. As part of the master plan the college identified and prioritized a program of infrastructure improvements as well as deferred maintenance needs. As a direct result of master planning MCLA renovated Murdock Hall, replaced electrical systems, upgraded fire alarm systems and identified other renovation and construction projects including the MCLA Center for Science and Innovation and Bowman Hall. However, the college now needs to complete the process of updating the Master Plan, taking into consideration the changing needs of today's students, the large amount of deferred maintenance and the college's enrollment projections. Once complete, the college would benefit from developing a multi-year strategy to upgrade the key strategic academic buildings on campus, especially those that are central to the teaching and learning mission of the college, such as Freel Library.

In addition, MCLA periodically undertakes updates to its facilities master plan including annual updates to its deferred maintenance plan. This plan is used to prioritize and identify required projects for funding under the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). MCLA is currently undertaking a comprehensive update to its facilities master plan.

Currently MCLA estimates that its deferred maintenance is approximately $68M. The deferred maintenance is evident in many buildings. Exterior cladding, including pointing on the bricks, on many buildings may not be weather tight. Additionally, the interior of a number of buildings is less than ideal. For example the stairs in one building were uneven with substantial dips on the risers that are a potential tripping hazard. Key academic buildings, including Freel Library, need further improvements to make the spaces more inviting to today's students. While the college has made great strides in energy efficiency enhancements, substantial renovations to existing buildings and the addition of a new science building, significant work is still required to bring all college buildings up to the standard that today's students require. Where renovations have been undertaken, such as in Murdock Hall and Berkshire Towers, the spaces are comfortable, well-appointed and meet the needs of the students.

Maintenance, repair and oversight of MCLA's physical plant is handled by an in-house staff. Two primary departments handle this work: the Facilities Department consisting of forty-five custodial, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, and painting staff, and Residential Programs and

Services (RPS). The RPS staff focus solely on the specialized needs and requirements of MCLA's residential areas. The facilities staff of MCLA should be commended for their stewardship and care of the college's physical plant. It is evident that the staff takes pride in their work and the work of the college and that the strategic goal of stewardship of college resources is well understood.

MCLA's strategic plan places a strong emphasis on the use of technology throughout the college. In support of this goal, the college has taken a number of steps to increase the use of technology both in the classroom and throughout the institution. These steps have included the creation of a Chief Information Officer position, the creation of a Center for Academic Technology, mandated training related to the use of Canvas™, the college's Learning Management System (LMS), and the adoption and preliminary implementation of Digication, an ePortfolio tool that allows undergraduates to document their academic and co-curricular learning right from the beginning of their time with MCLA.

The decision by MCLA to serve as the local hub for the Mass Broadband 123 is a wise strategic choice, both positioning MCLA well for its future infrastructure needs, opening up possibilities for collaboration and shared services, and the chance to open up services to its community partners.

MCLA's primary information systems include Banner for Student Information System (SIS), Canvas for the college's Learning Management System (LMS), Blackbaud for fundraising and development, and Digication for an ePortfolio solution. In addition, the college has in place a plan for converting all voice communications to Voice over IP (VOIP), installed an incident response system for crisis management and has moved to make all campus buildings wireless (Wi-Fi). Both Wi-Fi and wired connections are available in all residential spaces and Wi-Fi is available throughout campus buildings. The college does have a closed network but maintains open computer labs in two areas on campus, Murdock Hall and Freel Library.

The college reports that both signal strength and service reliability are a problem for mobile telecommunications due to the college's rural location. In addition, the college notes that the Wi-Fi system currently in place is more than seven years old and is not robust enough to handle the volume or types of devices students are bringing on campus today. Students express dissatisfaction with the level of wireless access available and throughout the visit this lack of access was evident to members of the team. MCLA has estimated that the cost of updating the wireless environment will be approximately $800K. The first phase of this upgrade was completed with the new Center for Science and Innovation building and the second phase is expected to be completed with the Bowman Hall renovation project. To continue to meet the rapidly changing needs of its students, MCLA will need to quickly find a way to upgrade the rest of the campus.

Technology is available in every classroom. Every room includes a networked computer, document camera, projector, screen, DVD and VHS player. The Center for Academic Technology provides training and support to faculty on the integration and deployment of technology related to teaching.

The college's computer systems are housed in redundant data centers located in two different buildings. These data centers, which include separate Internet connections, can be called upon to support the campus independently should the need arise. Load balancing software and hardware allow the data centers to balance the load based on demand and can also be used in the event of failures. The college has adopted, where feasible, a strategy to source software in the "cloud" thus reducing the overall infrastructure requirements for the institution.

The college's approach to IT change management, disaster recovery, information security and related activities is limited at this time. While back-up and recovery processes are in place, there appears to be no testing of the process or consistent practices associated with software change management. Information security practices are limited and protocols for stronger safeguarding of student information still need to be developed.

The college has a strategic plan for hardware planning but lacks a comprehensive strategic IT plan that meaningfully integrates the emerging needs of the academic program and college administrative needs. The college would benefit from a multi-year approach to planning the purchase of IT hardware and building the costs of these purchases into the base budget annually in order to avoid a large IT infrastructure infusion at a point of crisis.

Standard 9: Financial Resources

Since fiscal year 2010, MCLA has seen a decline in enrollment of approximately 9% -- from a headcount of 1913 to an estimated headcount of 1739 for fiscal year 2014. Simultaneously, the base state appropriation for MCLA has been held flat. (For FY 2013 it was $16,495,181 including benefit costs.) Tuition has not increased since 1997 and all tuition received for in-state students is remitted directly to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. While the college has been able to increase fees since FY2010 approximately 21%, it appears that the majority of this increase was dedicated to financial aid in order to attract and retain students. During this time period Operating Expenses have increased from $38.6M to $42.6M or approximately 10.5%, while Operating Revenues have declined from $25.8M to $24.6M or approximately 5.4%.

Despite these challenges, MCLA has consistently invested in programs and activities that directly relate to the college's strategic plan, master plan, and strategic plan for information technology hardware. The college's strategic partnership with the MCLA Foundation, as well as support received from the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), have allowed the college to make strategic investments in academic and administrative spaces, including renovations to existing buildings, energy improvements and the creation of the first new building in 40 years, the Feigenbaum Center for Science and Innovation.

Due to its rural locale and small catchment area, MCLA faces enrollment challenges. With 77% of the student body coming from Massachusetts and more than 35% from the Berkshires, MCLA continues to face difficulty in recruitment due to a declining number of graduating high school students in the region. The college's enrollment plan addresses these issues through a variety of tactics that are expected to increase overall enrollment. The college's enrollment goal of 335 first

time freshman students for fall 2014 is quite aggressive in that it is approximately 22% more than the prior year and nears the college's peak of first-time starts in the last 10 years.

Multi-year budget modeling is done periodically. In the materials provided to the NEASC team, evidence of multi-year planning was presented for the upcoming two-year cycle; however the plans appeared to have been developed several years prior to the visit. The college reports that it is a difficult process due to the significant variability in enrollment, the changing nature of higher education funding in the Commonwealth, and the impact of collective bargaining agreements on the college. Variability in the key sources of operating and non-operating revenue, including enrollment and state appropriations can negatively impact the college's ability to effectively plan for faculty and staff hiring to invest in projects that span more than one year. Nonetheless, the college would benefit from some form of regular, up-to-date multi-year budget modeling that takes into consideration the wide variety of funding components associated with the institution.

Since 2003 MCLA has made tremendous strides in advancement. In October of 2012 the college launched its first capital campaign, "Sowing the Seeds for Success: The MCLA Campaign for the Future," with a goal of $22M. As of the NEASC visit in November 2013, the Campaign has exceeded its pledge goal with the receipt of a $5M gift to name the Center for Science and Innovation. The college is to be commended for this level of fundraising given its size and public access mission. Since 2003 total Foundation assets have increased from approximately $7M to more than $13M. The MCLA Foundation has been instrumental in securing additional sources of funding, including a gift several years ago of $2.4M from Aramark for a renovation of the student dining facility, as well as numerous grant-writing opportunities. The Advancement function should be a point of pride for MCLA.

The college's budget is created through a combination of base budgets and the opportunity to propose additional investments that are aligned with the college's strategic plan. This enables the college to maintain existing functions and departments while simultaneously investing in new initiatives. During the annual budget process the college develops a pro-forma budget for each department that is consistent with spending patterns from previous years; then cabinet members work closely with departments to develop recommendations that are presented to the President. All requests for additional funds are aligned with the strategic plan of the college. Due to budget constraints the college is unable to expand budgets with any regularity or significance. This has led to some frustration in those departments that feel underserved or underrepresented with respect to budget increases. The college takes pains to make the process as transparent as possible. The annual budget cycle is a strength of the institution. The process is highly collaborative and transparent.

The Board of Trustees for the college receives quarterly financial reports which are reviewed by its Fiscal Affairs Committee. The committee reviews and evaluates both current and long term budget information. In addition all capital projects in excess of $50K are reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees. Major projects, such as the new Center for Science and Innovation, are funded through a state capital bond. (The current bond was for $54.5M.) This project, completed in conjunction with DCAMM, was completed on time and under budget. The remaining funds from this bond will be used to fund the renovation of Bowman Hall, expected to begin in 2014.

A strength of the institution is that the Board of Trustees is provided ample information to assist it with the oversight and management of the college's finances. In addition to the quarterly financial reports noted above, the Board of Trustees also receives detailed budgetary information inclusive of line item detail.

Annually MCLA participates in a financial audit conducted by an external auditor. For each of the past 10 years MCLA has received an unqualified opinion. No material findings were reported during any of the previous 10 audits. External audits are reviewed and accepted by the college's Board of Trustees. In addition to external audits, the Commonwealth also conducts periodic audits of various state-based programs.

Turnover in key areas of Finance and Administration due to the departure of the long-serving Treasurer has placed existing personnel in new roles. The college is using this opportunity to strengthen the functioning of the unit. The college's Administration and Finance staff clearly take pride in their management of the college's financial resources and work diligently to provide for all of the college's needs within the restrictions imposed by the financial environment.

The college spends approximately half of its operating expenses on instruction and related expenses, including academic support and student services. This amount has declined since the last accreditation report when more than 58% of all spending was related to instruction. During this same time, auxiliary services increased from 18.5% to 19.6% and institutional support increased a similar amount. These changes likely reflect the change in student credit hours associated with the loss of headcount since 2010, as well as the changing landscape of higher education.

MCLA recognizes that reduced or flat state support coupled with declining enrollments and a competitive market require sound financial management, fiscal prudence and strategies that seek to address the issue at hand. The college's strategic plan directly addresses these needs with the four key goals of fostering academic excellence, increasing enrollment, strengthening student life programs, and strengthening the College's financial position. To strengthen the college's financial position, MCLA is working to increase philanthropic and entrepreneurial efforts, successfully continuing its capital campaign, and cultivating new relationships. In addition, the college continues to advocate for increased public funding.

By every objective measure, the college stands on sound financial footing and has the resources necessary to support its mission.

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

In the decade that has passed since its last re-accreditation, MCLA has successfully made the transition to a primarily web-based system of communication, and has positioned itself for the transition to the next generation of technologies that are emerging, in an effort to provide its various constituents with the critical information that they need to make decisions and to participate in campus governance.

Via its website, MCLA provides the public with all of the types of information needed to make informed decisions about the institution. They have in place processes for keeping this information up-to-date, and methods for validating the accuracy of the information being presented.

MCLA has dedicated significant resources to the effort of providing a complex array of information to its various constituencies, both through the creation of new positions, and by creating campus-wide processes to promote this activity as a shared responsibility of a wide range of offices. They have a well-established set of processes for ensuring that the information is accurate, up-to-date, and readily accessible on their website.

The self-study identifies challenges common to most institutions of higher education: Maintenance of consistent message, timely data, and up-to-date information in a highly distributed web authoring environment; ensuring accountability for providing accurate, detailed, and complete information that the various constituents such as potential and current students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and community stakeholders want to access; supporting consistency of content and messaging in the many areas which are tasked with keeping their websites up-to-date. While MCLA has not solved these problems completely, it is continuing its efforts.

The visiting team wishes to encourage MCLA to go beyond the duty of public disclosure and tell its story of the last 10 years: how at the level of the department and as a college it is defining, measuring, and making progress on student achievement of important learning outcomes congruent with its mission. On-campus stakeholders and the broader community should know! In the course of our brief visit to campus, we were consistently and pleasantly surprised to find that there was a great deal of important data and analysis that had not found its way into the self-study, and that was also not widely shared with the campus and the wider community.

Standard Eleven: Integrity

As stated in the self-study, as a public liberal arts college with a commitment to engaged citizenship as a keystone of learning, MCLA expects its faculty, staff and administration to model integrity and ethical behavior.

The college adheres to laws governing Massachusetts State Universities, Federal laws dictating the development and dissemination of policies and practices, and collective bargaining agreements. The administration is cognizant of the importance of being knowledgeable about and responsive to increasing legislation from the state and local governments. Standards of professional practice are taken seriously.

The appropriate educational policies and procedures are available in the academic catalog, student handbook and on the website. These include but are not limited to student rights under the Family Education and Privacy Act (FERPA), grievance policies, alcohol and other drug policies, Campus Security Report, veteran information and voter registration information. The Office of Human Resources reports regular dissemination of the appropriate policies to members

of the faculty, staff and administration. The new Director is committed to reviewing these and ensuring that the campus adheres to current best practice. The self-study indicates that the Board of Trustees is involved in the review of the federally required annual Clery Report so that they are knowledgeable about campus safety.

The Policy Against Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment and Retaliation communicates clearly the MCLA commitment to providing an inclusive and diverse community. The Website directs complaints to the Discrimination Complaint Procedures, the Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Diversity Plan or to the Student Affairs or Academic Affairs Offices. Providing a link within the body of the grievance procedure would strengthen this communication.

The self-study indicates the college's continued commitment to a proactive and unified approach to enhance compliance and policy awareness. The focus on the Institutional Review Board, Academic Integrity and the Diversity Task Force seems appropriate. The self-study also commits to continued attentiveness to assessment as another example of a commitment to integrity.

Institutional Effectiveness Summary

Summary of Institutional Effectiveness

MCLA is doing a good job of assessing its institutional effectiveness. Assessment of student academic learning is on an excellent developmental trajectory, with departmental goals and objectives that are for the most part measurable and usable for continuing improvement. A program review cycle is in place. Nationally-recognized student assessments (e.g., NSSE) are taking their place within institutional culture. It is hoped that MCLA will tell its assessment story to wider audiences.

The same sorts of assessment need to be more fully extended to other areas – co-curricular programming, enrollment management, advancement, facilities master planning and multi-year financial modeling, administrative effectiveness – all would enhance and institutionalize the successes of MCLA. This is not to downplay the achievements of the college over the last ten years. It is simply to underline the caution that in a period of disruptive change, close attention with metrics and benchmarks to all the functional areas could be helpful. The manageable scope of the college, the close personal attention of the administrative team, the care and good intentions of the faculty and staff, can take an institution a long way, as has been amply demonstrated in this instance. But well-designed data collection, repeated over time, focuses the attention in new ways on performance.

Affirmation of Compliance

All the requirements of Title IV – credit hour policy as discussed in Standard Four; transfer policy; the procedures for dealing with student complaints; and public notification of the visit, with opportunity for public comment; have been met, as affirmed by the president. The requirement for distance learning does not apply. With respect to the credit hour policy, the team concluded that the institutional policy is appropriate and the documentation adequate, but there are nonetheless some instances where the policy is incompletely understood.

Conclusion

The self-study did not do justice to the achievements of MCLA over the past ten years. The closer the team looked, the better we found things to be. The students, faculty and staff are performing at a very high level. The public liberal arts mission as enacted is a major strength of the college, and has been organically adapted via high-impact practices for students and multiple partnerships with business, government, arts organizations and other non-profits to the surrounding community. MCLA is a vital force in the growing revitalization of North Adams and the Berkshires.

The president, Board of Trustees, and their many partners are to be commended for the record MCLA has achieved over the past decade. MCLA is truly a model of how small rural colleges can sustain themselves in the world of the early 21st century, providing students and communities with value through education, research and creative activity, and service.

Strengths:

The five-year strategic planning cycle enabling the college to achieve its planning goals has been effective; the library plan, with measurable and achievable goals has been created; and the financial health of the college has been maintained.

With regard to student learning, the team concluded that requirements for each degree level are appropriate and well-documented.

Concerns:

Resources need to be made available to carry out the library strategic plan.

A program of information literacy is yet to be infused into the Core and across the curriculum.

Access to the college's IT network and wireless service is inadequate.

Regular multi-year financial planning is needed, including a more comprehensive enrollment management plan.