



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Thursday, April 7, 2016  
Murdock 218**

**Trustees in attendance:**

William Dudley, Vice Chair  
Mohan Boodram  
Lisa Chamberlain  
JD Chesloff  
Susan Gold  
Buffy Lord  
Denise Marshall  
Nicholas Hernigle, Student Trustee

**Trustees absent:**

Tyler Fairbank

**Staff in attendance:**

James F. Birge, President  
Denise Richardello, Executive Vice President  
Larry Behan, Vice President of Administration & Finance  
Cynthia Brown, Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Barbara Chaput, Director of Human Resources  
Cathy Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs  
Monica Joslin, Dean of Academic Affairs  
Curt King, Chief Information Officer  
Beth Petri, Director of Financial Aid  
Laura Standley, Assistant Professor, Theatre  
Benjamin Wood, Assistant Professor, Psychology  
Ginger Menard, Clerk

**Special Guests**

Carlos Santiago, Commissioner, MA Department of Higher Education  
Michael Mizzoni, Director of Trustee Relations, MA Department of Higher Education

---

Complying with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and 15A, Section 9, and with a quorum present, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met at 5:00 p.m. at Murdock Hall on April 7, 2016 with Board Vice Chair Dudley presiding.

Vice Chair Dudley called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. He welcomed President Birge to his first full Board meeting as President. He then introduced guests from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Commissioner Carlos Santiago and Director of Trustee Relations, Michael Mizzoni. Commissioner Santiago met with a number of constituencies on campus throughout the day and will speak about his impressions from those meetings.

### **Remarks and discussion with Commissioner Santiago**

Commissioner Santiago remarked that he had an exceptional day learning about an exceptional institution. This was his 18<sup>th</sup> campus visit and he had the opportunity to meet with students, faculty, staff, elected officials, business leaders, and local K-12 leaders. He commended the extremely professional and competent staff and applauded the campus-wide focus on student performance and providing access to education to underserved populations. MCLA has opened its doors to those who lack the financial capacity to continue their education with a Pell eligibility population over 40%.

He noted that the state is facing a challenge as its high school population is in decline. One third of the state labor force is between the ages of 55 and 65 and there will be difficulties in filling positions when this educated demographic retires. The challenge lies not only in filling current jobs, but educating our citizens for jobs that are yet to be created. Our public institutions are important to the future of the Commonwealth as it is their graduates that tend to stay in the state after graduation.

The Commissioner shared that he had a phenomenal conversation with students. He also complimented the in-depth collaborations between MCLA and K-12 educators in fostering community collaborations to lead students on the path to success.

He recognized the difficult budget environment and the scarcity of capital dollars. He also noted the important role of public institutions to the growth of local economies.

He spoke about the state system of public institutions as a whole noting that while he is not advocating for an overhaul, he does believe there needs to be a more unified voice around issues that impact education, especially higher education. There is also a need to solidify the transfer system so that a student can attend any community college in the state and seamlessly transfer to one of the state universities. They have completed the mapping process for transfers within 6 majors and are currently working on an additional ten majors.

In summarizing his visit Commissioner Santiago stated that all of MCLA's constituencies should be very proud. The College is fully ingrained in the life of the North Adams community and fully committed to student success. Additionally, MCLA has a long history of, and is renowned for, its civic engagement. He encouraged the sharing of these practices and participation in conversations with other institutions to bring this expertise to others.

Trustee Marshall thanked the Commissioner for his comments and for his recognition of the College's dedication to access and student success.

Trustee Chesloff added to the comment about graduates remaining in state and noted how this is especially critical in Berkshire County. He asked the Commissioner to share something that he learned today about MCLA of which he was not aware prior to his visit. The Commissioner offered that although he knew about MCLA's commitment to access, he was not aware at how successful the College had been in that area. He also noted the deep commitment of the faculty, their collegiality, and their dedication to providing high-quality instruction.

Trustee Boodram shared the challenges the College has occasionally faced when telling stories of success and how these stories can be obscured by data. An example is the reporting of retention rates without segmenting non-Pell versus Pell-eligible as the latter are being retained at a higher rate.

Finally, the Commissioner shared that the campus and presidential evaluation process will be different this year. The Commissioner will have a conversation with each President to discuss the state of the institution, results related to the Vision Project, and upcoming goals. A joint single page letter will then be drafted highlighting the areas of focus.

Trustee Dudley offered his appreciation as well for the Commissioner's recognition of MCLA's distinctness. He said that we would appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with other campuses but would also appreciate any help in spreading MCLA's story and the College's commitment to creating a more robust economy in Berkshire County.

### **Approval of the Minutes of the October 22, 2015 and December 10, 2015 meetings of the Board of Trustees**

Due to the specialized agenda of the December meeting there are two sets of Board meeting minutes to approve along with Executive Committee minutes.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the October 22, 2015 and December 10, 2015, meetings of the Board and all actions contained therein.

### **Report of the March 30, 2016, Executive Committee Meeting**

Trustee Dudley reported that the committee received an update on Trustee appointments and discussed Board retreat planning. The suggestion is to hold two retreats next year, one in the summer and one in the winter. President Birge will convene an ad hoc group to discuss agenda items. The President also reported on the Vice President for Institutional Advancement search as well as budget updates. The key budget issue remains collective bargaining and whether funding will be included by the state.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the March 30, 2016, meeting of the Executive Committee and all actions contained therein.

### **Report of the December 3, 2015 and March 2, 2016 Fiscal Affairs Committee meetings**

Trustee Marshall reported that the December meeting included findings from the state auditor and the committee approved the purchase of a disk array system as the current system was out of date and insufficient for the campus needs. The sealing of the Venable Hall tunnel that leads to the Campus Center will begin after Commencement and improvements to the Public Safety building are being discussed.

The committee reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter report in December and the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter report in March. In March they also received results of the A-133 Audit on financial aid. In addition, Vice President Behan reviewed the state budget process and expressed concern over the potential lack of collective bargaining funding.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the December 3, 2015 and March 2, 2016, meetings of the Fiscal Affairs Committee and all actions contained therein.

### **Report of the March 3, 2016, Student Affairs Committee Meeting**

Trustee Gold shared that the committee received reports regarding the “It’s on Us” campaign and “Safe Zone” training. Student Trustee Hernigle raised concerns regarding the lack of compliance with the campus smoking policy. The committee discussed the possibility of the campus becoming smoke-free. Trustee Chamberlain asked how this issue could be approached via a culture shift and not simply statistics about the dangers of smoking and a mandate against it. Student Affairs will facilitate the discussion of this issue and continue the discussions with the Student Affairs Committee as well as the full Board.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the March 3, 2016 meeting of the Student Affairs Committee and all actions contained therein.

### **Report of the March 22, 2016, Academic Affairs Committee Meeting**

Trustee Chamberlain reported on behalf of the committee.

The committee received an update on faculty personnel actions including reappointments, promotions, and tenure. Only tenure requires a formal Board vote. Promotions and appointments do not require a vote but information is shared to allow the committee to become familiar with faculty members.

The Committee discussed the recommendation from Vice President Brown that Dr. Elizabeth Hartung, Laura Standley, Dr. Nicholas Stroud, and Dr. Benjamin Wood be granted tenure. Three faculty being advanced today are seeking appointment a year early. This is allowable under the contract for those who make an exceptional contribution to the College or their discipline. Dean Joslin noted that she supported the recommendations and affirmed the faculty's commitment to scholarship and engagement.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To unanimously recommend tenure for Dr. Elizabeth "Liz" Hartung – Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Laura Standley – Assistant Professor of Theatre, Dr. Nicholas Stroud – Assistant Professor of Education, and Dr. Benjamin "Ben" Wood – Assistant Professor of Psychology

Trustee Chamberlain noted the importance of this occasion for these faculty members and she offered congratulations on behalf of the Board to Laura Standley and Ben Wood who were in attendance at the meeting. She then called for a vote to accept the minutes from the March 22 meeting.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the March 22, 2016, meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee and all actions contained therein.

### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

Trustee Chesloff shared that the election of Board officers is being brought forward at this meeting rather than at the annual meeting in May due to current and upcoming shifts in Board membership.

Chair Fairbank has served for three years instead of the usual term of two years due to the presidential transition. Though he will continue as a Trustee until an appointment is announced to take his seat, he will be stepping down as Chair. Additionally, current Vice Chair Dudley has accepted the Presidency at Washington and Lee University and will only be able to serve a partial term for the upcoming year.

Given these transitions the Nominating Committee is bringing forth the names of Susan Gold to serve as Chair and JD Chesloff to serve as Vice Chair through the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

The Nominating Committee also reviewed Committee assignments for the 2016-2017 academic year. Due to the current size of the Board some of the Committees have only two members. As Board appointments are made the Committees will be adjusted to reflect the membership. Though new Board Committee assignments begin July 1 Trustee Lord as agreed to step in as Chair of the Student Affairs Committee for the remainder of this academic year as well as that Committee is currently without a Chair due to Trustee Edgerton's resignation.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the nominations of Susan Gold as Chair and JD Chesloff as Vice Chair for a term of one year, effective immediately.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the slate of committee assignments for 2016-2017.

### **Vice Chair's report**

Vice Chair Dudley noted that we have not yet received final word from the Governor's office regarding Board appointments and reappointments but anticipate receiving news next week. He also shared that there is no additional news regarding the inclusion of collective bargaining in the state budget. As previously noted, this lack of funding would create a shortfall in the budget which will have to be addressed.

Vice Chair Dudley then shared that Chair Fairbank is sorry he could not be at today's meeting. Though not present, Vice Chair Dudley wanted to publicly thank him again for his leadership the past three years, particularly during the presidential transition as he guided the Board through two searches. Chair Fairbank has given so much of his time to MCLA, especially over the last year and a half, and he would like the record to reflect his deep commitment to keeping the

College moving forward throughout the transition and to ensuring that we identified the right leader for MCLA, which we have in Dr. Birge.

## **Presidents Report**

President Birge offered his gratitude on being named MCLA's 12<sup>th</sup> President. He recognized that it was a long and exhaustive process with two searches and he extended his thanks to Executive Vice President Richardello for her stewarding of the transition plan.

In his first month he attended an alumni event in Washington DC, organized in conjunction with the other state universities, and will be attending the Taconic Society event this weekend and an alumni event in Andover on April 14.

He has also attended a meeting with the Council of Presidents (COP) of the state universities and a meeting of the Board of Higher Education (BHE).

At the BHE a decision was made to freeze tuition. The Fiscal Affairs Committee will be reviewing the budget and will make recommendations regarding student fees pending the results of collective bargaining funding, or lack thereof.

The COP has been discussing the issue of tracking Presidential time and travel. At MCLA the President's time records will be reviewed by the Vice President of Administration & Finance. Additionally, he will get written approval from the Board Chair in advance of any travel outside of the Commonwealth to ensure there are no misconceptions regarding his time and travel.

A search consultant has been engaged or the Vice President of Institutional Advancement position. The goal is to have someone in the position by July.

Fall enrollment numbers are positive and tending above last year's numbers. He has attended two Accepted Student Day events and has seen very good turnout.

President Birge will implement a monthly email communication with the Board to summarize campus and necessary statewide activity and requested their feedback regarding content. Additionally, he began holding a weekly open office hour for conversations with students, faculty, staff, and the community.

Finally, he noted that each Trustee received a copy of the recent edition of the *Mind's Eye* which features an essay and photos by Trustee Lord regarding a bus trip she took with MCLA faculty and students to significant sites in the American Civil Rights Movement throughout the Southeast.

## **Adjournment**

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

**VOTED** to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m.