

The logo for MCLA, featuring the letters 'MCLA' in a large, white, serif font. The background of the entire page is a dark blue color with a pattern of dark blue, ornate, swirling scrollwork.

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

2017-2022

Think **Differently**

Learning and Teaching for a Changing World

## OUR MISSION

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) is the Commonwealth's public liberal arts college and a campus of the Massachusetts state university system. MCLA promotes excellence in learning and teaching, innovative scholarship, intellectual creativity, public service, applied knowledge, and active and responsible citizenship. MCLA prepares its graduates to be practical problem solvers and engaged, resilient global citizens.

MCLA

# Message from the President

I am pleased to share with you MCLA's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. This document is the culmination of an inclusive process that began in September 2016. Led by an 18-person steering committee representing all segments of the college community, the process generated voluminous and valuable input through outreach and engagement opportunities that included open forums; surveys of students, faculty and staff; questionnaires for the Board of Trustees and the Foundation Board of Directors; a survey of alumni; roundtable discussion with community members; and many meetings on campus.

The plan represents a call to action, charging all of us to challenge our assumptions, think creatively about how we approach our work, and act strategically as we pursue the shared goal of making MCLA a better, stronger, and more diverse institution. The result of the visioning, goal setting and planning we undertook is more than a document; it is a living plan that will engage all members of our college community.

I am impressed by the work of so many that created this plan that calls us to **think differently** about learning and teaching for a changing world. The plan will keep us focused, inspired, and in pursuit of excellence.

Already a public liberal arts college with an excellent reputation for providing an affordable, high-quality education, MCLA is ready to think differently as we begin our quest to be the best public liberal arts college in the nation.

Over the next five years we will create new educational opportunities for our students and new professional opportunities for our faculty and staff. We will emphasize the importance of communication; we will share MCLA's story and values more widely. And we will make inclusion and diversity defining characteristics of an MCLA education.

I know our community will work together to advance these goals and enhance the positive impact MCLA already has — on our students and their families, our 18,000 alumni, our faculty and staff, our city and the region, and the Commonwealth.

I am excited about MCLA's future and by the collaboration of my colleagues to achieve these goals.



James F. Birge, Ph.D.  
President

# Our Values



**Access:** We believe a high-quality liberal arts education should be available and affordable to all who aspire to it and are prepared for its challenges. MCLA is committed to providing this opportunity.

**Critical Thinking:** Through MCLA's role as leader, convener, and partner, we cultivate critical thinking and analysis in our learning and teaching. We promote a spirit of informed and open-ended inquiry. Our community members demonstrate consideration, deliberation, and planning in addressing challenges and opportunities in our society.

**Discovery and Understanding:** We understand intellectual disciplines and specific courses of study interact dynamically in academic and co-curricular experiences. We believe in strengthening student, faculty, and community interaction through engaging coursework, shared research, and service.

**Global Awareness:** We know that a liberal arts education affords students an appreciation of the wider world, both as a subject of intellectual discovery and through engagement with our society. We work to create and sustain the breadth of curriculum, experiences, and opportunities that lead us all to understand our active roles as knowledgeable global citizens.

**Inclusive Community:** MCLA is committed to creating a campus climate and culture of mutual respect that represents and honors diversity in our society. We celebrate this diversity and affirm the dignity and worth of all people. We intentionally integrate topics of social, cultural, and physical diversity in the curricular, co-curricular, and work life of our community.

**Innovation, Experimentation and Creativity:** We promote creativity and inquiry, and we believe the role of a liberal arts institution is to provide students with the freedom and means to explore ideas and take intellectual and creative risks.

**Leadership:** We believe that leadership is a shared responsibility, and encourage all members of the MCLA community to develop their affinity for leadership through formal coursework, professional development, co-curricular training, and practical application. We cultivate leadership opportunities and development programs to further these goals.

**Lifelong Learning:** We empower learners to develop habits of learning that have integrity and engender respect for tradition. We deploy 21st century tools for learning in our academic and co-curricular programs that prepare students to be informed, engaged, and capable learners.

**Practicality and Application:** We believe that the disciplines of arts, sciences, and professional studies empower individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values and ethics. In its programs and initiatives MCLA forges the connection among academic study, experiential learning, civic engagement, and future success.

**Stewardship:** We manage our resources responsibly and sustainably, and offer a variety of educational, cultural, and recreational experiences for the campus and local communities. We provide unique resources for the greater Berkshire region. We encourage a spirit of service among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees, and to serve as stewards of the future.





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# Broad Strokes: Our Position Today and Our Vision for Tomorrow



Today, MCLA is a small, but mighty public liberal arts institution offering a high-quality, affordable education in a close-knit living and learning community where students can engage and excel right from the start.

One of only 29 public liberal arts colleges in the nation, MCLA is **distinguished** by its approach to integrating the liberal arts with professional studies and by a unique location that enriches students' overall educational experience. The College is further distinguished by the talented faculty and staff it attracts, its distinctive niche programs, the wide range of learning and leadership opportunities it offers, and the accomplishments of its alumni.

As the College plans for the future and prepares to make strategic changes where necessary to address critical issues, confront challenges and seize opportunities, certain commitments **will remain** firm, among them MCLA's commitment to:

- ensuring its education is accessible to all and challenging for all;
- promoting excellence and quality across the board;
- building its educational program on the foundation of the liberal arts and sciences;
- being a diverse and inclusive community;
- being a place where no one is a stranger and no one falls through the cracks;
- connecting with our external community and serving as a cultural, intellectual, and economic resource; and
- responding to regional and Commonwealth needs in creative ways that add value.



Building on our strengths and remaining faithful to our core commitments, we aspire to be even better and stronger **in five years**. The MCLA we envision in 2022 will be a nationally known, top-choice destination for those seeking an affordable liberal arts education of the highest quality; indeed, we aspire to be the #1-ranked public liberal arts college in the nation by 2022.

The College will be well known for a cutting-edge, innovative, 21st-century curriculum rooted in the liberal arts that also is responsive to and connected with the evolving world of work. MCLA will be a model academic community where faculty and staff thrive and students' lives are transformed. Diversity will be reflected at all levels of the institution, including in leadership roles.

We believe students should view their education as an investment, not a debt, and accordingly the MCLA we envision in 2022 will be a place where every qualified admitted student's full financial need will be met. We believe it is possible for MCLA to lead the state public higher education system in retention and graduation rates, and so we will work toward that goal.

MCLA will remain deeply rooted in its community and region, and by 2022 our engagement with other organizations and institutions will be both deeper and wider, mutually benefitting our students and our partners. MCLA will be an institution that is nimble and flexible, not afraid to make change or take calculated risks. The College's funding sources will be more diversified and adequate to support ongoing operations and strategic investments in support of the vision and goals.







## OUR GOALS FOR 2017-2022

**Respond** to student and community needs in ways that enhance MCLA's distinctiveness, its role as a pioneering educational leader, and its value as an engine of regional growth

**Enhance** student persistence, completion, and preparation for post-college success

**Strengthen** and demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

**Attract** and retain great talent and promote a campus climate that is collegial, collaborative, and creative

**Improve** internal communications and enhance our external reputation

**Improve** facilities and technology infrastructure in support of our mission

**Promote** enhanced organizational effectiveness

**Diversify** revenues and build a more sustainable financial model

# Our Key Strategies



## GOAL 1

Respond to student and community needs in ways that enhance MCLA's distinctiveness, its role as a pioneering educational leader, and its value as an engine of regional growth

### Key Strategies:

- Fortify the integration of a liberal arts foundation with career preparation
- Nurture innovative faculty scholarship and continue to apply emerging pedagogies
- Leverage the unique cultural, natural, and economic resources of MCLA's location to offer distinctive programs
- Expand living-learning communities and more effectively integrate academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular programming
- Provide more diverse and flexible program delivery options to meet the needs of non-traditional, non-residential students
- Develop more transfer pathways from community colleges and increase dual-enrollment programming that provides pre-/early-college experiences

## GOAL 2

Enhance student persistence, completion, and preparation for post-college success

### Key Strategies:

- Take a more intentional and integrated approach to promoting student self-awareness, understanding of cognitive processes, and self-regulated learning
- Continue to build a culture of high-quality, inclusive teaching and learning grounded in evidence-based practices
- Place renewed emphasis on advising as fundamental to student success and retention
- Ensure that all students can access resources, support systems and tools that facilitate adjustment to college life and promote social and intellectual development throughout their college experience
- Strengthen and deepen alumni networks and local connections that expand post-graduation transition pathways for all students
- Meet a higher percentage of student financial need so that cost of attendance is not a barrier to completion



### GOAL 3

## Strengthen and demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

### Key Strategies:

- Work creatively and in collaboration with the community to expand access to an MCLA education by underserved populations and students whose academic preparation and socioeconomic status disadvantage them
- Promote a pluralistic student experience and a campus culture that embraces diversity, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and social responsibility
- Ensure students of diverse backgrounds see themselves reflected in the faculty, administration and staff on campus and in the College's leadership
- Provide faculty, staff, and administrators with continuing education/training on issues relating to diversity, inclusive pedagogies and programs, creating respectful classroom and office spaces, and managing difficult conversations
- Create, coordinate, and maintain transparent policies and processes that model inclusion and equity





## GOAL 4

Attract and retain great talent and promote a campus climate that is collegial, collaborative, and creative

### Key Strategies:

- Foster a supportive campus culture and climate aligned with MCLA's core values
- Expand professional development opportunities and emphasize lifelong learning for faculty and staff
- Align workloads and role-related expectations of faculty and staff at MCLA with the resources and time necessary to meet those expectations effectively and efficiently
- Expand opportunities for teamwork and collaboration among members of the campus community and across departments and divisions
- Encourage, facilitate and reward innovative thinking and entrepreneurial solutions throughout the College



## GOAL 5

Improve internal communications and enhance our external reputation

### Key Strategies:

- Develop and implement strategies to improve the flow of information on campus
- Ensure all members of the campus community can easily access up-to-date, accurate information related to policies, procedures, programs, and other matters affecting how students, faculty and staff function on campus
- Increase informal interaction and community-building among faculty, staff, students, administration, and alumni
- Continue efforts to promote public awareness of and appreciation for the value of a liberal arts education and MCLA's status as a top-tier public liberal arts education
- Fortify MCLA's unique "brand" and aggressively showcase the College's distinctive strengths and competitive advantages, including its size and location



## GOAL 6

### Improve facilities and technology infrastructure in support of our mission

#### Key Strategies:

- Leverage opportunities to bring Campus Master Plan priorities to fruition
- Renovate or improve College space on and off campus as required to enhance the experience of teaching, learning, living, working, engaging in research or creative pursuits, and socializing
- Continue to promote environmental responsibility and sustainability as a core institutional value
- Assure that the campus is safe, secure, and conveniently connected to North Adams and the region
- Continue to enhance library resources and advance the vision of a learning commons model
- Strengthen our technology infrastructure to support the evolving demands of instructional, classroom and communication needs



## GOAL 7

### Promote enhanced organizational effectiveness

#### Key Strategies:

- Promote active, collaborative, and effective governance at all levels
- Promote greater transparency in decision making, and ensure faculty and staff feel they have a voice in setting strategic direction and priorities
- Align human and physical resources with program development, student enrollment and success patterns, and other changing needs
- Promote innovative practices such as design thinking across campus to address issues and solve problems
- Foster a campus culture that promotes active citizenship, data-driven assessment, and shared accountability
- Eliminate redundancies and streamline processes



## GOAL 8

### Diversify revenues and build a more sustainable financial model

#### Key Strategies:

- Advocate at the state and federal level for positive changes in government funding of higher education, student loan programs, and grants
- Pursue opportunities to reduce costs through sharing of resources, conservative budgeting, and careful fiscal management
- Develop a multi-year enrollment plan, targeting growth opportunities that can maximize revenues without overextending
- Enhance graduate and continuing education offerings and entrepreneurial programs to increase non-state revenue to the College
- Create a culture of stewardship and philanthropy that inspires students, faculty, staff and alumni to give back and help strengthen the College



# Strategic Planning Committee

## **Co-chairs**

Gina Puc, Director of Admission

Adrienne Wootters, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

## **Members**

Amanda Beckwith, Head Volleyball Coach, Coordinator of Women's Center and Identity & Gender Equality Resource Center

Mariana Bolivar, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages

Michael Birch, Professor of English/Communications

James F. Birge, President

Jason Canales, Institutional Research Analyst

Barbara Chaput, Director of Human Resources/Payroll Office

Charles Cianfarini, Network/Computer Support Services and APA President

H. Jake Eberwein, Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education

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Elizabeth Manns, Mailroom and Copy Center Clerk, AFSCME Steward

Nancy Ovitsky, Professor of Business Administration & Economics,  
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Graziana Ramsden, Professor of Modern Languages,  
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Denise Richardello, Executive Vice President

Ann Scott, Professor of Education

Diane Scott, Assistant Professor of Arts Management

Daniel P. Shustack, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies

Brianne O'Rourke, Student Trustee 2016-2017

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