



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of December 4, 2024
MS Teams
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Mohan Boodram, Chair, Jean Clarke-Mitchell, Denise Marshall

Members Absent

Frederick Keator

Others in Attendance

James Birge, President,
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

All attendees participated remotely.

As allowed by executive order of the Governor of Massachusetts, in compliance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and 15A, Section 9, and with a quorum present via audio/video-conference, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees with Chair Boodram presiding was called to order at 8:15 a.m.

FY24 Student Account Write-offs

An error was made in advancing the recommendation for approval of write-offs to the board of trustees meeting of October 24, 2024. The Board returned that motion to this committee to take further action. Upon motion duly made and second, with no further discussion, upon roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to rescind the motion of October 16 recommending approval by the Board of Trustees to write-off student accounts receivable totaling \$25,136.19, as presented.

Trustee Resignation – Franklyn Reynolds

Trustee Reynolds submitted his resignation from MCLA's Board of Trustees on October 31, 2024. At this point, MCLA has two Trustees serving beyond their term end dates, two Trustees with terms ending in March 2025, and the immediate vacancy created with this resignation.

Board of Trustees Nominees

Chair Boodram provided an overview of current activity at the State level regarding the selection and appointment of Trustees for State universities. The Public Education Nominating Council is active and have meetings scheduled through the fiscal year. Institutions have been invited to submit two trustee recommendations for PENC's and the Governor's consideration. The next meeting of PENC is scheduled for December 18.

The Committee reviewed names submitted in the past and additional names for PENC's consideration. Skill and experience gaps of the current membership were discussed. The committee agreed with the individuals discussed and President Birge will begin outreach to determine if there is interest amongst those discussed.

Honorary Degree Recipients

President Birge began the discussion of commencement speaker and honorary degree candidates for the Class of 2025 Commencement exercises. The selection of the Commencement speaker is at the discretion of the President and honorary degree recipients are recommended by this committee to the full board.

Mr. LeVar Burton is the President's recommendation for Commencement speaker, as well as an HD recipient. Mr. Burton is an actor, director, producer, author and podcaster whose decades-long body of work includes Roots, Star Trek: The Next Generation, and Reading Rainbow. He is the honored recipient of six NAACP Awards, a Peabody, a Grammy, and 15 Emmy Awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Inaugural Children's & Family Emmys.

President Birge presented individuals for consideration as HD recipients. Trustees discussed the merits of each candidate. Upon motion duly made and seconded, with no further discussion, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to recommend that MCLA's Board of Trustees approve Mr. LeVar Burton, Dr. Kathleen Warren, and Mr. Dennis Powell as recipients of an Honorary Doctorate to be awarded at the Class of 2025 Commencement exercises.

Commencement Speaker

As noted in the HD recipient discussion, President Birge recommended Mr. LeVar Burton to serve as Commencement Speaker. In the event the Mr. Burton is unable to serve as speaker, Mr. Kiese Laymon was recommended as an alternate commencement speaker.

Mr. Laymon is a professor of English and Creative Writing at Rice University. He is the author of three full-length books: a novel, *Long Division* (2013), and two memoirs, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* (2013) and the award-winning *Heavy: An American Memoir* (2018). Laymon was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2022.

President Birge will begin the process of contacting the above individuals to serve as Commencement speaker.

Strategic Plan

President Birge provided an update on the College's strategic plan being developed. The timeline had been that this committee would review the proposed plan and advance it to the Board of Trustees for consideration and discussion at the December meeting. However, the DHE is unable to accommodate this timeline, and the plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees at their February meeting.

The draft plan will be discussed with Trustees for additional input at the December meeting. Questions to provide structure to the conversation will be provided for that meeting.

Other business

Chair Boodram stated that the Trustees annual retreat has been scheduled for January 17, 2025. Clerk Lesarbeau will provide a save the date notice for trustees and materials will follow once the agenda has been set.

As this is a year in which the President's evaluation is to be a comprehensive review, Chair Boodram has had a conversation with the Chair of Salem State University's board of trustees to learn details of how they conducted their similar Presidential review. He is also in the process of considering Trustee selection for service on the Evaluation Committee.

With no other business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:11 a.m.