



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

December 12, 2019

Murdock Hall, Room 208

The following Trustees were present:

Mohan Boodram
John Barrett III
JD Chesloff

Susan Gold
Frederick Keator
Karen Kowalczyk

Robert Reilly
Kathleen Therrien
Jacob Vitali

The following Trustees were absent:

Brenda Burdick
Denise Marshall

MCLA staff in attendance:

President James Birge
Lawrence Behan, Vice President of Finance and Administration
Barbara Chaput, Vice President of Human Resources
Catherine Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Gina Puc, Dean of Enrollment Management and Community Relations
Adrienne Wootters, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs

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 5:30 p.m. at Murdock Hall on December 12, 2019 with Board Vice Chair Chesloff presiding.

Approval of Minutes: October 24, 2019 Meetings of the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the October 24, 2019 meetings of the Board and Executive Committee and all actions contained therein.

Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 12, 2019

The Fiscal Affairs committee met on December 4, 2019 for a review of financials for Q1 2020 and FY20 forecast, a report of accounts receivable, and an update on campus renovations.

The three-month period ended September 30, 2019 shows a net operating gain of \$394,000 resulting mainly from position vacancies. Marketing and branding expenses were over budget, but this overage was expected as the college works to take advantage of work done with Simpson Scarborough to grow brand awareness.

The committee discussed open positions and current searches, as well as the teach-out agreement with SVC and its impact on faculty.

Accounts receivable ended the fall semester at \$62,035 consisting of 48 students. Thirty percent of this is small balances and these students were allowed to register for spring classes. The remaining students will be pursued in unenrolled collection. Twenty-two students defaulted on payment plans as compared to 15 students last fall.

Thirteen hundred students have been billed for the spring semester including undergrads, cohorts, and grad students. Receivables at \$2.9 million are on par with the prior spring semester.

For fiscal year 2020, an operating deficit of \$373,000 is forecast. Strategies to address the deficit and areas forecast to be over budget will be addressed by Management.

While the current model for financial aid awarding is showing a small increase in retention, it has led to higher award acceptances by students and subsequently over awarding of financial aid. This model will be refined to focus on balancing awarding levels and net tuition revenue. Despite over awarding, net tuition revenue has increased.

The college will benefit from State supplemental funding for financial aid, which may be awarded for FY19. This would reduce the deficit in the financial aid line.

Renovations on the Centennial Dining Room are complete and the new fitness center construction is well underway. Change orders have delayed the soft opening to summer 2020.

The committee reviewed funding sources for the fitness center, \$4.5mm of which is in-kind donations from Aramark. The funding sources include DCAMM, MSCBA bonds, and MCLA's Foundation. If the project remains on course with no additional change orders, a \$566,000 revenue surplus is forecast. This would be used to offset other college expense lines and will be known at the end of the construction in late 2020.

The college will submit a proposal for DCAMM funding to renovate Eldridge and Mark Hopkins halls, and to construct a building to connect the two. If approved, the \$26 million project will be funded through \$22 million from DCAMM, fundraising, grants, and in-kind donations.

The report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee was accepted as presented.

Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 12, 2019

Trustee Boodram presented the report of the Enrollment Management Committee of December 12, 2019.

Upon motion duly made and second, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the October 24, 2019 meeting of the Enrollment Management Committee and all actions contained therein.

The Committee heard a summary of the early action applications. The number of accepted students is up year over year. It was noted that early action students yield and persist in high numbers.

Applications for regular action in the fall 2020 cycle were reviewed. While there has been a decrease in applications, the applicant pool is of higher quality based on GPA and standardized testing, and this group behaves differently in the enrollment cycle.

Data was provided on FAFSA filers which are down nationwide.

The committee was provided an overview of the use of ChatBot, which is AI used to provide interactive chats with potential and current students.

Spring recruitment and yield were discussed, and modifications have been made to the onboarding processes and programs. Retention trends year over year were presented. First-year students are retaining higher than last year at 73%. An analysis will be conducted of lower retention rates to strategize ways to improve retention.

Title 3 funding for persistence was presented including kick-off to college and activities during this period; grants for specific majors; and student wellness and success planning.

Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of November 21, 2019

Trustee Keator presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of November 21, 2019

Coach Amanda Beckwith provided an overview of the volleyball program. Student athletes Tessa Sestito and Houa Xiong, talked about their experiences at MCLA.

Trustees discussed Title 9 and an assault that occurred on campus. Students' feelings around the lack of information and understanding of Title 9, and communication related to Title 9 were reviewed. Of most concern to students was the description of the suspect used in the campus safety alerts. Care will be taken when sending alerts to include language providing trigger warnings as needed. VP Holbrook indicated that all Title 9 reports have been addressed and no investigations remain open.

Due to time constraints, the discussion of the fitness center was tabled until the next committee meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019 meeting of the Student Affairs Committee and all actions contained therein.

The report of the Student Affairs Committee was accepted as presented.

Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of December 6, 2019

Trustee Therrien presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting of December 6, 2019.

The Academic Affairs committee met on December 6, 2019 to review sabbatical applications for 2020/21; discuss faculty searches; and hear updates from Ely Janis, Dean of Academic Affairs, and Theresa O'Bryant, Dean of the Center for Student Success and Engagement.

The following faculty members applied for sabbatical in upcoming 2020 and 2021 semesters:

- Dr. Mariana Bolivar
- Dr. David Braden-Johnson
- Dr. Emily Maher
- Dr. Kerri Leyda Nicoll
- Diane Scott
- Dr. Jenna Scuito; and
- Dr. Thomas Whalen

Sabbatical plans for each were reviewed, and the committee discussed course coverage practices during these absences. All applicants for sabbatical were recommended for approval by VP of Academic Affairs Adrienne Wootters and President Birge.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to approve sabbatical in the 2020 and 2021 time periods to the aforementioned faculty.

Trustees further discussed the sabbatical application process, options of a six month or full year leave, and reporting out of work done during sabbatical.

There are currently seven faculty searches in process to fill open positions. The committee discussed full time and adjunct hiring. MCLA remains within the 15% adjunct calculation per MSCA contract.

Dean Janis provided an update on organization changes made within the Division of Continuing and Graduate Education. Staffing has been optimized at 66 Allen Street to leverage that location.

Core curriculum redesign remains a focus of the Academic Affairs division. Subcommittee work continues on this multi-year process. The new core curriculum is anticipated to go through the governance process in fall 2020 and be implemented in fall 2021.

Reappointment portfolio reviews for 2nd year faculty have been completed by Dean Janis, and the review of promotions and tenure portfolios, and portfolios for 3rd, 4th and 5th year are due in January 2020.

Post tenure portfolio review and first year appointments will be conducted by VP Wootters.

The committee heard an update from Theresa O'Bryant, Dean of the Center for Student Success and Engagement. She provided an overview of her transition to her current Dean's position, and the organizational structure of CSSE. CSSE's work centers around careers, advising students, peer tutoring, disability resources, accessibility, and student outreach.

The division has held career fairs and invited employers to campus for student internships and employment searches. New software has been introduced to improve career placement, as well.

Work is being done between CSSE and the Office of Admission to disclose learning disabilities to help CSSE act and provide services earlier in students' college careers. Academic support and disability services training is planned for faculty and staff.

A search is under way for an Associate Director for College Readiness and Success with two candidates scheduled for on campus interviews this week.

The committee discussed President Birge's recommendation that Professor Matthew Silliman be appointed faculty emeritus status; and motioned to accept this appointment based on qualifications under policy guidelines having been met.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to approve the appointment of Professor Matthew Silliman to faculty emeritus status.

The report of the Academic Affairs Committee was accepted as presented.

MCLA Foundation Board Representative Report of Meeting of November 18, 2019

Trustee Therrien presented the report of the MCLA Foundation Board meeting of November 18, 2019.

The Foundation's net assets have topped \$19 million and the endowment's value is nearing \$14 million. Estate gifts, property values, and the market continue to contribute to the rise in these figures.

The annual audit of the Foundation was conducted in August 2019 and a clean opinion was rendered.

The College will celebrate its 125th anniversary with a major fundraising event on April 25, 2020. Proceeds of this event will go to the Elevating Lives Fund. Sponsorships will be the primary source of revenue in this effort.

The Foundation Board voted to purchase 8-10 Montana Street and 60 Porter Street for \$150,000. The Montana Street building has been razed and is being made into a parking lot with 12-14 spaces for commuter students and faculty. The building at 60 Porter Street will be renovated for faculty or administrative offices.

The Foundation Board approved the purchase of 39 Willow Street in North Adams for use as a permanent residence for the President of the College. The Board has been pursuing this strategy as a means for the College to attract future Presidents. In addition, this property provides the Foundation with a close to campus option for the President to host fundraising events, dinners, and committee meetings. Purchase and renovation of the home will not exceed \$400,000. The President will forego his housing stipend to pay for and maintain the property.

The Foundation Board voted to support the Connector Project by agreeing to conduct a Capital Campaign and endeavor to raise \$4 million. A campaign feasibility study will be conducted at a cost of no more than \$50,000, and will only take place if MCLA's connector project is selected to be funded by the State.

The report of the Trustee Representative to the Foundation Board was accepted as presented.

Chairperson's Report

Vice Chair Chesloff began the Chairperson's Report. A resource guide to aid trustees in their role was provided for each to take with them. The Board of Trustees retreat is scheduled for February 7; the location and agenda will be provided once finalized.

Spring opening breakfast is scheduled for January 21 and Trustees are invited to attend.

President's Report

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board. On December 10, an academic reception for students who graduated in August and anticipated graduation in December was held.

Follow up on information regarding the shutdown of the Amsler Campus Center due to CO detection was provided. No residual health effects were reported as a result of this incident. Costs related to this event will be reimbursed by the responsible contractor.

President Birge stated that the team that managed this incident handled it very well. The lecture scheduled in the campus center was moved quickly and seamlessly.

A proposal for a \$26mm capital building project is being submitted to DCAMM on December 20, 2019. President Birge reviewed the timing and process for review and approval of the proposals.

The state's \$500mm supplemental budget passed earlier today and has been forwarded to Governor Baker for his approval and signature. This supplement will complete funding of the collective bargaining costs, includes financial and information technology aid for state universities, and includes an endowment enhancement fund. In addition, there is an appropriation for \$200k for safety equipment for MCLA.

MCLA is in conversation with COPLAC to host their annual conference in summer 2022.

With no other business being brought before the meeting, upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 pm.

All were invited to the Smith House for a reception.