

## A VISION OF EXCELLENCE: MCLA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

*“MCLA will develop future leaders — through an outstanding liberal arts curriculum, a vibrant student life, an ability to respond to a changing world context and the financial strength that makes this possible.”*

—Dr. Mary K. Grant, MCLA President

**M**assachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) offers an extraordinary liberal arts experience. At the heart of this experience are a superior academic curriculum and a dynamic student life. MCLA graduates leave campus prepared for leadership in a variety of disciplines.

Today, our students face unprecedented challenges: an interdependent world, global economy, digital revolution, and startling array of social and environmental concerns. This changing context offers exciting new opportunities for the College and for our students — both inside and outside the classroom. With bold action, and by bringing all our resources to bear, we will help our students succeed.

With this framework as our guide, MCLA will strengthen our position in the region and the Commonwealth. Building upon the liberal arts foundation, we will continue to enhance and expand existing academic curricula, while identifying opportunities to create fresh, innovative programs. We also will develop new partnerships to support county and Commonwealth initiatives, such as the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education; the Berkshire Economic Development Blueprint; Massachusetts Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Pipeline; and the Creative Economy Project.

A vibrant MCLA is essential to the civic, social, and economic well-being of the region we serve, the community we call home, and the Commonwealth. An investment in MCLA is an investment in the future.

### MCLA'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Every academic and administrative department participated actively in shaping MCLA's strategic plan. Community stakeholders contributed to these efforts, as well. Academic and administrative departments developed action plans, which now are a part of our annual planning. Each spring, a campus-wide retreat brings together the campus community to assess progress, consider emerging trends, and reaffirm strategic priorities. With this collaborative focus, we will make this plan — so critical to MCLA's future— a reality.

*“Our strategic plan will be guided by the following principles: We will focus on measurable outcomes; we will be inclusive and transparent; we will encourage and support innovative ideas; we will be ambitious and future minded; together, we will achieve our goals.”*

—Dr. Mary K. Grant, MCLA President

## I. STRATEGIC GOALS

The following goals are shared, institutional priorities. These will guide ongoing planning and implementation activities:

- FOSTER ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
- INCREASE ENROLLMENT
- STRENGTHEN STUDENT LIFE PROGRAMS
- STRENGTHEN THE COLLEGE’S FINANCIAL POSITION





## II. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

All departments have been charged with the responsibility to incorporate the following strategies into their annual action plans:

- **Capitalize on the Berkshires.** MCLA is located in one of the most beautiful, historic, and culturally-rich regions in the United States. This area offers a vast array of opportunities for academic and student life programming, and it enriches the value of MCLA for our students.
- **Expand and enrich student life opportunities.** MCLA offers a variety of student life programs, including NCAA Division III sports, intramurals, cultural and community service organizations; an active and engaged student government; and clubs that support a wide range of interests — artistic, environmental, scientific, and social. In addition to this broad range of programs, MCLA regularly surveys students to assess their interests and develops new opportunities for student participation.
- **Formalize collaborations that expand MCLA's reach and resources.** As the only public four-year college in the Berkshires, MCLA has a unique perspective on education across the region. Through the leadership of the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education, the Berkshire STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Pipeline, and agreements with the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Berkshire Community College, Greenfield Community College, and other partnerships, MCLA extends its reach beyond the North Adams campus, and provides a comprehensive and diverse array of resources to students, faculty and community members.
- **Increase the use of technology.** Technology has revolutionized all aspects of modern life — including education, business, the arts, politics and social realms. By deploying and using the most current technology available, MCLA will provide students with the tools they need to compete for jobs, offer faculty new ways of connecting with students, and foster skills that will aid adoption of future technologies.
- **Improve program mix.** Growth is required to meet the needs of current and prospective students, and to connect academic programs to the region's economy and natural resources. The College will continue to develop fresh approaches to academic programs to increase both their scope and impact. New degree programs, such as arts management, will offer students practical insight and hands-on connections to the creative economy in the Berkshires and beyond.
- **Raise the public profile of the College.** By ensuring that MCLA's contributions to the community and the region enjoy broad exposure, we will raise the academic, social and service recognition of the College. This positions MCLA as a natural choice for students looking for an affordable, high-quality education. As the region's only four-year public college, public support is vital. MCLA must be visible in the decision centers of the state and the nation, as well as in the corporate and professional sectors. To that end, MCLA is a leading member of COPLAC (Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges) a national organization establishing a visible and influential identity of public liberal arts institutions in the public, private and corporate sectors of the nation.

### III. NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



A. STRATEGIC PLANNING has resulted in the development of new programs that already have expanded the program mix for our students.

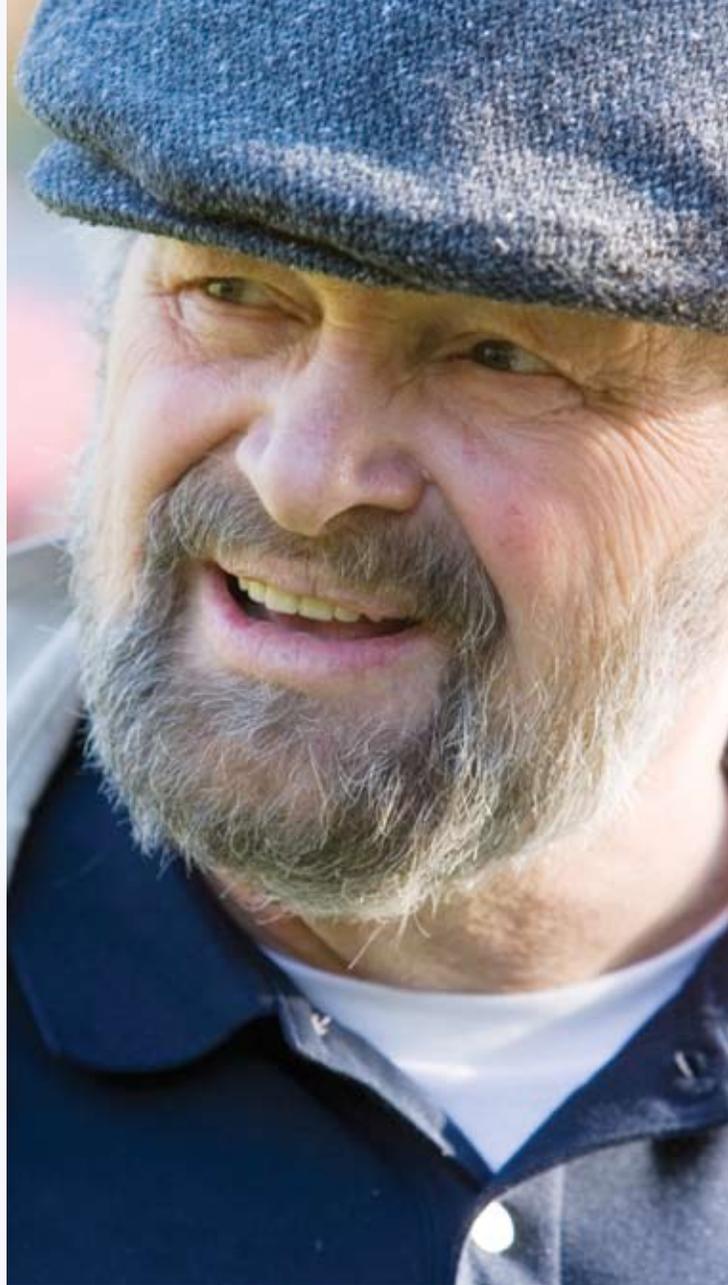
- Bachelor of Arts degree in arts management
- Berkshire Hills Internship Program (B-HIP) provides experiential learning opportunities in arts management
- 3+2 engineering program with the University of Massachusetts. Students earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in physics from MCLA and a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from UMass
- Fast-Track: Accelerated Adult Learner Program
- Environmental Studies major enhancements and Berkshire Environmental Resource Center (BERC)
- Interdisciplinary Studies: New program models
- Business Information Systems concentration under the Department of Business Administration
- Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) in education
- Newly accredited Master of Education programs in the areas of school administration, reading, moderate disabilities and instructional technology

B. COLLABORATIONS increase the reach and scope of MCLA. By partnering with other institutions and organizations, the College can strengthen its leadership position and provide new and expanded resources to students. Recent collaborations have launched these initiatives:

- Berkshire Compact for Higher Education, a regional strategy group working to strengthen pre-Kindergarten through lifelong learning education across the County.
- MCLA Gallery 51: Located in downtown North Adams, Gallery 51 showcases faculty and student art as well as the work of local, national and international artists.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Pipeline initiative links MCLA with Berkshire Community College, K-12 schools and local businesses.
- Berkshire Environmental Resource Center (BERC) promotes faculty and student research, serves as a local center for internships with various area organizations, and fosters community involvement both on and off campus.
- Greenfield Community College and MCLA developed and implemented a 2 + 2 program where MCLA offers courses toward a degree in interdisciplinary studies on GCC's campus.

- **Collaborations with Cultural Institutions:** Mass MoCA and the Clark Art field trips, use of performance space, internship sites, and admission to special events and galleries.
- **Williams College:** Faculty and student summer research, guest lectures, cross-registration and collaboration on major events
- **Upper Housatonic River Valley initiative:** Sponsored by Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Inc., these graduate level programs provide an overview of the rich historical, industrial, cultural and environmental influences of the region.
- **Russell Sage/Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade (SIFT):** An agreement to promote educational, economic, and institutional exchanges, including visiting professorships.
- **Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative:** MCLA serves as the hub for professional development in this pilot laptop computer program in North Adams and Pittsfield.
- **Articulation agreements** with Berkshire, Greenfield, and Bristol community colleges to improve the transfer process for students.

C. MCLA aggressively is **CULTIVATING NEW RESOURCES**. With contributions from individual and institutional donors, we are increasing the endowment, and providing more dollars for student scholarships, program support, facility renovation and property acquisition. MCLA actively has pursued the procurement of federal, state, and private grants to support programming and enhance student life opportunities.





D. MCLA continues to make **TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES** in the delivery of academic programming, communication and the management of the College's business. Recent accomplishments include:

- **First Year Laptop Initiative:** Incoming MCLA students are required to own and use laptop computers.
- Implementation of **First Class and Web-CT**, providing a unified communications and course delivery portal.
- The creation of the **Center for Academic Technology** to assist faculty in advancing instructional teaching methods.
- **Academic Technology Advisory Group (ATAG)**, to identify issues relevant to the use of technology.
- **Implementation of a new student records system** to support real-time advising.
- Campus-wide **telecommunications upgrade** to enhance public safety and efficient communications.
- **Opening and rededication of Murdock Hall as a state-of-the-art learning center.**

E. In the area of **STUDENT LIFE**, a number of new programs have been added or are in the process of development, including:

- Peer advisor program
- Mentor program for second-year students
- Leadership in Education, Action, and Development (LEAD)
- Student Government Association organizational development
- Tolerance program/diversity appreciation
- Public safety department accreditation
- Athletic Team Captain Council
- National Residence Hall Honor Society
- Counseling/Health Services enhancements

F. All academic departments have undertaken and are completing **LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PROGRAM REVIEWS**. Consistent with best practices in higher education, MCLA has engaged external experts to assess program strengths and new opportunities. Excellence is not just limited to academic programs; it is a goal across all administrative and student support areas. A process of review for non-academic areas also is underway.

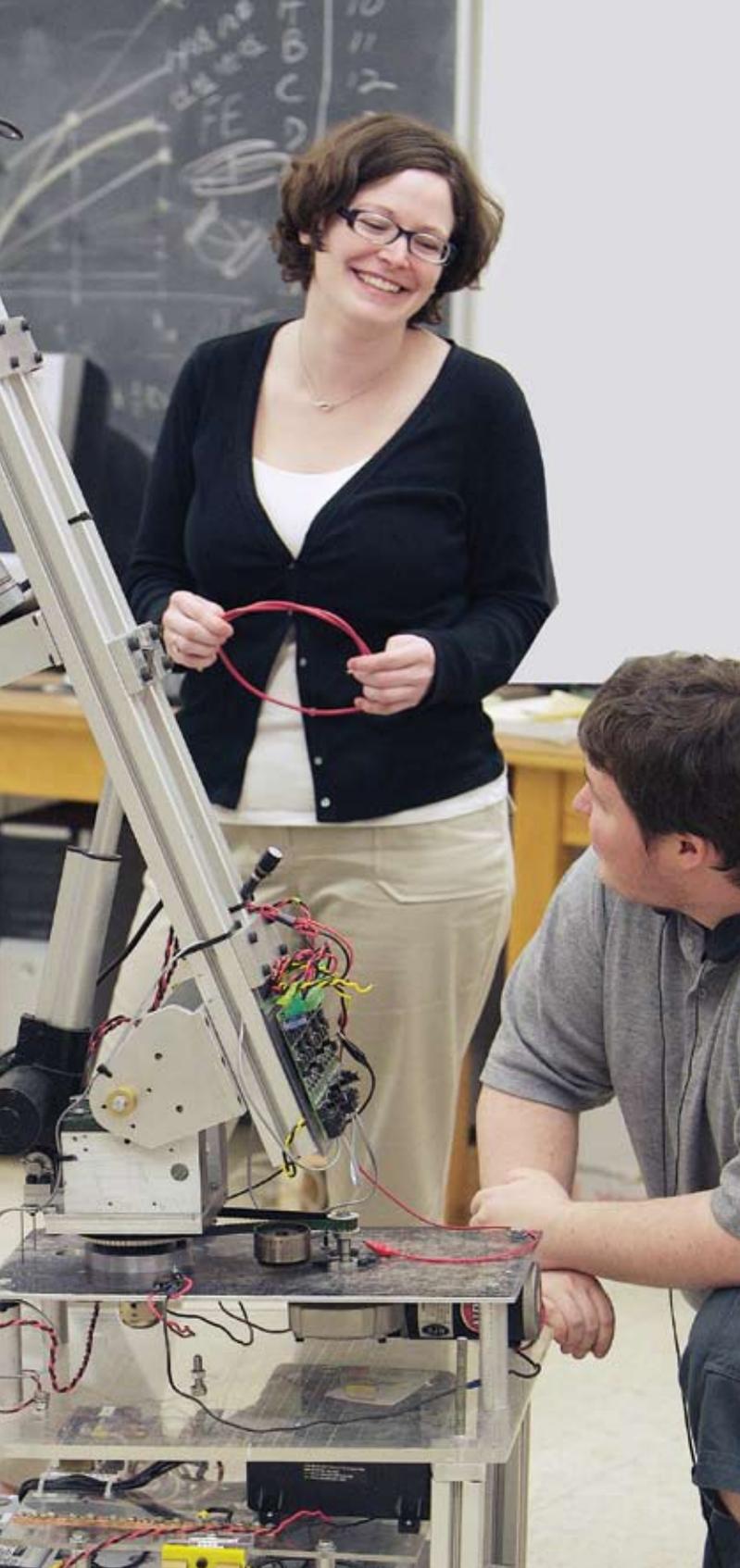
G. **ENROLLMENT** has benefited tremendously from the strategic planning process. Undergraduate enrollments have increased and retention numbers also indicate progress. Improvements are aligned with action plans including:

- Financial aid and admissions publications were redesigned, with clear and consistent messages.
- **Enhancements of Prospective Visitation program:** This resulted in a 13 percent increase in visitors to campus.
- **Multicultural Program:** A popular program that intentionally reaches out to prospective ALANA students has contributed to an increase in diversity amongst the MCLA student body.
- **Electronic outreach** to prospective students through Web page upgrades, slideshows and e-mail blasts.
- **Increased communication and awareness** of financial aid opportunities through internal marketing efforts, resulting in more students applying for scholarship aid.

H. **MCLA FACILITIES** play a central role in campus life and influence the delivery of academic and student life programs. Facilities improvements are on-going. Notable projects include:

- **Murdock Hall** restoration
- **Berkshire Environmental Resource Center** laboratory in Venable Hall
- Creation of **music practice rooms** and a **new piano lab**
- **Athletic facilities:** new tennis courts, improvements to the women's soccer field, artificial turf field and new scoreboards
- **Campus Center:** marketplace renovation, opening of the Campus Store and new student spaces
- **Solar panel** installation
- **New parking areas** to accommodate enrollment growth
- Acquisition of off-campus property and creation of new faculty offices
- **Television studio** upgrade
- **Interior renovations** of both **Berkshire Towers** and the **Flagg Townhouse Apartments**





## IV. Next Steps

MCLA will continue augmenting and adapting our strategic plan to achieve our goals. The College will maintain its focus on the following priorities:

- Growth, expansion, and strengthening of academic programs
- Retention strategies that enable student success and enrollment growth, including:
  - Effective use of baseline data to develop action plans and measure progress
  - Effective use of data to improve student retention
- Incorporation of technology into action plans
- Collaboration between campus departments and programs in action plan development
- Center for Science and Innovation plan
- Title III: Strengthening Institution Grants
- Development of First Year Seminar

### ACTION PLANS

Included among the action plans are those that consider the expansion of academic programs in: allied health, art, theatre, athletic training, language, and political science/public policy.

Additional plans consider the development of:

- A faculty-in-residence program
- An endowed chair in education
- Learn and serve initiatives

And others would:

- Implement Retention Task Force recommendations
- Expand the roster of NCAA Division III athletic programs
- Expand internships for career exploration
- Make further advancements in electronic recruitment
- Admissions /alumni recruitment program.

MCLA is committed to our vision of excellence. We are proud to share with you our plan to achieve that excellence.

For more information on the Strategic Plan for Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts please contact the President's Office at (413) 662-5201.

# MCLA

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS