



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of March 11, 2021
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Robert Reilly, Chair
Kathleen Therrien
Mohan Boodram, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Frederick Keator

Others in Attendance

James F. Birge, President
Gina Puc, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Jana Boyer, Director of Enrollment Operations
Kayla Hollins, Director of Admission
Bonnie Howland, Director of Student Financial Services

Upon establishing a quorum of the Enrollment Management Committee Members present, Chair Reilly called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

Ms. Hollins began with an update for the Office of Admission. She reviewed the new student funnel and yield tactics. Inquiries for first year students is seeing an increase of about 17% year over year. Virtual college fairs allow staff to meet students and enable the gathering of data as participant information is required to register for the fairs. Student applications are down about 1.5% with 1,358 having been received to date. Accepted students are at 1,070, which is an increase of 15% over the same time last year, and enrolled transfer students is at three compared to 12 at the same time last year. It is anticipated that once in-person learning announcements are made, increases in enrolled students will be seen.

President Birge stated that MCLA intends to be fully in-person for the fall 2021 semester, but announcement of this is pending the approval of Governor Baker. Community colleges have announced that they will be fully remote in the fall.

Ms. Hollins touched briefly on yield tactics which had been more fully discussed at the trustees' retreat. Tours are being held virtually and on-campus as allowed, with a focus on safety for students, families and staff. An instant decision day was held at Berkshire Community College to gain access to transfer students who are not engaged in virtual opportunities to connect with MCLA.

Admission staff continue to utilize the Chatbot to recruit new and engage existing students. Targeted advertisements and geofencing are planned in an upcoming campaign. As well, one-to-one student appointments continue.

Ms. Boyer reviewed activity around the scheduled virtual accepted students week. Students will have the option to sit in on virtual classes, a welcome session, and resource fair, as well as sessions for athletics, financial aid, campus activities, housing, diversity, and a family panel. Students who attend two or more of these sessions will be awarded a \$500 virtual visit scholarship.

Ms. Howland provided a student financial services update. FAFSA filings are down across the country, and MCLA is experiencing the same trend. New student FAFSA reviews are down 8%, and returning student reviews are down 9%, year over year. State DHE, EOE and OFSA offices are working together to address these declines.

At this time, there are only two requests from students for additional funding; however, Ms. Howland expressed concern that these requests will be forthcoming closer to student decision dates.

MCLA is not experiencing an increase in DOE verification of student FAFSA filings, which continues at a rate of about 20%. Staff continue to work with students encouraging them to complete their FAFSA filings.

President Birge commented on the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that is expected to be signed which includes approximately \$40B for higher education. These funds will be disseminated 50% direct to students and 50% for institution relief. MCLA is anticipating \$4MM from the ARP.

VP Puc provided an overview of the three to five year planning cycle including enrollment trends, 10-year enrollment history, technology and data analytics, new markets and programs, vendor relationships, staffing, and financial aid access and equity.

The committee discussed the impact of virtual recruitment, and what changes made to recruit during the pandemic that will remain post-pandemic.

In response to a question regarding how MCLA remains competitive, VP Puc stated that the New England Board of Higher Education has allowed MCLA to offer reduced tuition (as is done for New York residents) to other states surrounding Massachusetts. As well, there has been renewed interest in rural campuses from students and guidance counselors. Ms. Hollins provided comment on feedback from students stating preference for the rural Berkshire area, small size, and being seen as safer than Boston or New York City, for example.

Frederick Keator joined the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

President Birge commented on the core revisions made for fall 2021 and how these distinguish MCLA as the public liberal arts college in Massachusetts.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.