



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

October 22, 2020

Murdock Hall Room 208

Audio/Video Conference

The following Trustees were present:

Mohan Boodram
John Barrett III
Brenda Burdick
JD Chesloff

Susan Gold
Frederick Keator
Karen Kowalczyk

Denise Marshall
Robert Reilly
Kathleen Therrien

MCLA staff in attendance:

President James Birge
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Erica Wall, Director, Berkshire Cultural Resource Center

Guests in attendance:

David DiIulis, O'Connor & Drew

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 in-person and via audio/video-conference, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on October 22, 2020 with Board Chair Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

For purposes of recording, it was noted that the Board Development session was held at 4:30 p.m. and Trustees were provided the required annual EO Plan update and Title IX training.

Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of October 15, 2020

Trustee Burdick presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting of October 15, 2020.

Tenure candidates presenting at this session were:

- Tara Barboza, Assistant Professor of Accounting, Business and Economics Department
- Eric Doucette, Assistant Professor, Biology Department
- Anna Jaysane-Darr, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
- Samantha Pettey, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Department of History and Political Science
- Jerome Socolof, Associate Professor of Arts Management, Fine and Performing Arts Department
- Jeremy Winchester, Associate Professor of Theatre, Fine and Performing Arts Department

Each tenure candidate introduced themselves to the Committee members, provided an overview of their background, scholarly work including publications and major presentations, and service, and responded to questions from the Trustees.

The committee was provided an overview of how students are performing on campus. The technology employed to conduct hybrid courses has worked, and students are participating in their course work. Students are wearing face masks and complying with social distancing rules that were instituted as a result of the pandemic. There are some students who have had a difficult time adjusting to online course delivery, and engagement concerns have arisen with these students. CSSE, advising, and faculty are working together to reengage these students. The course withdrawal rate is on par with prior years.

The holiday weekend had no impact on virus transmission with zero positive results being reported for the current seven-day period.

Dr. Wootters presented an update on the core curriculum, which is now ready to move to governance for review. A steering committee consisting of about 13 members will review every course in the core, and put forward to governance all courses that will carry the core designation. The new core curriculum is expected to be operating by fall 2021.

The spring term will mirror the fall in terms of course delivery in a hybrid manner. Spring registration will end in early November. With regard to the spring semester academic calendar, the Academic Policies Committee met and proposed the elimination of spring break and beginning classes on January 27. This proposal had unanimous support among faculty committee members and will continue through the College's governance process.

Executive Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of October 22, 2020

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Executive Committee of October 22, 2020. The committee reviewed the agreement between the College and MCLA Foundation, Inc. for the use of property located at 39 Willow Street, North Adams. This property will be used at a residence for the College's President. The Committee voted to approve the agreement and to authorize Chair Boodram to sign the agreement on behalf of MCLA.

Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of October 16, 2020

Trustee Kowalczyk presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of October 16, 2020. She began by thanking Susan Gold for her assistance in Trustee Kowalczyk's transition to Chair of this Committee, and for her service to the Fiscal Affairs Committee.

Mr. David DiIulis of O'Connor & Drew presented the results of the FY20 audit, which resulted in an unmodified opinion. There was an Emphasis of Matters paragraph in the report related to the restatement of prior year balances for a change in the College's Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability (OPEB). This is a calculation done outside of the college by an actuary, and was notably the second change.

There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified in the report, and there were no findings noted in accounting policies or internal control procedures. There was one proposed and accepted adjustment to dispose of the pool resulting in a loss on disposal of \$121,660.

Required communications with the committee were outlined, and mention was made of an upcoming GASB statement change related to lease accounting which will affect the College's financials. Mr. DiIulis reviewed the Management Discussion and Analysis, as well as relevant sections of the financial statements and footnotes.

The committee discussed the circumstances related to the discontinuance of the Perkins Loan program, and the CARES Act funds. The College was awarded \$1.3M from the CARES, of which \$235k was expended as of June 30, 2020. There is a hold on approximately \$650K of this grant due to the lack of federal guidance on appropriate use of funds.

The Committee briefly reviewed the FY21 YTD budget, which had no changes from the Committee's prior meeting due to timing.

President Birge discussed the EY Parthenon project, and their financial analysis of all state universities and colleges, which emerged from a request of the Executive Office of Education. EY has been engaged through January to meet with institutions to find efficiencies in budgets particularly between institutions. President Birge discussed current and potential shared efficiencies with Berkshire Community College, and also expressed his concern that EY appeared to have little experience with the higher education model. EY was scheduled to present their findings, in aggregate, to Board of Education on October 20.

The Committee reviewed the College's Five-Year Master Plan which is essentially a capital plan with eight priorities.

The Committee reviewed the projects being completed DCAMM Small Projects Repairs Program. Freel Library roof repairs are anticipated to begin once the bid is awarded over the coming week. All projects funded through this program must be completed by June 30, 2021.

Concern was expressed that the full Board of Trustees was not receiving financial reports as part of the material provided for Board Meetings. Trustees discussed the importance of the full Board receiving copies of the financial information presented at the Fiscal Affairs Committee, and this information will be distributed to the full Board going forward.

Trustee Kowalczyk turned the update over to Mr. David DiIulis to report on the FY20 audit.

Mr. DiIulis reviewed a prepared document on required communications that outlined the auditors' responsibilities as well as accounting policies and the various steps taken during the audit. He commented on the upcoming GASB pronouncement, GASB Statement 87, which is related to operating leases.

Mr. DiIulis then reviewed Management Discussion and Analysis (MD&A) as well as the Audited Financial Statements and Footnotes for the year ending June 30, 2020. He noted that there were no major issues or disagreements with management.

Mr. DiIulis commented on the \$120K impact of the disposition of the swimming pool that had been removed as part of the Campus Center renovations. With regard to fraud, testing and internal control, Mr. DiIulis cited that the risk at the College are similar to peers. He commented on the \$4M decrease in assets and the Perkins Loan program termination. The net position decreased \$1.4M from \$61.2M to \$59.9M, due in large part to the housing refunds given to students in the spring.

With no further questions on the FY20 audit report, Mr. DiIulis departed the meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To accept the FY 2020 audited financial statements as presented.

Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of October 22, 2020

Trustee Chesloff presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of October 22, 2020. The Committee was joined by Mr. Spencer Moser and Ms. DeAnna Wardwell, who led a discussion of the food pantry.

Adjustments were made to the food pantry operations as a result of the pandemic and the need to minimize contact. The operation moved to an on-line ordering system that allow students to select specific items that volunteers then package and prepare for pickup. This system is showing that students who access the food pantry are being more deliberate in their selections and indicate more focus on meal planning.

Trustee Chesloff asked the Trustees to consider participating in a food drive for the pantry in December.

The committee discussed the status of a student trustee. There were three candidates who took out papers but were unable to secure signatures needed to be on the ballot. Two students attempted a

write-in campaign, but were unsuccessful in securing the necessary 100 votes at the time of election. Options to secure a student trustee are being discussed with SGA officers. The college's governance benefits from the student voice and SGA is being encouraged to make a selection soon.

VP Holbrook provided an update on the student experience during the pandemic. The vast majority of students have been great with compliance to testing and safety protocols; however, there is evidence that this is beginning to wear on students.

VP Puc reviewed the COVID dashboard showing the seven-day average positive test rate is 0%. There have been three positive cases in total and all were managed and no spread of infection was seen. The total number of tests completed is approximately 3,000.

Students are showing preference to live, in-person events over virtual, although Day of Dialogue, which was conducted virtually, was well attended.

The Committee discussed practices that may remain in place post pandemic, such as online ordering for the food pantry and a component of the Day of Dialogue.

College staff are preparing for 2020 presidential election activity and providing support to students during and after election day. Resources have been made available on-line and events such as an election day viewing have been planned. Space has been designated on campus to allow students to conduct rallies, protests or celebrations in a safe and socially distanced manner.

Approval of Minutes of Committee Meetings

Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the following meeting minutes and all actions contained therein:

- Board of Trustees of September 17, 2020
- Executive Committee of September 17, 2020
- Student Affairs Committee of September 17, 2020
- Academic Affairs of October 15, 2020
- Fiscal Affairs of October 16, 2020

Chairperson's Report

Chair Boodram provided the Chairperson's Report beginning with a resolution to support level funding for FY21 as brought forward by the MTA/MSCA, a copy of which is attached to these minutes as Attachment A.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, upon roll call vote, it was unanimously:

RESOLVED: that the Board of Trustees at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts urges the Legislature to provide, at a minimum, level funding for the FY21 to each of the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities.

Chair Boodram mentioned briefly that copies of the College's strategic plan had been mailed to Trustees' homes, and he encouraged all to read the plan.

The Board of Higher Education's Annual Trustee Convening is scheduled for October 27. At this meeting Trustees will be provided information on required training which is a condition of continuing service. The convening will serve to fulfill the governance education requirement of this new training. Chair Boodram encouraged trustees to attend the convening.

Berkshire Cultural Resource Center

Ms. Wall presented an overview of the programming work being done through MCLA's Berkshire Cultural Resource Center. She reviewed artist installations at Gallery 51, and works that are done virtually with presenting artists. She highlighted the upcoming installation - Hostile Terrain 94 – which is a multisite, interactive installation that illustrates the violence of U.S. border policies by memorializing the thousands of people who have perished seeking to cross the U.S./Mexico border.

Ms. Wall discussed her goals for BCRC including serving as an incubator and accelerator for the next generation of top arts professionals, creating a teaching museum and expanding collaborations to enhance brand awareness and support, and elevating recruitment and retention efforts.

President's Report

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board. He thanked Ms. Wall for her work and the energy she brings to the program and the College.

The College has had positive COVID-19 tests among the students, but only one student with an active case of the virus on campus. This was managed with isolation and contact tracing, and no transmission resulted on campus. With regard to positive rates, the College is outperforming the city, county and Commonwealth.

President Birge presented current Institutional Dashboards which will be shared with the Trustees on the SharePoint/board portal site. These dashboards are being finalized for readability and will be shared with Trustees at future meetings.

The Connector Project is still under consideration with DCAMM as they finalize their plans for funding capital projects. DCAMM has indicated that they will return to consider the program sometime this fiscal year.

President Birge requested that Trustees submit to him names to be considered for recipients of honorary degrees as part of 2021 commencement.

President Birge provided an update on the three vice president searches currently underway. Search committees have been created and first meetings have either happened or been scheduled.

The College's 125th anniversary celebration was held virtually and was very successful. Presidential Medallion recipients were recognized, and the event raised \$177K against a goal of \$150K.

President Birge provided Trustees with a copy of the book "Remembering Massachusetts State Normal Schools: Pioneers in Teacher Education", which has a chapter on the North Adams State Normal School now MCLA.

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 6:50 p.m.

Resolution in Support of Level-Funding for Public Higher Education

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is confronted with some of the most difficult challenges it has faced in our lifetimes and the continuing public health crisis and its economic fallout affects every corner of our state and most deeply impacts those who were already struggling;

WHEREAS, in past recessions, public higher education has received cuts in state aid, even as it has served as a refuge for people of all ages, a tool for economic growth, and an invaluable opportunity for the residents of the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS, the ability of colleges to raise tuition and fees to compensate for lack of state funding has led to crushing and unsustainable student debt and is, particularly during a pandemic, an unfair and inappropriate avenue to offset reductions in state aid;

WHEREAS, public higher education is indispensable to the economic vitality of our Commonwealth and to the tens of thousands of students, especially low-income students, and students of color, who rely on an affordable and high-quality public higher education system;

WHEREAS, the long-term health of our economy and our students' futures are at risk if we allow our public institutions of higher education to suffer irreparable damage during what we all hope and expect to be a relatively short-term crisis;

WHEREAS, faculty and staff in community colleges, state universities and the University of Massachusetts system are experiencing the elimination of programs, service cuts, and increased use of part-time faculty and staff; and

WHEREAS, any potential funding cuts are hitting a system of public higher education that prior to COVID-19 was already confronting a decades-long history of being chronically under-resourced which has made the financial consequences of COVID-19 particularly devastating for our students and campuses;

WHEREAS, the state has already provided limited immediate relief to our colleges and universities by level funding state services, including public education, through October 2020 which has aided in their re-opening and helped to prevent some of the worst potential cuts to student services, programs, staff, and faculty employment;

WHEREAS, maintaining level funding for the remainder of the fiscal year will strengthen the ability of those colleges and universities to weather the COVID-19 crisis and reemerge as a crucial and strong contributor to our recovery;

WHEREAS the stability of our local economies and our economic recovery post-COVID-19 depend heavily on the ability to maintain strong employment now and to ensure the economic benefits the public higher education system engenders including the tax revenue that a healthy economy produces;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts urges the Legislature to provide, at a minimum, level-funding for the FY21 to each of the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities.