



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

April 2, 2020  
Teleconference

### **The following Trustees were present:**

|                  |                  |                   |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Mohan Boodram    | Susan Gold       | Robert Reilly     |
| John Barrett III | Frederick Keator | Kathleen Therrien |
| Brenda Burdick   | Karen Kowalczyk  | Jacob Vitali      |
| JD Chesloff      | 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

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- and video-conference, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met at 5:30 p.m. on April 2, 2020 with Board Chair Marshall presiding.

### **Approval of Minutes: December 12, 2019 Meetings of the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee**

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

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the December 12, 2019 meetings of the Board and Executive Committee and all actions contained therein.

### **Executive Committee Chair Report on the Meetings of March 9 and 19, 2020**

Chair Marshall presented the report of the Executive Committee meetings of March 9 and 19, 2020.

At both Executive Committee meetings in March, President Birge reviewed actions and efforts relative to the pandemic response. He will provide an update on this when he presents his President's Report at this meeting.

At the March 9 meeting members voted to recommend to the Board of Trustees the approval of Mary Dana Hinton, Alma Benedetti, and Jenn Smith as honorary degree recipients at MCLA's 2020 commencement exercises. Subsequently, it was discovered that the College had previously conferred an honorary degree upon Ms. Benedetti.

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

**VOTED:** to approve Dr. Mary Dana Hinton and Ms. Jenn Smith as honorary degree recipients at MCLA's 2020 commencement exercises.

At the March 19 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, the members voted to grant Continuation of Presidential Authority as of this date, March 19, 2020, to President Birge. Trustees discussed the purpose of this authority and the types of decisions that would be made under this authority.

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

**VOTED:** to ratify the decision of the Executive Committee to continue the President's authority to make such appointments and decisions that are necessary for the normal operation of the College effective March 19, 2020.

### **Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of March 10, 2020**

Trustee Burdick presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee of March 10, 2020.

The Department of Higher Education approved the name change for the B. A. in Political Science and Public Policy to B. A. in Political Science. This change is in name only and does not change the major's curriculum.

Seven faculty searches have been conducted. Three offers have been accepted for five positions, one search is in progress, and one was a failed search and will be reposted in the fall.

The Academic Affairs Committee reviewed faculty promotion to associate professor recommendations for:

- Dr. Jerome Socolof, Department of Arts Management
- Prof. Jeremy Winchester, Department of Theater

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

**VOTED:** To approve promotion of Jerome Socolof and Jeremy Winchester to Associate Professor.

The Committee also reviewed tenure and faculty promotion to associate professor recommendations for:

- Dr. David Cupery, Department of Political Science
- Dr. Hannah Noel, Department of English and Communications
- Dr. Ruby Vega, Department of Psychology
- Dr. Kebra Ward, Department of Physics

Brief bios on the tenure and promotion recommendations were provided with meeting material and are available in the full minutes of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting.

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

**VOTED:** To approve tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of David Cupery, Hannah Noel, Ruby Vega, and Kebra Ward.

The Committee reviewed emeritus status recommendations for:

- Dr. Mary Ellen Cohane, Department of English and Communications
- Dr. Dale Fink, Department of Education
- Dr. Ann Scott, Department of Education
- Prof. Richard Yanow, Department of Business Administration

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

**VOTED:** To approve appointment to faculty emeritus status for Mary Ellen Cohane, Dale Fink, Ann Scott, and Richard Yanow.

In other business, President Birge provided an update on the pandemic response.

### **Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of March 23, 2020**

Trustee Gold presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of March 23, 2020.

The committee met for a review of financials for Q2 2020 and FY20 forecast, a report of accounts receivable, and updates on campus renovations, FY21 budget process, and the leadership transition in administration and finance.

For the second quarter of FY20 a positive net revenue of \$221,094 was reported. This is being driven mainly by open positions. A revenue shortfall of \$801,433 for the full fiscal year 2020 is being projected. This is due to decreased enrollment from fall 2019 to spring 2020 which resulted in lower tuition revenue, and the over-awarding of institutional aid.

President Birge provided the committee with an update on potential student refunds for room, board, and parking fees that result from moving students off campus to distance learning. We are waiting on further information from the executive office of education before anything is done in the way of refunds.

Accounts receivable ended the fall semester with a balance of \$58,174, which is on par with this same period last year.

Contract work continues on the fitness center and crews remain on site as the governor has not yet directed the stoppage of construction projects. A cash surplus of \$450,000 is anticipated when the project is completed in early July.

The FY21 budget process to date was reviewed. Templates and models have been provided to the budget managers and finance will collect the data as it is available to begin building the FY21 budget.

A local employment agency will be contracted to aid in the search for an interim Vice President of Finance and Administration with a mid-April goal for placement. The goal is to fill the position permanently within one year.

President Birge provided the committee with an update on pandemic planning and impacts.

### **Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of February 20, 2020**

Trustee Keator presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of February 20, 2020.

Trustees Vitali provided an overview of the campus safety walk and VP Holbrook discussed plans to postpone the College's "Day to End Sexual Violence" that had been scheduled for April 9. The Committee also heard a presentation from Dean Puc regarding the programs planned for the first weeks for first year students enrolled to begin in fall 2020.

### **Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of April 2, 2020**

Trustee Boodram presented the report of the Enrollment Management Committee of April 2, 2020.

The committee discussed the changing student climate for admissions and recruiting as high school seniors are thinking about the pandemic and weighing the impact it has on where and if they enroll in college. The decisions are very price sensitive now as families face unemployment and uncertainty for return to work

The college's admissions staff is working remote and are being creative with virtual recruiting and application deadline extensions. Communications and outreach efforts were reviewed. Admissions open houses did not take place this year. Staff continue to update the website as new information develops and be creative with social media to engage and attract students. Swag was mailed to scholarship recipients.

Staff are staying up to speed with current events and adjusting to the changing environment. Refunds to students are being processed and personal outreach with students is underway.

### **Approval of Minutes of Committee Meetings**

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

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

- Executive Committee of March 9 and 19, 2020
- Academic Affairs Committee of March 10, 2020
- Fiscal Affairs Committee of March 23, 2020
- Student Affairs Committee of February 20, 2020
- Enrollment Management Committee of December 12, 2019

### **Chairperson's Report**

Chair Marshall provided the Chairperson's Report.

The President's Evaluation Committee was established with Chair Marshall appointing Trustees Chesloff, Keator, Gold, Boodram, and Burdick, along with herself, to serve as members. The Committee will meet as needed in April and May, and draft the evaluation for discussion with the full board at the annual meeting in June. A final version will then be shared with the Board and submitted to the Commissioner by the June 30 deadline. Trustees with questions or comments should speak directly with Chair Marshall.

The Nominating Committee was established to bring forth names at the annual meeting for Chair and Vice Chair. Trustee Gold will serve as chair and two other trustees to be named. This committee will need to meet in April or May prior to the June 3 annual meeting. Trustees interested in participating on the Nominating Committee should contact Chair Marshall.

The Chairs of the state Colleges and Universities boards met recently with the CoP to discuss state reimbursement to colleges/universities for refunds on student housing, board, and parking fees. The Chairs are drafting a letter regarding these refunds, as well as the state university's responses, to the COVID-19 pandemic to be sent to the Board of Higher Education for their meeting on April 7. The final letter will be shared with Trustees.

### **President's Report**

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board beginning with a review of activity in response to the pandemic. The College moved quickly to establish remote learning for over 500 courses. During one week nearly 100 faculty used technology to move to remote instruction and overall things have gone very well.

College staff responded quickly to the Governor's March 23 executive order for nonessential employees to move to remote work. Nonessential roles were identified, remote work agreements were completed and, within 24 hours remote work commenced for a majority of College staff.

During spring break, the residence halls were emptied with the assistance of 17 members of the residence hall staff. Over a two-week period, 700 students were moved out of residence while maintaining prescribed social distancing standards.

Events including commencement, the fall lecture with former senator Jeff Flake, and the College's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, were postponed or cancelled.

Tremendous effort and support are being seen from all areas of campus. Staff members in CSSE are calling every single student to check on their transition and provide assistance and resources. The writing studio and math drop in center have moved to virtual formats. IT team members have assisted with technology, hardware and software access. Academic and All College Committees worked quickly to consider and approve a pass/no pass policy for grading courses. Advancement established a resiliency fund to address student needs for food, housing, fuel for cars, utilities, technology and equipment.

President Birge reviewed the pandemic's impact on the College's financial position. The ability to sustain the financial impact of refunds and lost revenue will rely on support from the Commonwealth. State and federal stimulus information is awaited at this time.

Enrollment markets around the country are soft and management continues to evaluate what this means for the College. As the FY21 budget is built, focus is on reducing expenses while maintain a quality education.

President Birge expressed concern with the possibility of the Governor being granted 9C powers which would draw money back from state agencies, further increasing financial worries.

Additional concern centers on retention and new student enrollment numbers as students face uncertainty and speculation is highlighting the desire for students to remain closer to home.

The search for an interim Vice President of Finance and Administration began with two interviews held recently and several scheduled for the next week. The goal is to have someone placed in an interim role by late April.

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

**VOTED:** to adjourn the meeting.