



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

June 10, 2021

Murdock Hall, Room 208

Audio/Video Conference

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

Mohan Boodram  
John Barrett III\*  
Brenda Burdick\*  
JD Chesloff\*

Justin Daniels\*  
Susan Gold  
Frederick Keator  
Karen Kowalczyk

Denise Marshall  
Robert Reilly  
Kathleen Therrien\*

### **MCLA Staff in attendance:**

James F. Birge, President  
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk  
Ian Bergeron, CIO\*

### **Guests in attendance:**

Robert Demont, Demont Associates\*

\*Indicates remote participation

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 June 10, 2021 with Board Chair Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

### **Cybersecurity Presentation**

Ian Bergeron provided an overview of cybersecurity concerns and potential impacts on College operations. He reviewed ransomware noting that the college has not had a ransomware attack in five years, and that the one attack at that time was a single PC that did not result in any significant issues.

Mr. Bergeron discussed cyberattacks in general. The College stores data offsite and that data can be quickly recovered in the event of a cyberattack. Additional training needs for College personnel to prevent security breaches were reviewed and software to assist with this need will be purchased.

The College is working with the DHE on preventing ransom attacks, and conducting a deeper dive into remote access and further penetration testing.

### **MCLA Foundation**

Trustee Marshall presented the report of MCLA's Foundation Committee meeting of May 13, 2021. The Committee reviewed the Foundations bylaws, heard a five-year review from the investment advisor, approved the remortgaging of Foundation owned properties, and reviewed the slate of officers proposed for election at the fall meeting.

The Foundation endowment balance is \$17.78M and assets are \$23.5M.

The scope of the proposed campaign was discussed and will be presented in more detail for this Board by Mr. Robert Demont of Demont Associates.

Mr. Demont provided an overview of the campaign, and the proposed need of \$30M. He reviewed potential areas of the campaign including equity initiatives for students and faculty, campus and curriculum, and workforce and community development.

Mr. Demont provided a summary of his observations and conclusions resulting from interviews with 59 of the College's constituents including faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, corporators, and potential donors.

Trustees discussed the work related to the campaign, the division of that work, and backfilling College and Foundation responsibilities during the campaign. Management has developed a plan to ensure operations continue without interruption as a result of the campaign.

With no further questions, Mr. Demont exited the meeting.

### **Executive Committee Chair Report on the Meetings of April 21, June 4 and June 10, 2021**

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Executive Committee meetings of April 21, June 4 and June 10, 2021.

At the April 28 meeting, the Committee met in Executive Session to discuss legal matters as meeting in open session could have a detrimental effect on the process. This pertained to an EO investigation.

At the meeting of June 4, the committee discussed the process for completing the Presidential Evaluation. The Executive Committee members will serve as members of the Evaluation Committee with Trustee Burdick serving as Chair of the Committee.

President Birge's self-evaluation document was shared with the committee to aid in discussion of the preparation of the Committee's evaluation. Committee members will evaluate the President's goals as follows:

- Executive searches - Chair Boodram, and Trustees Kowalczyk, Chesloff and Burdick
- Enrollment goal - Chair Boodram and Trustee Reilly
- Facilities capital projects - Trustee Kowalczyk
- Dashboards - Chair Boodram
- Budget and deficit reduction - Trustee Kowalczyk
- Fundraising/campaign - Trustee Burdick
- Equity and diversity - Trustee Chesloff

Committee members will speak with respective members of the executive team for additional information pertaining to the goals as assigned. The availability of student surveys was discussed, but these may not be relevant to the evaluation, and the frequency of the survey is unknown.

The DHE has instructed that data dashboards be included in the evaluation, which will be done. As well, careful thought will be given to the number of other critical incidents that were managed unrelated to the pandemic.

Each committee member will draft goal summaries and provide them to Trustee Burdick to compile into a first draft. The committee will meet again in July and August to have a completed evaluation to present to the Board of Trustees at the September meeting and for submission to the Commissioner by September 30.

At today's meeting, the committee considered recommendations for trustee appointments as second terms for many reach an end in March 2021.

The committee also discussed candidates to be considered for honorary degrees in 2022.

### **Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of May 11, 2021**

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee meeting of May 11, 2021.

Professor Stroud provided an update on the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education approved teacher and educator preparation program review conducted in AY 2019 which resulted in Probationary status for the college's program.

Administration continues to address the issues and maintain frequent contact with DESE. Current reports indicate the program is progressing well. The program's probationary status does not impact the college's ability to recruit and admit students to the education program. A formal review by DESE will be conducted in Fall of 2022.

Summer courses will be taught fully online for 2021 with the exception of lab courses which will be conducted in person. Summer course enrollment is up 9%.

New department chairs have been elected. Mr. Jeremy Winchester will serve as chair of the fine and performing arts department for a three-year term. Dr. Anthony Daly will serve a one-year term as acting chair of the History and Political Science dept., and Dr. Kerri Nicoll has been re-elected to a three-year term as chair of the Anthropology, Sociology and Social Work department.

Faculty incentive awards were given to Drs. Lisa Arrastia, Hannah Haynes, Sudipto Sarkar, Amber Engelson, Daniel Shustack, and Elizabeth Hartung.

The following faculty members will retire this May and have been nominated for Emeritus status.

- Dr. Susan Edgerton, Language, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Philosophy
- Dr. Deborah Foss, Psychology
- Dr. Don Hyers, Environmental Studies
- Dr. Ben Kahn, Business Administration
- Dr. David Levine, Chemistry
- Dr. Mark Miller, English & Communications
- Dr. Adrienne Wootters, Academic Affairs

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

**VOTED:** to approve faculty emeritus status for the faculty as presented.

### **Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of June 3, 2021**

Chair Boodram presented the report of the Enrollment Management Committee meeting June 3, 2021.

The new student funnel was reviewed. As of May 21, inquiries are at 8,685; applications 1,537; accepts 1,216; and enrolled students 162. Transfer student inquiries, applications, accepts and enrolls are trending down year-over-year, and is reflective of Berkshire Community College's reduced enrollment.

Programs seeing increases include business administration, biology, health sciences and undeclared studies. Increases are also seen from students in Berkshire County and the North Shore, MA, and CT, as well as from students who identify as male.

Decreases are being seen in computer science, history, math and sociology majors. As well, decreases geographically are being scene from Suffolk County and Pioneer Valley, MA, and NY.

The ALANA student funnel is down 2% year-over-year and the average GPA is 3.33, down 0.02 year over year.

With regard to FASFA filings, the national trend shows a decrease of approximately 9%; MCLA is seeing a decrease of 8%. SFS and Admission staff continue to conduct active outreach to students for FASFA filing.

MCLA's PELL percentage is 56% vs 50% the prior year. This trend mirrors national trends and shows that the pandemic affected students at two-year institutions.

The College's Kick-off to College program was reviewed. Student orientations will be held later this month and will focus on connection and belonging, and efforts to prevent summer melt.

The division's recruitment preparation efforts for Fall 2022 were reviewed. Focus will be on boosting the top of the funnel communications, returning to in-person travel season, events and tours, while incorporating virtual options that have worked well, and academic based marketing.

Retention and communication efforts were presented to the Committee. The division continues to work to remain connected to current students, conducting check-ins during remote learning, reaching out to non-registered students to offer assistance, to withdrawn/LOA students to provide guidance on returning to campus, and to students who have not completed housing and FASFA applications to encourage them to do these steps.

MASSGrant and CARES Act funds are being used by students to pay their outstanding balances which has resulted in student accounts receivable being much lower than past years.

American Rescue Plan funds totaling \$1.9M will be granted to students in two rounds over AY22. Students will be able to use this money to pay down debt, and to apply to future semester expenses and summer courses.

An uptick in financial aid special circumstance requests is expected. Students were notified of the process for filing for special circumstances, the online form for applying has been changed, and a letter is being sent to student homes with process information.

An overview of plans to fully return to campus in the fall were reviewed in the absence of a higher education control plan post-pandemic. The College will return to in-person classes and residential living with double occupancy.

An employee survey to gauge vaccination amongst campus has been completed by 248 people with 93% of respondents indicating that they are fully vaccinated. This places MCLA's community within herd immunity rates. Student vaccination will be required for a fall return to campus. This approach is the same across the state university system. An onsite vaccine clinic is scheduled on campus on June 8 and will be open to the public.

Surveillance testing will be conducted in particular around unvaccinated students and likely in partnership with the local Stop the Spread site along with MCLA's health services division.

Communications plans include email updates to the campus community, updating FAQs on MCLA's website, and working with individual departments around specific COVID protocols. As of June 1, employees returned to campus ending remote work with a few applications for exemptions.

### **Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of June 1, 2021**

Trustee Kowalczyk presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of June 1, 2021. The third quarter report for FY21 was reviewed. Of note, there is a \$4.6mm surplus, level funding was appropriated by the state, and revenue is up \$417k overall. Negative impacts include the losses of summer conferences of \$160k, and \$100k from the Blue and Gold athletic team fundraiser.

Expenses are down \$4.2M as a result of several factors including open positions, delayed hiring and retirements, reduced educational assistance, and reduced debt service.

The FY21 forecast was reviewed reflecting 10 actual and two projected months. Conservative estimates project a \$1.2M surplus with lower revenue in the fourth quarter on a cash basis. Increased expenses included student refunds as a result of residential housing closure, early retirement incentive and vacation payouts, and fringe benefit costs.

Accounts receivable balance is \$2.5k and is made up by seven students with one representing \$1.8k of that balance. HERF 2 and MASSGrant funds aided student account balances with \$640k and \$254k respectively.

Accounts receivable write-off for the year was \$38,421.

A bill is pending in the state house to eliminate holds on student accounts as this is viewed as preventing access to a student's college transcript.

The small repairs project list was review. Eleven of fourteen proposed projects have been completed with three expected to be complete by mid-June. Available funds totaling \$151k were not used largely due to timing; the project deadline was announced as June 30, 2021, but projects had to be submitted to DCAMM by April 19. Management will continue to work with DCAMM to access these lost funds.

The FY22 proposed budget was presented to the Committee. A surplus of \$726k is projected with assumptions including level state funding, CARES II and III funds totaling \$3.6M, and no increase in student fees.

The format for presenting the budget to Trustees was discussed and enhancements to include projected actual, prior FY budget and projected FY budget numbers, and additional detail on assumptions, were requested.

With regard to future years budgeting, President Birge expressed concern for fiscal year 2023 in the absence of federal stimulus money and declining enrollment. There is need for federal or state stabilization funds to aid FY23 and grow enrollment efforts.

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

**VOTED:** to approve the write-off of accounts receivable totaling \$38,421, and the fiscal year 2022 budget as presented.

An MSCBA bond will be reviewed by President Birge in his report to this meeting.

### **Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of June 10, 2021**

Trustee Chesloff presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of June 10, 2021. The Committee reviewed the end of semester events leading up the move to fully remote instruction. Several areas were highlighted including the phenomenal health services staff and the collaborative culture on campus. The option of take-out services for student dining will remain an option post-pandemic as it was very well received. Staff also learned that students did not like being in single rooms.

As planning for Fall 2021 begins, the shift will be toward a return to normalcy and this is being communicated in all messaging to campus and community members. Residential plans will focus on connecting and belonging for students with a return to roommate and shared suites.

As a result of declining enrollment, Hoosac Hall will be taken off line for this academic year. Students will be housed in the Berkshire Towers and Townhouses, with one tower being dedicated to first year students.

The Committee heard an update on the work with campus policing being conducted by Dr. Boyd. Listening sessions were held and that information will be used to determine the best approach toward rethinking community policing on campus.

Catherine Holbrook and Justin Daniels were thanked for their service to the Student Affairs Committee.

### **Nominating Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of May 11, 2021**

Trustee Gold presented the report of the Nominating Committee meeting of May 11, 2021.

The Committee discussed nominees for the position of Chair and Vice-Chair of the MCLA board of trustees. Chair Marshall presented the nominees and stated that Trustee Mohan Boodram accepted the nomination for the position of Chair and Trustee Brenda Burdick accepted the nomination for the position of Vice Chair. The committee members reviewed the eligibility requirements of each officer and established that both nominees meet the requirements.

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

**VOTED:** to recommend to the board of trustees to approve the nominations of Mohan Boodram as Chair, and Brenda Burdick as Vice-Chair of MCLA's Board of Trustees for one-year terms beginning July 1, 2022.

### **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 April 1, 2021
- Executive Committee of April 1, April 28 and June 4, 2021
- Enrollment Management Committee of June 3, 2021
- Student Affairs Committee of April 1, 2021
- Academic Affairs of May 11, 2021
- Fiscal Affairs of June 1, 2021
- Nominating Committee of May 11, 2021

### **President's Report**

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board and began by welcoming Vice President of Finance and Administration, Mr. Joseph DaSilva. As well, Dr. Jeannette Smith, Vice President of Student Affairs, and Dr. Richard Glejzer, Vice President of Academic Affairs will join the College on June 28 and July 26, respectively.

President Birge commented on the work of RENZ Consulting on campus policing. Since February, public safety officers have participated in 15 courses including de-escalation practices, antibias training, sex crime investigation, and emergencies on campus.

The Catholic Diocese of Springfield issued an enhanced list of credibly accused clergy, of which two had assignments at North Adams State College during 1971-1982. As a result of this information, the College under the guidance of Title IX Officer Nicole Comstock, issued a message to approximately 3,000 alumni sharing general information for victims of sexual abuse.

President Birge presented institutional dashboards being finalized including enrollment, graduation and retention rates, student financial aid, state appropriates, and tuition and fees. This information will be presented to Committees and Trustees at future meetings.

President Birge discussed the MSCBA bond which had been discussed at the Fiscal Affairs Committee meeting of June 1, 2021. No action was taken at the time of the meeting, but it was agreed that, should the MSCBA decide to go to market with the bond offering, this Board would

be asked to consider MCLA's participation for \$1M in the bond offering. As of this meeting, the MSCBA has notified MCLA that they are going to the bond market and seeking our intent for participation.

President Birge explained further that the bond was sought originally as part of the construction of the fitness center. However, the cost of the fitness center renovations was contained and the \$1M bond financing was not sought.

The \$1M bond being offered is at a rate of 3% and a term of 20 years. Debt service the first year is estimated at \$30k and declines in subsequent years.

Trustees discussed with management present the specific use of the funds, including possibilities such as upgrades for residential buildings, the student center, and athletics facilities. The cost of funds was also discussed. The funds are considered to be relatively inexpensive to the College and would allow flexibility in capital access should the funds be needed. With regard to impact on the campaign, having the \$1M in funds available could be deemed helpful. As well, there are typically no prepayment penalties on the bond.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

**VOTED:** to authorize the College to finance a \$1M bond with the MSCBA at an interest rate not to exceed 3% and a term of 20 years.

President Birge presented the continuation of Presidential Authority for the summer. This is an annual action taken at this time of year as the Board heads into recess for the summer.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, following a roll call vote, it was

**VOTED:** to approve Presidential Authority for the summer.

With regard to remote participation in public meetings, it is anticipated that the executive order allowing remote attendance will be extended.

President Birge thanked Trustee Daniels for service to the College and Board, and announced that Edgar Perez will serve as student trustee for AY 22.

President Birge also thanked Drs. Wootters and Holbrook for their service to the College and our students, and wished them well in their retirement.

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 7:03 p.m.