



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of January 23, 2023
MCLA, 87 Blackinton St, North Adams, MA
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Brenda Burdick, Chair*, Mohan Boodram*, Denise Marshall* Frederick Keator*

Members Absent

Franklyn Reynolds

Others in Attendance

James Birge, President , Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

*Denotes 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 Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees with Committee Chair Burdick presiding was called to order at 8:32 a.m.

President Birge began with an update on efforts to secure a commencement speaker. Ms. Elizabeth Banks has been contacted; however, no reply has been received to acknowledge receipt of the invitation or to accept or decline that invitation.

An invitation has been extended to Dr. Meg Day, Poet and Professor and North Carolina State University. Dr. Day was the keynote at the virtual 2021 Lavender Lecture and was very well received. Once a reply has been received, President Birge will provided an update to this Committee.

Should Dr. Day accept the invitation to be Commencement Speaker, President Birge will likely recommend they also receive an honorary degree.

President Birge reviewed the people discussed for possible honorary degree (HD) receipt at a prior Committee meeting. He spoke with Mr. Kenneth Turner, CEO of Mass Life Sciences, Mr. and Mrs. Brian and Vickie Fairbank, principals in the Fairbank Group, and Mr. Joseph Dwinell, Executive Editor at the Boston Herald, to discuss their interest in being honored at May's commencement with an HD. Each was humbled by the recognition and agreed to accept the honorary degree.

Trustees discussed the backgrounds of candidate proposed. Mr. Turner has made considerable effort to connect and support MCLA and the Berkshires including LEVER Inc, and the Berkshire Innovation Center. He delivers an interesting message of life sciences and higher education, and is an engaging person.

Mr. and Mrs. Brian and Vickie Fairbank are both long-time supporters of the College, both financially and as volunteers. Ms. Fairbank is a parent of an MCLA alum, and Mr. Fairbank's son served on the College's Board of Trustees. As well, they have provided financial support for College scholarship funds, and currently both serve on the Foundations Campaign Cabinet as co-chairs.

Dr. Birge asked the candidates to think about who to bring to the ceremony, but to avoid any announcements until a formal press release has been made by the College.

Mr. Dwinell is an '82 graduate of MCLA and his story of stopping out of College for financial reasons and returning resonates with many of our marginalized community members. He is a successful executive with the Boston Herald. As well, Mr. Dwinell's son is a graduate of MCLA. In addition, Mr. Dwinell has been selected to be the Hardman Journalist in Residence and will be on campus in the coming weeks.

All candidates for HD have been asked to keep their selection confidential until the College Board of Trustees has voted to approve the slate of recipients and the College is prepared to make a press release announcement.

With regard to the selection of a commencement speaker, Trustee Keator state his belief that Mr. Turner and Mr. Dwinell would be good alternative options.

With regard to logistics of Commencement events, it was clarified that honorary degree recipients are offered the opportunity to speak at the Friday dinner event recognizing them, and that they receive their diploma at that time. HD recipients are hooded at the Commencement ceremony on Saturday, but do not speak at that event.

Upon motion made and duly seconded, with no further discussion and upon roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to recommend that MCLA's Board of Trustees approve Mr. Kenneth Turner, Mr. and Mrs. Brian and Vickie Fairbank, and Mr. Joseph Dwinell as recipients of Honorary Degrees at the Colleges commencement exercises in May 2023.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:51 a.m. by Chair Burdick.