



MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

December 12, 2024

**Murdock Hall, Room 208, 375 Church Street, North Adams, MA
& Microsoft Teams Audio/Video Conference**

Trustees in attendance:

Mohan Boodram	Jean Clarke-Mitchell	Darlene Rodowicz
Brenda Burdick*	William Garrity	
John Barrett III*	Buffy Lord	

Trustees Absent:

Frederick Keator	Denise Marshall	Yvonne Spicer
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MCLA Staff in attendance:

James F. Birge	President
Bernadette Alden	Director of Marketing and Communications
Joseph DaSilva	Vice President for Administration & Finance
Jennifer Dix *	Budget Manager
Richard Glejzer	Provost
Kelli Kozak	Director of Conferences & Campus Events, Acting Clerk
Lisa Lescarbeau	Clerk
Andre Lynch	Vice Provost, Institutional Equity & Belonging
Joshua Mendel	Chief of Staff
Jeannette Smith	Vice President of Student of Affairs
Robert Ziomek	Vice President for Institutional Advancement

*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 Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on December 12, 2024 with Chair Mohan Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:34p.m.

Chair Boodram reviewed the items in the consent agenda as presented and asked if there were items in the meeting materials that members wish to be removed from consent and discussed

individually. Hearing none, Chair Boodram then asked for corrections to the minutes as provided from the prior meetings and reports listed on the agenda.

Trustee Garrity noted that the Student Affairs minutes it should say Dean Morrill as opposed to VP Smith on page 4. Trustee Lord noted that on page 3 of the Student Affairs minutes that Chief Colonno has corrected himself to say that non-student incidents do need to be included in the Clery Report, that there just have not been any of those types of incidents. The changes were accepted as friendly amendments. Chair Boodram noted that Board of Trustees minutes of October 24, 2024 will be distributed in February.

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

- VOTED:** To approve the consent agenda as presented noting the above amendments
Minutes
- Student Affairs Committee (November 21, 2024)
 - Executive Committee of the Board (December 4, 2024)
 - Enrollment Management Committee (November 25, 2024)
 - Fiscal Affairs Committee (October 22 and November 26, 2024)

Chair Boodram then requested a review of actions required from Committees. He presented the requests for Sabbaticals for the Fall 2025 semester.

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

- VOTED:** To approve the Sabbaticals of the following:
- Dr. Mariana Bolivar Associate Professor of Spanish, AY 2025-2026
 - Dr. Christine Condaris Professor of Music, Spring 2026
 - Dr. Carolyn Dehner Professor of Chemistry, Spring 2026
 - Dr. George Hamaoui, Associate Professor of Biology, Spring 2026
 - Dr. Robert Harris, Professor of Chemistry, Fall 2025
 - Dr. Ely Janis, Professor of History, Fall 2025
 - Ms. Michaela Petrovich, Associate Professor of Theatre, Fall 2025
 - Dr. Guodong Wang, Associate Professor of Computer Science, Fall 2025

President Birge then updated the Trustees on the Fiscal Report.

State appropriations are ahead of projections however that will even out over time. We have fewer students than anticipated so tuition and fees are down. We also see that grants are down a little from budget, based on timing. We expect that to correct. Interest income is up due to a positive market. Overall, revenue is \$87,000 lower than projected for this period.

On the expense side open positions in line AA account for savings. Line cc on the report is showing savings with part-time and student positions unfilled. Line kk on the report is overspent by \$150,000 due to van purchases approved by the Board in June 2024. Expenses are currently \$78,000 less than projected through October 31st revealing an overall budget shortfall of \$10,000.

President Birge noted the revenue forecast. We expect revenue from the State funding formula to be lower by . MCLA is appealing to the DHE to correct this reduction. Tuition and fee revenue is lower by \$742,000, although more transfers are expected in spring semester. Interest income will be impacted by the market, and we anticipate a positive variance. We have a projected revenue loss of \$800,000 at year-end.

President Birge continued to review the expense forecast. Expense forecasts show an overall projected loss of \$320,000. This calculation does not factor in unrealized revenue for success funding of \$685,000 and other grants that may come in as well - particularly TRIO and Title III. The President believes we can balance this deficit by year-end.

The Trustees then had various questions on the Fiscal Report.

Trustee Barrett asked about Hockey Program funding. President Birge noted that alumni support has been lower than anticipated despite active solicitation, however enrollment revenue has exceeded program costs. Many of our hockey players are from out of state.

There was further discussion of the proposed DHE funding model change that will negatively impact MCLA. The model favors larger institutions with more Pell eligible students, and it will more negatively impact MCLA as a smaller institution.

Trustee Barrett recommended that President Birge engage with our local delegation for further support as he does not believe they are aware of this negative impact. The President is currently working with the COP and will reach out to the delegation as well.

Trustees Garrity and Lord discussed whether it was a law or a DHE regulation that was causing the change. It appears to be a DHE-managed fund based on an appropriation from the legislature. President Birge will follow up on the legal parameters of the funding.

Trustee Garrity asked if the expected deficit was stable, to which the President replied that it is. Garrity also asked about transfer numbers which won't be finalized until after Spring add/drop, however registration is currently trending as expected.

President Birge presented the President's Report:

After our successful NECHE accreditation, President Birge also informed the Board about other accreditations and reviews. We just completed a JCERT visit to review our Radiologic

Technology Program. We don't have final results yet, but it was a positive visit, especially for a small program. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has endorsed our education program. We have been working to strengthen the program and they have affirmed that.

President Birge also noted that every academic department undergoes program review - Public/Community Health and Political Science departments were recently reviewed, and the external reviewers have affirmed that the programs are performing well. Peer review and accreditation are important parts of the process.

We had planned for a full review of the Strategic Plan at this meeting; however, the Department of Higher Education (DHE) has informed us that they have not yet been able to do their 2nd review due to staffing levels at DHE. Therefore, we cannot review with Trustees yet. DHE anticipates reviewing the plan in early January and then the Trustees will review at the Board retreat on January 17th.

MCLA was recently awarded \$685,000 in Success Funding from the state. It must be spent by September for the purpose of student support. Our staff is reviewing needs in the areas of wellness, academic advising, transportation, and personal support for students. The CoP is advocating with the Governor to include these funds in her FY26 budget. These funds will also relieve some budget expenses.

Fifteen MCLA representatives recently attended the Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) Conference at Bridgewater State. REJI is made up of 40 institutions that collaborate on equity, inclusion, and justice initiatives. We also had a very successful Day of Dialogue event. We have carved out further financial support for these important initiatives.

President Birge noted that a brief reception will be held in the Essential Needs Center that provides access to food and other essentials for students. We want to Board to see what the Center offers for students.

President Birge announced that Clerk Lescarbeau is leaving the college for a new opportunity and her position will be posted. Chair Boodram thanked Ms. Lescarbeau for her support and expertise and wished her luck in her new position.

Chair Boodram then presented the Chairperson's Report:

Trustee Reynolds communicated to the Chair that he has other commitments and has reluctantly resigned effective immediately. The Public Education Nominating Council (PENC) will meet on December 18 to consider Board vacancies. We are hopeful that they will be able to fill our open positions. Chair Boodram also noted that the Trustees Retreat is scheduled for January 17. On January 16 there will be a social gathering, and the Board is encouraged to attend the men's ice hockey game that evening. Details will be provided.

Trustee Burdick left the meeting at 6:09p.m. A quorum remained in place.

Chair Boodram informed the Board that former Trustee Ellie Collins has passed away. Chair Boodram noted her involvement in the school and her positive impact in the community. He expressed his condolences on behalf of the Board.

It was also noted that Title IX training has been rescheduled for the February meeting.

Chair Boodram asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. Hearing none he requested a motion to adjourn. Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 6:12p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelli Kozak
Acting Clerk