



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
April 25, 2023  
Murdock Hall, Room 208  
375 Church Street, North Adams, MA  
Microsoft Teams Audio/Video Conference

**Trustees in attendance:**

Mohan Boodram, Chair pro tem  
Brenda Burdick\*  
John Barrett III\*  
Paige Dufur\*  
Frederick Keator\*  
Karen Kowalczyk  
Denise Marshall  
Jean Clarke-Mitchell  
Kathleen Therrien

**Trustees Absent:**

Franklyn Reynolds  
Robert Reilly

**MCLA Staff in attendance:**

James F. Birge, President  
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk  
Gina Puc, Chief of Staff  
Barbara Chaput, Executive Director of Human Resources  
Joseph DaSilva, Vice President for Administration and Finance  
Richard Glejzer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Bernadette Alden, Director of Marketing and Communications  
Robert Ziomek, Vice President for Institutional Advancement  
Jeannette Smith, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Andre Lynch, Vice Provost for DEIB

\*Denotes remote participation

For recording purposes only, the Trustees met for a Board Professional Development session prior to this Board of Trustees meeting. Trustees heard from faculty and students who participated in spring break travel courses.

Attending the development session in person were Trustees Barrett, Boodram, Clarke-Mitchell, Kowalczyk, Marshall, and Therrien. Attending remote were Trustees Burdick, and Keator. Absent from this session were Trustees Reilly, Reynolds, and Dufur.

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 April 25, 2024, with Trustee Boodram presiding as chair pro tem. Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:44 p.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 and discussed individually.

Hearing none, Chair Boodram then asked for corrections to the minutes as provided from the prior meetings listed on the agenda as item 2a, and other reports listed as item 2b. Hearing no corrections, upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

**VOTED:** to approve the consent agenda as presented.

## **Committee Actions**

### *Faculty Tenure and Promotions*

The Academic Affairs Committee met on April 10, 2023, and recommended approval of the following faculty actions as recommended by the President:

#### *Tenure with Promotion to Associate Professor*

- Dr. Caren Beilin
- Dr. Sara Steele

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

**VOTED:** to recommend reappointment with tenure and promotion to Associate Professor to Drs. Beilin and Steele, as presented.

#### *Promotion to Full Professor:*

- Dr. Mariana Bolivar
- Dr. Hannah Haynes
- Professor James Moriarty
- Dr. Kerri Nicoll
- Dr. Jerome Socolof
- Professor Laura Standley
- Professor Jeremy Winchester

Following a motion duly made and seconded, with no further discussion and following a roll call vote, it was unanimously:

**VOTED:** to recommend reappointment and promotion to full professor to Drs. Bolivar, Haynes, Nicoll and Socolof, and Professors Moriarty, Standley and Winchester, as presented.

## **Fiscal Reporting**

Trustee Mashall provided a fiscal report based on the Fiscal Affairs Committee meeting of April 9, 2024. The overall budget revenue and expenses continue to trend positive to budget. Net revenue reports as a \$400k positive variance to budget. She noted that the College operates on a cash basis which creates timing differences when comparing actual to budget. The projected loss at fiscal year end will be less than \$1m, which is less than the \$2.5m budgeted reserve use.

The lowered reserve use is a result of several factors throughout the fiscal year and are noted in the eight-month actual report provided to Trustees. Some of these include:

- Open positions with savings in salary and benefits (approximately 12 positions at this time)
- Reduced expenses for adjunct faculty
- Fewer student employees
- General reduction in expenditures
- Slight increase in revenue due to payer mix

Trustee Barrett requested a detailed reporting of what revenues and expenses make up the reduced need for reserve fund use.

Trustee Marshall shared that the College's draft of the FY25 budget was presented to the Committee for review with no action taken. The final draft including a 3% student fee increase, \$10 residence life fee increase, and \$50 technology fee increase will be presented at the next Fiscal Affairs Committee meeting.

## **President's Report**

President Birge invited faculty to join the Board of Trustees reception following this meeting. He introduced newly hired Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity and Institutional Belonging, Mr. Andre Lynch.

President Birge provided an update on the College's NECHE accreditation. NECHE has approved MCLA's accreditation for 10 years with a two-year report on strategic planning and a four-year report on DEIB and enrollment. A formal letter from the Commission is anticipated within the

next 30 days. Once this is received, the notice and report of the visiting team will be shared publicly.

Administration began the strategic planning process following the completion of the NECHE team visit. The steering committee consisting of 25 faculty, staff, students, and a trustee has begun meeting. Data collection began in April with surveys to MCLA's community; 280 have been returned complete at this item. Focus groups and individual interviews will be held with students, faculty, staff, and education partners. Trustees are encouraged to participate in the May 22 strategic planning retreat on campus.

Community input will continue to be gathered through the summer months. The draft strategic plan with goals and actions will be presented to trustees for their review and feedback in the fall, and then sent to the DHE, BHE and EOE for their input.

The DHE has three required touchpoints with a member of their staff. The first will take place at the May 22 retreat. The second is the sharing of the draft document with the DHE, and the third is submission to the DHE following board action.

The College's Foundation has a potential donor who is interested in establishing an art museum with the College. This donor has a history of working with public liberal arts institutions to advance the arts and is in talks with MCLA about an art museum and art lab to be built on campus. A gift agreement drafted by the Foundation has been initially accepted by the donor and their attorney, and a final agreement is expected by the end of the 2024 calendar year. The agreement, with estimated value between \$8-10M, includes full construction of the facility, opening the museum, managing the collection, and three years of operating capital.

MCLA Gives, a 30-hour fundraising event conducted online, is scheduled for May 6-7, 2024.

Trustees were encouraged to complete the self-assessment survey they received via email; six of the eleven have been submitted to date.

MCLA's Business Department participates in the VITA (Volunteers in Tax Assistance) program with Habitat for Humanity and the IRS. Student interns are trained to complete and file tax returns for low-income community members.

During the last five years there were:

- 51 student participants,
- 884 tax returns filed, and
- \$1,006,000 in total refunds issued to filers

The IRS verifies and grades the VITA program and MCLA's program received a 95-100% rating on accuracy.

## **Chair's Report**

Chair Boodram requested of Trustees to complete the board self-evaluation survey the received via email.

Commencement exercises are May 10 and 11, beginning with dinner on Friday where honorary degree recipients will be recognized. Commencement is on Saturday and begins at 9:30 a.m. with a continental breakfast, robing and photos. The procession begins at 10:45 a.m. with the ceremony in the gym at 11 a.m. Trustees are encouraged to attend and asked to RSVP to Clerk Lescarbeau by May 1.

The President's annual review will be conducted for submission to the Commissioner at the end of June 2024. The process will be the same as in the past and begins with the establishment of the Presidential Evaluation Committee consisting of the Chairs of each of the Academic Affairs, Fiscal Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management Committees, as well as the Board Chair.

The Evaluation Committee will meet to consider the President's self-evaluation and each chair is asked to draft a summary evaluation based on the President's goals established for AY24. The Committee will provide an update to the Board of Trustees at the June 6 meeting and Trustees will be asked to provide their feedback on the President's performance to the established goals.

The final evaluation will be presented to the full board for their consideration at the June 27 meeting with the goal of submission to the Commissioner by June 30, 2024.

At the April 25, 2024, board meeting, there was discussion about the President's authority relative to the creation of a revenue generating position in the Office of Advancement. Chair Burdick consulted with the College's attorney, reviewed the President's job description, President's appointment letter, and the Board's bylaws to determine where authority lies. An email was issued to Trustees with the Chair's statement, which was also included in the material for this meeting. In summary, it is within the President's authority to create positions and hire to those position as determined through the review conducted.

Trustee Barrett questioned the statement of authority noting that the College's budget is formed with planned positions, and he had no knowledge of the position creation and thought it should be in the budget before being created. He holds that this is the work of the board of trustees and did not wish to debate. He expressed further concern that adjunct and other positions are needed and are going unfilled.

Chair Boodram stated that the budget as presented and approved by the Board of Trustees does not include the level of granularity that would indicate individual positions.

Trustee Marshall commended President Birge and his staff on the successful NECHE reaccreditation. The process is daunting and involves numerous people to get it right and she wished to highlight this accomplishment.

### **Adjournment**

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 6:28 p.m.