



**Minutes of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNUAL MEETING  
Thursday, May 19, 2016  
Fitzpatrick Room, Murdock Hall 208**

**The following Trustees were present:**

Susan Gold, Chair  
JD Chesloff, Vice Chair  
John Barrett III  
Mohan Boodram  
Lisa Chamberlain  
Will Dudley  
Buffy Lord  
Denise Marshall  
Nicholas Hernigle, Student Trustee

**Others present:**

Dr. James F. Birge, President  
Denise Richardello, Executive Vice President  
Cynthia Brown, Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Larry Behan, Vice President of Administration & Finance  
Cathy Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs  
Monica Joslin, Dean of Academic Affairs  
Curt King, Chief Information Officer  
Jennifer Macksey, Director of Student Accounts  
Barbara Chaput, Director of Human Resources  
Beth Petri, Director of Financial Aid  
Gina Puc, Director of Admission  
Brienne O'Rourke, Student Trustee-elect  
Ginger Menard, Clerk

Complying with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and 15A, Section 9, and with a quorum present, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met at 5:00 p.m. at Murdock Hall on May 19, 2016 with Board Chair Gold presiding.

Chair Gold called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. She extended a welcome to MCLA's newest Trustee, John Barrett III, and Student-Trustee elect, Brianne O'Rourke.

### **Approval of Minutes: April 7, 2016 Board of Trustees meeting**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the April 7, 2016, meeting of the Board and all actions contained therein.

### **Report on the on April 27, 2016 Academic Affairs Committee conference call**

Trustee Chamberlain reported that the Academic Affairs Committee did not hold a formal meeting but did have a conference call on April 27 to receive updates from staff. Staff reported on a proposed new Faculty Emeriti policy that will be presented to the Committee in the fall and then to the full Board. This policy will establish criteria that must be met in order for a retired faculty member to receive the designation of Emeritus/a.

The discussion also included the establishment of a Software Development concentration and the critical need to expand in this and other similar areas that align with the needs of major local employers.

The Board of Higher Education recently passed a policy that will require the state universities to increase and expand the range of demonstrable civic learning and engagement on campuses. Academic Affairs will continue to work closely with the BHE on this issue. The college currently has an "MCLA Scholar" designation based on required coursework and GPA, and one suggestion is to add a designation of "MCLA Civic Scholar" which would be reflected on the student's transcript pending completion of specific requirements. This is still a work in process and when the College Administration is ready to make a proposal, they will present their recommendations at a future committee meeting.

Finally, the trustees and staff discussed how to cultivate and enhance internship opportunities, including involving and supporting faculty as well as students, and how to continue to build relationships with employers and organizations. It was noted that faculty support is especially critical when working with small businesses/organizations as they often lack the infrastructure to support an internship program.

## **Report on the Minutes of the April 20, 2016 Student Affairs Committee Meeting**

Trustee Lord reported on behalf of the committee.

The focus of the meeting was on High Impact Practices. One such program is a Living Learning Community (LLC) that provides opportunities for students with similar educational interests to live together in residence halls. These are intentionally designed to promote integration of in- and out-of-class learning and to link academic goals with co-curricular interests. The first LLC for Honors students will be instituted in the fall of 2016. The Committee also heard from students about their experiences with programs through the Center for Service and Citizenship including Write Stuff, E3, and Alternative Spring Break programs. They also discussed the issue of hunger within the student population.

Finally, the committee received a year-end report from outgoing Student Trustee Nicholas Hernigle. He noted the positive changes with Aramark including their increased involvement with students and additional dining options. He also applauded the changes in the Athletic Department including their work to increase the cumulative GPA of student athletes and adopting the moniker of “one team” which creates more cohesion and support of one another.

Trustee Lord thanked Nick for his hard work this past year and VP Holbrook extended her thanks as well. She noted that since she arrived on campus last summer Nick has been a fantastic resource and she has enjoyed working with him.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the April 20, 2016 meeting of the Student Affairs Committee and all actions contained therein.

## **Report on the on April 7, 2016 Enrollment Management Committee meeting**

Trustee Boodram reported on behalf of the committee. He noted that they were joined at the meeting by Commissioner Santiago.

Director of Admission Gina Puc reported on the current admission cycle and reviewed the admissions plan in process for 2016-2017. She shared that based on feedback and survey results from accepted students some campus admission events were adjusted and overnight visits were added. One of the most impactful changes has been the adoption of a paperless review process. One challenge for this year’s admission cycle was the requirement by the state of an additional 4<sup>th</sup> year of math. This new requirement affected some highly qualified students who did not meet that qualification resulting in more exemptions being utilized to admit them. Trustee Boodram extended his thanks to the Admissions team for their fantastic work.

Director of Financial Aid Beth Petri provided a report on the current financial aid cycle. Award letters were sent out two weeks earlier than usual and she and Gina Puc worked together to tailor each award. MCLA continues to see students with high financial need as 46% of current applicants are Pell eligible. Of those 46%, over half (56%), have an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$0. The average gap amount, the cost MCLA cannot cover, is \$5,000, which is up from \$4,000 last year. The average student's portfolio consists of 60% loans and 40% grants. As the Pell population increases the number of accepts has decreased due to the challenge of families funding the gap. The bulk of financial aid funds is from federal money and institutional funds. MCLA is committed to its mission of access and, as such, our Pell eligible percentage is the highest among the state universities of enrolled students. While our current numbers remain fairly steady we continue to be concerned with the portion of the Pell population who cannot afford to attend.

An additional challenge next year will be the new date of the FAFSA application – October 1 instead of March 1. Because of this earlier date, financial aid awards will be based on the “prior-prior” year of financial data, information that is two years old.

Trustee Boodram also extended his thanks to the Financial Aid staff for their good work. Trustee Chesloff noted that since the drop in Admissions numbers had been identified as an issue strategies have been developed by Admissions and Financial Aid to address this resulting in a positive impact on these numbers.

### **Report on the Minutes of the May 4, 2016 Fiscal Affairs Committee Meeting**

Trustee Marshall reported on behalf of the committee. She reviewed an update from the CIO and Director of Facilities then noted that the committee had four action items to bring before the Board.

The first action item is to write off uncollectible student accounts. Bonnie Howland, Director of Student Accounts, presented a recommendation to write off accounts totaling \$13,894.03. The College has completed its due diligence to collect these funds and deemed them uncollectable. While the accounts will be written off, a hold will remain on the records of the students who owe these balances against future collection opportunities.

Trustee Barrett asked about the holds that continue on these account and the cost of writing off such debt each year. Vice President Behan explained that even though the accounts are written off they are kept active in the state intercept program if they are residents of MA. He also noted that there is a debt threshold that, once reached, will render the students unable to register.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED** To accept the recommendation to the Board of Trustees to write off the amount of \$13,894.03 related to these specific accounts.

Trustee Marshall shared that the committee reviewed the proposed budget as of the May 4 meeting. In lieu of the potential lack of funding for Collective Bargaining (CB), the committee proposed a fee range increase of \$0 to \$500 for the 2016-2017 academic year.

It was noted that the senate budget was released earlier this week which did include CB funding. As it was not included in the Governor's or House budget, it will now go to conference.

Trustee Barrett asked about how this potential funding will affect the final budget and current projections. President Birge indicated that the initial model was for an increase of \$200 (\$100 per semester), an increase of approximately 2%.

Trustee Barrett suggested limiting the top of the fee range and suggested a possible amendment to the motion to include a lower number. A discussion on the fee range followed. Trustee Marshall noted that it is the Board's intent, along with President Birge's, to keep the fee increase as minimal as possible. No additional amendment was deemed necessary. The Fiscal Affairs Committee will meet again when the final state budget is released.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED** To accept the recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the College increase the campus support fee for the 2016-2017 academic year in a range from \$0-\$500, contingent on the outcome of the state budget process for FY 2017.

The Trustees and President Birge are committed to a minimal fee increase and therefore reserves may have to be accessed to cover any budget shortfalls. The Fiscal Affairs Committee discussed this issue at the meeting and agreed that reserves could be accessed, pending the outcome of the final state budget, in order to allow for a minimal increase of the campus support fee. Funds taken from reserves would be paid back. Based on this feedback the committee was asked to approve the preliminary deficit budget and give approval to access reserves.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED** To accept the recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the College proceed with the preliminary budget, contingent on the outcome of the state budget process, and to approve the accessing of reserves with the condition that any such funds will be repaid.

The final action item presented to the Board was the increase of the technology fee. Technology throughout campus has been upgraded, enhanced, and improved including bandwidth, hardware, and software. Currently only residential students pay a technology fee. The committee discussed adding a proportionate technology fee for commuter students as they also utilize these resources. The Trustees agreed that keeping the technology fee aligned with the significant upgrades in that area is important.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED** To accept the recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the College increase the technology fee for residential students for the 2016-2017 academic year in a range from \$0-\$100, and to include a technology fee for non-residential students for the 2016-2017 academic year in a range from \$0-\$100.

Trustee Marshall then called for a motion to approve the full minutes from the May 4 meeting. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of the May 4, 2016, meetings of the Fiscal Affairs Committee and all actions contained therein.

### **Chairperson's report**

Chair Gold began her report with the Continuation of Presidential Authority. She reminded the Board that this is an annual action taken at the Annual Meeting as the Board heads into recess for the summer.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED** To continue the President's authority to make such appointments and decisions that are necessary for the normal operation of the College during periods when the Board does not conduct regularly scheduled meetings.

Chair Gold shared information from the Board of Higher Education regarding Presidential Evaluations. The Board's first full evaluation of President Birge is not due until the next cycle. However, the October deadline is being changed so the first evaluation will be due on June 30, 2017.

Chair Gold then congratulated President Birge on his first MCLA Commencement. She also recognized the staff and volunteers who work so hard to make the day run smoothly.

She shared news about her visit to the Undergraduate Research Conference and noted that next year, President Birge's inauguration will be held the week of the Undergraduate Research Conference on Friday, April 21 as President Birge wants this celebration to include student scholarship and performance.

She then noted that the upcoming Board calendar and contact sheets had been distributed and asked everyone to review. Of note for next year's schedule is that the Executive Committee meetings will be held the same day as the Board meetings. A Board Retreat is being scheduled for the fall with a tentative date of September 16.

Chair Gold then recognized Student Trustee Nicholas Hernigle for his service this year noting he has been a very engaged and thoughtful member of the Board and a stellar representative for the student body. The Trustees have all enjoyed working with him look forward to seeing him at upcoming alumni events.

### **President's Report**

President Birge reiterated that the final budget numbers are still forthcoming.

He shared that the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) would be visiting campus in the coming weeks to meet with executive staff and tour campus facilities. DCAMM has engaged a consultant, DumontJanks, to develop a strategy for capital investments. It is critical that the campus be strategic and thoughtful about what is presented as funding is extremely limited.

President Birge reported on the current Vision Project dashboard and noted that the College performs at or above the state university average in most areas. These areas of measurement are important and will be the foundation upon which the College will be evaluated.

He shared information regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act which has updated overtime regulations. These changes go in effect on December 1, 2016 and any salaried employees earning less than \$47,476 must be compensated for any hours worked over the regular 40 hour work week.

Current enrollment numbers are up from last year and as well as deposits. The retention of returning freshmen is at 82% so we are on track to meet or exceed last year's number.

The search for the Vice President of Institutional Advancement is in process. The candidates have been exceptional and the goal is to have an offer accepted by the end of May.

The Department of Higher Education is holding a Trustee workshop on Wednesday, June 15 at Mass Bay CC in Framingham. Trustee Marshall shared that she attended a past workshop and it was very informative.

Fall Convocation is scheduled for Tuesday, September 6 and the ceremony will be held at noon instead of at the end of the day.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was

**VOTED** to adjourn the meeting at 6:16 p.m.