



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
May 12, 2020
Audio/Video Conference**

Trustees in Attendance:

Brenda Burdick
Denise Marshall, Chair
Robert Reilly
Kathleen Therrien

Others in Attendance

James Birge, President
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Adrienne Wootters, VP of Academic Affairs

Following a confirmation of attendance of the Academic Affairs Committee Members, and upon establishing a quorum present, Trustee Burdick called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

Department Chair Appointments

VP Wootters provided a review of newly appointed chairs. Kebra Ward will serve as Acting Chair of the Physics Department during Emily Maher's sabbatical from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. Elena Traister was appointed as Environmental Studies Department Chair, and Amber Engelson as English and Communications Department Chair, for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2023.

Faculty Incentive Awards

The application deadline for faculty incentive awards was extended by one week, moving the review period out an additional week. Award decisions will be finalized by May 18, 2020.

Return to Campus

An Advisory Committee has been established for developing strategies for a return to campus. Four subcommittees will address operations, academic affairs, student affairs and staff plans. The academic affairs subcommittee will consider several options for a return in the fall. Ideas being generated include changes to the academic year schedule, and offering hybrid courses as a mix of online and in-person classes.

President Birge reviewed early thoughts on plans for a return to campus in the fall, which is what peers in Massachusetts are planning at this time. Committees have been tasked with modeling for alternate scenarios including a situation where a return in the fall is not possible.

The impact of COVID-19 on the community was discussed. Hospitalizations in Berkshire County peaked in mid-April. Positive test results peaked at the same time, and the region has seen a flattened and declining curve. While these indicators are positive for Berkshire County, it is important to remember that two-thirds of MCLA's students come from outside the region, as such, we are monitoring the statistics in those areas.

Considerable work remains to present an opening plan to include protocols for a safe return for all members of the campus community.

VP Wootters noted that the faculty have been instructed to prepare all course work as though it will be conducted fully online in the fall, which allows for an easier conversion from the planned classroom return. This poses challenges for lab courses and work continues to address how these classes will be conducted.

Several four-week courses have been setup during the summer for faculty to continue their training in setup and delivery of online classes. As well, the newly hired Instructional Designer Jessica Yarkovsky will begin work on June 1 and will likely jump right into assisting with the faculty training course.

Summer courses are on pace and all three sessions will be delivered online, with the exception of labs which will be hybrid. These hybrid courses will have established guidelines for social distancing in the classroom.

Kick-off to College Program

VP Wootters provided an update on the Kick-off to College Program. This program model works to establish a consistent and constant voice for students from orientation to first weeks across all areas of the College. Two accepted student days were held prior to the stay at home advisory, with a third conducted virtually. Efforts are focused on retention and enrollment.

A June orientation session remains on the calendar to be held in-person, but plans have been made to conduct this through virtual programming. The FYE (first year experience) program will be done over a course of eight weeks primarily on-line. Efforts here focus on building ways to reach students to assist with study skills, time management, socializing with peers, and meeting with professors and advisors.

While new first time/full time student enrollment is down, enrollment for returning students, currently at 78%, is among the highest in the last four years. Enrollment for summer courses is 15 seats ahead over the same period last year.

Commencement

President Birge provided an update on plans for Commencement for the class of 2020, which would have been held on May 16. To commemorate the day, a virtual event has been scheduled with recorded pieces from President Birge and Chair of the Alumni Board Dennis Ducharme. Plans remain to conduct an in-person commencement ceremony before the end of 2020.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 a.m.