



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

June 18, 2020
Teleconference

The following Trustees were present:

Mohan Boodram
John Barrett III
Brenda Burdick
JD Chesloff

Susan Gold
Frederick Keator
Karen Kowalczyk

Denise Marshall
Robert Reilly
Kathleen Therrien

Absent: Jacob Vitali

MCLA staff in attendance:

President James Birge
Curt Cellana, Interim Director of Finance and Administration
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Gina Puc, Dean of Enrollment Management and Community Relations

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 via audio- and video-conference, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met at 5 p.m. on June 18, 2020 with Board Chair Marshall presiding.

Chair Marshall began with comments on recent events regarding Black Lives Matter. She also thanked Jake Vitali for his time and service to the Board of Trustees in his role as Student Trustee.

Nominating Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of April 27, 2020

Trustee Gold presented the report of the Nominating Committee meeting of April 27, 2020. The eligibility requirements of each officer were reviewed and it was established that nominees meet the requirements. The following slate of officers was presented to the Board of Trustees for the 2020-2021 academic year:

For Chair of the MCLA Board of Trustees: Mohan Boodram
For Vice-Chair of the MCLA Board of Trustees: Brenda Burdick

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

VOTED: To appoint Mohan Boodram as Chair and Brenda Burdick as Vice-chair of

MCLA's Board of Trustees to serve a one-year term for the 2020/21 academic year beginning on July 1, 2020.

Academic Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of May 12, 2020

Trustee Burdick presented the report of the Academic Affairs Committee of May 12, 2020.

VP Wootters provided a review of newly appointed department chairs. Kebra Ward will serve as Acting Chair of Physics, Elena Traister as Chair of Environmental Studies and Amber Engelson as Chair of English and Communications.

An advisory committee has been established to develop strategies for a return to campus in the fall including modeling for alternate scenarios. VP Wootters indicated that 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. Challenges for lab courses are being addressed.

Several courses have been scheduled for faculty to continue training in setup and delivery on online classes. And the newly hired Instructional Designer will begin work on June 1 and will assist with these trainings.

Summer courses will be delivered online for all three sessions. Labs will be conducted using a hybrid model using established guidelines for social distancing in the classroom.

The Kick-off to College program was presented. This model provides a consistent and constant voice for students from orientation to first weeks across all areas of the College. Accepted student days were held in person prior to the stay at home advisory and one virtually after the advisory.

While the June orientation session remained on the calendar to be held in person, plans were made to hold it virtually.

The First Year Experience program will be conducted over a course of eight weeks primarily on line. The focus of the program is to establish ways to reach students to assist with study skills, time management, socializing with peers and meetings with professors and advisors.

Plans continue to be developed to hold an in-person commencement in 2020. To commemorate the May 16 date that would have been commencement, a virtual event was held with recordings from President Birge and Alumni Chair Dennis Ducharme.

Enrollment Management Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of June 3, 2020

Trustee Boodram presented the report of the Enrollment Management Committee of June 3, 2020.

First year and transfer applications have resulted in 170 and 34 enrolled students, respectively. Ms. Hollins reviewed the efforts of the Office of Admission to continue to recruit students throughout the summer and proactively address summer melt. Efforts are also underway to acclimate students to college including the Kick-off to College course being delivery via Canvas.

Ms. Boyer presented the Fall 2021 recruitment efforts. Biweekly virtual information sessions are scheduled in place of in-person meetings for recruiting, and webinars are being held for each major including faculty participation. SAT and ACT score requirements have been waived for Fall 2021 and 2022 applicants, in line with a number of the College's peer institutions. An online FAQ page has been established to assist school counselors as they work with students making college decisions. Summer efforts will focus on reimagining what recruitment looks like as we transition back to campus amid budget constraints and pandemic measures

Ms. Howland provided an update on student financial aid services where 693 returning and 836 new student awards were processed. While we await information on MA grant and cash grant allocations, a reduction in state funding is anticipated.

MCLA received \$1.3MM from the CARES Act award, \$650K of which is for students facing financial hardships.

Dean Puc reviewed retention data to-date stating that 783 matriculated students are registered at this time. This number represents retention rate of 78% for first-to-second year students.

The Communications and Marketing staff are planning out a campaign for social, electronic and print media, with an emphasis on print as it has proven to be more important during this unusual time. Staff are conducting personal check-ins with students, and providing updates on registration and housing processes with a focus on maintaining continuous contact with students.

President Birge presented the College's return to campus plans. Academic Affairs is recommending a blended hybrid model for course delivery and technology will be upgraded to support this model. The academic year will remain the same, with student's not returning to campus until January 20 once they depart for the Thanksgiving break. Residential students will be housed in single units and residential space has been designated for quarantine and isolation needs. Dining will be arranged for social distant operations and grab-and-go options.

Fiscal Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of June 15, 2020

Trustee Gold presented the report of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of June 15, 2020. The Committee reviewed financial reports for Q3 2020 and FY20, a report of accounts receivable, and heard updates on campus renovations, and FY 21 budget recommendations.

Net revenue of \$2.2MM is projected against a budget of \$2.6MM. The revenue deficit is due in large part to the loss of students. Expenses were up in areas of equipment and IT as a result of the need to purchase equipment to support academic programs and college infrastructure.

The committee discussed the college's accounting practices on a cash basis vs. an accrual basis.

A revenue shortfall just under \$700K is projected for the full fiscal year 2020. Of this amount, \$200K was for the purchase of IT equipment to establish an improved blended learning environment. Student refunds were issued totaling \$1.5MM for room, board and parking fees.

Accounts receivable ended the fall semester with a balance of \$15,100.16. Collections plans are in place for most students, while others wait on funding from the Foundation's Resiliency Fund to settle their outstanding balances.

The committee recommended approval of the accounts receivable write-offs totaling \$14,067.71. Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to approve the write-off of accounts receivable totaling \$14,067.71, as presented.

The FY21 budget was presented to the committee. The committee discussed various aspects of the proposed budget including the capital improvement fee increase, line by line expenses and the reduction in state appropriate.

President Birge reviewed the basis for his budget recommendations with a focus on preserving full-time employment at the College noting concern for employees' ability to find other employment in the current economy based on precariously high unemployment and the lack of opportunities in the region and the industry.

The committee recommended approval of the fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget with a 3% increase in student fees, and up to \$2.5 million supplement from reserve funds to support FY21. It is understood that any state and federal funds appropriated to the College will be used to offset the budgeted deficit.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was:

VOTED: to approve the fiscal year 2021 budget with a 3% increase in student fees, and up to \$2.5 million supplement from reserve funds to support FY 2021.

Student Affairs Committee Chair Report on the Meeting of April 28, 2020

Chair Marshall presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee meeting of April 28, 2020.

VP Holbrook provided an overview of the process for student to retrieve their belongings from campus following the announcement that the remainder of the spring semester would be conducted in a remote environment. There are currently 10 students residing on campus as they lack alternate safe housing. Summer housing will be addressed in the coming weeks.

The Resiliency Fund is being used to support students in need of assistance with travel home, technology and internet access, and computer equipment. Grants were made to 77 students with immediate need and to 20 for technology assistance. As of June 18, 2020, 244 students have received \$227,000.

A new resiliency fund campaign launched on April 27 and was funded primarily by the CARES Act. Students were notified of the available funds and informed of the application process.

Trustee Vitali commented on his experience in the virtual learning environment. He shared how the radio station continued to operate and his personal efforts to remain connected with his friends. He noted that there was common frustration among students with completing course work as there isn't a standardized platform across the College. He expressed that faculty members are missed and that the extra efforts from many professors is greatly appreciated.

Commencement plans were postponed and other plans to commemorate the day were in discussion.

To plan for Fall 2020, a committee has been established to strategize scenarios and establish a process for a return to campus. The student affairs subcommittee is focused at this time on housing reassignment and determining the best living arrangements with the likelihood of single units for all students. Cleaning and dining processes will be reviewed for needed changes. As well, all members of the campus community will be required to wear face coverings.

The committee discussed the impact on athletics. Coaches remain in contact with athletes and the annual athletics banquet was moved to a virtual format. A decision is still awaited from MASCAC with guidance for fall sports.

President Birge provided the committee with an update on the campus center renovations. As this is considered public work, construction continues on this project. Summer is still the targeted completion date and the project remains on track to achieve this.

Presidential Evaluation Committee Chair Report

The President's Evaluation Committee met several times during May and June to conduct a thorough evaluation of Dr. Birge. The Trustees received the committee's final written evaluation and Dr. Birge's self-evaluation. Trustee Burdick will review the evaluation with President Birge

and submit the document to Commissioner Santiago in advance of the September 1, 2020 deadline.

Approval of Minutes of Committee Meetings

Upon motion duly made and seconded, by roll call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the following meeting minutes and all actions contained therein:

- Nominating Committee of April 27, 2020
- Academic Affairs Committee of May 12, 2020
- Fiscal Affairs Committee of June 15, 2020
- Student Affairs Committee of April 28, 2020
- Enrollment Management Committee of April 2 and June 3, 2019

Chairperson's Report

Chair Marshall provided the Chairperson's Report beginning by offering her praise of the work done by the faculty and staff in the face of the pandemic.

Chair Marshall also expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees, and congratulated Trustees Boodram and Burdick as they assume the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, for the coming AY.

Trustee Boodram reviewed the AY 2019/20 board and committee meetings schedule. Board meeting dates were provided and the committee meeting dates will be established once chairs and committee memberships have been determined.

Trustees were asked to complete the survey on committee membership, which was included in the board materials, and return it to her to be used in developing committee memberships

President's Report

President Birge provided the President's Report to the Board beginning by extending his thanks to Chair Marshall and Vice Chair Chesloff for their leadership during their terms as officers of the board. He congratulated Trustees Boodram and Burdick on their appointments and thanked them for their willingness to serve in leadership roles as members of the board.

President Birge reviewed the return to campus efforts focused on providing living and learning on campus for Fall 2020 in as safe an environment as possible. Guidelines for safe social distancing, face coverings, and hand washing will be followed. Signage will be placed about campus

reminding students and employees of the need to adhere to these practices. Courses will be a blended hybrid model of in-person and online delivery methods.

The academic year will remain the same with the only change being that students will not return to campus until January 20 once released for the Thanksgiving break in November. Students will be housed in single units and additional efforts will be made to de-densify all campus spaces. Dining halls will be reconfigured to reduce seating and to-go meal availability will be increased.

Enhanced cleaning of offices, classrooms and common spaces is planned, with the addition of equipment to improve sanitization efforts.

President Birge commented on the Black Lives Matter and related events of the past couple of weeks. As a result of conversations stemming from these events, a committee has been formed to examine practices, policies and training of the College's police department. Other areas of the College, including faculty, staff, students and administration, will also be examined in similar ways toward efforts to improve equity on campus. Work will also be done to enhance our relationships with community partners such as NAACP and BRIDGE. Anti-racism training for faculty and staff is being researched.

President Birge reviewed efforts that have been made toward the College's goal of diversity, equity and inclusion including the establishment of an annual day of dialogue program, training for executive team members and trustees on privilege and bias, core curriculum review and revisions, and increased diversity of alumni and foundation board membership. The College has seen improved hiring practices for a more diverse workforce across all areas of the campus.

President Birge provided an update on the DCAMM funding sought for the building project referred to as the Connector Project. DCAMM has paused this funding, but has committed to a decision on proposal this year. MCLA will apply for \$1MM in DCAMM funding under a new program for small projects repair.

The search for an interim VP of Administration and Finance was unsuccessful as the candidate declined the College's offer. Curt Cellana will serve as Interim Director of Fiscal Affairs, and a search for a permanent VP of A&F will begin in the Fall.

In response to questions regarding liability, President Birge stated that this is a topic of conversation at the federal and state level. While there is interest at the federal level, it is unclear if a waiver of liability for COVID-19 will be granted to colleges and universities.

With no other business being brought before the meeting, upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting.