



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of April 1, 2021
Tele/Video Conference**

Members in Attendance

JD Chesloff, Chair
Mohan Boodram, Board Chair
Justin Daniels
Susan Gold

Others in Attendance

James F. Birge, President
Cathy Holbrook, Vice President of Student Affairs
Lisa Lescarbeau, Board Clerk
Gina Puc, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives
Heather Quire, Dean of Students
Spencer Moser, *title*
Shelby Dempsey, Student
Meaghan Murphy, Student
DeAnna Wardwell, Student

Trustee Chesloff called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m. Following a brief discussion of the agenda for this meeting, upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously:

VOTED: to table the Fall Planning agenda topic to the June meeting of this Committee.

Food Pantry

Mr. Moser began the Food Pantry update with an introduction of students Shelby Dempsey, Meaghan Murphy and DeAnna Wardwell.

Ms. Dempsey provided an overview of her role in the food pantry project as the boots on the ground person responsible for the gift card service and general food pantry management. As part of the challenges faced as a result of the pandemic, the food pantry examined their services. An online pickup service was created to ensure students have access to food pantry resources. Technology was used to gather information from students on their true needs and using that feedback to provide for those needs.

On average the food pantry processes approximately 25 orders per month. A partnership exists with Aramark food services who provide frozen meals to the pantry, and a gift card service gives students access to items that can not be stored in the pantry including produce and meats.

President Birge announced that Ms. Dempsey had been nominated and will be honored as part of the DHE's 29 Who Shine student recognition program.

Ms. Murphy spoke as a three-year volunteer in the center for service, serving this year as a member of the food pantry working on the creation of the pantry's Canvas presence. A page was created in Canvas that provides a single point for information regarding resources available to students including food, medical, and mental health supports; application links for the food pantry, gift card and monetary donations; and announcements. Additional links to resources outside the campus community are also available to SNAP and other benefits students can apply for. This one stop Canvas page is private to those enrolled and provides a place that fosters community and centralizes student needs. Work continues toward eliminating the stigma around need, food in this particular case.

Ms. Wardwell provided a history and evolution of the food pantry, which emerged from course work in a 2017 class. The Pantry has since moved from Mr. Moser's closet to a dedicated space that has allowed for considerable expansion of services including meal vouchers for the dining hall. Access to the food pantry is now available through an online form, providing equity and access that helps to eliminate the stigma associated with food insecurity. Work has been done with the development office to secure grants and establish a process for alumni to support gift cards offered through the pantry.

Ms. Wardwell also provided her perspective as a member who has attended statewide meetings and participated in conversations on SNAP benefits and campus student needs. MCLA provides more in the areas of food security than the colleges Ms. Wardwell has met with. She provides advice to state agencies and universities regarding support of student food security. Ms. Wardwell also provides the state with the student perspective, which is not heard from other institutions.

Lastly Ms. Wardwell stated the importance of alleviating food insecurity as a barrier to education success.

Discussion followed regarding the impact this work has had on the three students present at this meeting and their thoughts on how it would impact their career and future service work.

Mr. Moser provided information on how to support the pantry including links for monetary donations through MCLA's Foundation page, and food donations. As well, the pantry has received grants that help pay for staffing the pantry.

VP Holbrook and Ms. Dempsey praised Mr. Moser for his work and support of student learning and service projects.

COVID Update

VP Holbrook provided an update on recent COVID-19 impacts on campus living. MCLA has experienced an uptick in positive cases in residential students that seriously impacted the health and safety of students living on campus. A large number of students are currently in quarantine, isolation, and lockdown. This situation is causing hardship on these students as many now are facing nearly three weeks between quarantine and isolation. As a result, the decision was made to shift to distance/remote learning for the remainder of the semester. Communications and plans for moving students out of the residence halls is underway. An exception process will be in place for students who need to remain on campus.

Discussion followed regarding the lockdown process that had been put in place for Townhouse residents, the continued positive testing after the lockdown, the lack of available beds for isolation, and the emergence of one positive case in each of Berkshire Towers and Hoosac Hall. With 28 positive cases on campus, the larger concern has shifted to the number of close contacts being placed in quarantine, and the strained ability to properly feed and care for all these students.

Students will have over a week to complete the move-out process, and will be able to arrange to move-out of residence at a time that fits their schedules.

Mr. Daniels provided his student perspective on move-out and the shift to remote learning. He commented that many students are relieved and feel that completing the semester from home will just be easier, and alleviate concerns about more positive cases on campus. Many students are upset that they have been in quarantine for a fair amount of time and now are being sent home. They understand the reasons, but are frustrated. He expressed that students know this is not the fault of MCLA and they are not mad at administration; they are mad at the situation.

Mr. Daniels also stated that many students are worried about work study and employment. They are also trying to figure out how to get home, and in some cases, how to get back to campus for their belongings then return home again. Again, he stated frustration with the situation.

HEIF Grant/Work with Public Safety

VP Holbrook reviewed the use of a HEIF Grant to work with public safety on community policing. Renz Consulting has been retained and will work with MCLA to bridge the gap on relationships between campus and campus police. Beginning in April, the consultant will hold eight to ten

listening sessions with various campus community groups, and begin assessment of underlying issues and campus disconnects. A curriculum specific to MCLA will then be developed. Training will consist of 15-20 hours to be conducted with campus police by the end of June. Training will include sessions for officers to practice the skills they are being taught. Communication will continue throughout the summer between consulting staff and campus police, and a refresher training session will be held in August prior to students and faculty returning to campus for the fall semester.

VP Holbrook stated that this consultant has experience working with other universities on campus policing and received several very positive recommendations. As well, all employees with Renz Consulting have prior law enforcement experience. The principal himself, Mr. Lorenzo Boyd, is a former Boston police officer and is educated in sociology and psychology.

Other Business

Under other business, Mr. Daniels spoke about quarantine and food related concerns. He suggested that the college explore issuing gift cards for supermarkets to students. Students would then be able to order online the food and supplies they need to remain in quarantine and the supermarket would be able to deliver to the door of the student's townhouse without contact. While he understands that the cafeteria food is delivered, it is not always desirable.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.