



BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of January 30, 2023
President's Offices, 87 Blackinton St
Tele/Video Conference

Members in Attendance:

Denise Marshall
Rob Reilly*
Taylor Hope
Brenda Burdick *

**Denotes remote participation

Others in Attendance:

James F. Birge, President
Jeannette Smith, Vice President of Student Affairs
Spencer Moser, Director of Civic and Community Engagement
Marissa Parker, Administrative Assistant for Student Affairs

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 Student Affairs Committee meeting of January 30, 2023, with Committee Chair Marshall presiding was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

Introduction and Welcome of Spencer Moser

VP Smith provided a brief introduction of Director Moser.

ARPA College Hunger Grant Update

Director Moser further introduced himself and provided a brief overview of his role with the College. He then discussed the \$180K grant recently awarded to the College in conjunction with Berkshire Community College (BCC). The funds are part of Federal ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) monies and will be used for student food security. This award, along with in-kind gifts, brings the total funds for food security to \$203K.

Food insecurity is known to negatively impact student retention; 37-43% of students are food insecure.

Grant funds will be used to hire a food coordinator who will work on both the MCLA and BCC campuses, and will help identify student needs. This person will provide professional development for all involved, including faculty – helping them to speak to students who are food insecure, and potentially in need of housing.

The grant will cover a full-time professional position for two academic years.

Chair Burdick asked if staff could provide access to the Western Mass Food Bank to MCLA's community members. Director Moser discussed the potential for MCLA to become a mobile food bank sponsor, the hurdles to this position, and the potential to partner with places like the Berkshire Food Project. MCLA currently provides transportation to the Western Mass Food Bank for student access.

Trustee Hope commented that the food pantry has been beneficial and on the need for the pantry.

Travel Courses

Director Moser provided an update on the alternative spring break trip to Belize. This is not a credit bearing program but is impactful none the less. This trip, which was last offered in 2018, returns a sense of normalcy.

The group consisting of two staff leaders and nine students will be going to Monkey Bay Resource Center in Belize. The group will spend three to four days on a service project. Cultural excursions will include the Mayan Ruins, Capital of Belize, caving, hiking through the jungle, and going to an orange and grapefruit plantation where participants will learn about the migration these workers do to find work. During evening debriefs the group may be joined by an expert who will offer further insight on that day's events.

The Office of Institutional Advancement was able to secure funds and offer \$6K to assist students with partial financing for the trip to Belize.

Committee members discussed possible ways for trip participants to share their experience with the campus community. Ideas included a possible video diary during the trip. President Birge suggested that Kristen DeGare, an alum who went on the Belize trip and was inspired to do more mission work in Belize, come to campus to speak about her experience.

DHE Mental Health and Student Behavior Grants Updates

VP Smith provided an update on the Department of Higher Education Mental Health and Student Behavior Grants. The need for student mental health support is trending upward. In the Fall of 2022, MCLA received a grant which allowed the College to become a JED Campus and to

establish a new wellness space on campus. These funds also allowed the adoption of Maple, the College's comfort dog. Maple will have office hours in the wellness space.

A secondary grant was received that will be used to aid with disability resources, provide mental health training for athletes, fund a Wellness Educator and Interim Director of Counseling positions, allow for software updates, and allow for bystander and first aid training.

The first grant was for \$157K, and the second for \$168K.

Upcoming Events and Programs

Residence Life is fully staffed and members are working on a model where they partner with other members of the College to share design work for the program. This approach also allows for collaboration across campus.

Programming is happening in each department within the division, and weekly emails are issued to update everyone in the division.

Black History Month begins in February and there is a robust offering of events throughout the month. Athletics will also be hosting a number of themed nights at basketball games during February.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:31 a.m.