



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
February 15, 2024  
Murdock Hall, Room 208  
375 Church Street, North Adams, MA  
Microsoft Teams Audio/Video Conference

**Trustees in attendance:**

Mohan Boodram  
Franklyn Reynolds\*  
Robert Reilly  
John Barrett III\*  
Paige Dufur\*  
Frederick Keator\*  
Karen Kowalczyk\*  
Jean Clarke-Mitchell  
Kathleen Therrien

**Trustees Absent:**

Denise Marshall  
Brenda Burdick

**MCLA Staff in attendance:**

James F. Birge, President  
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk  
Gina Puc, Chief of Staff  
Barbara Chaput, Executive Director of Human Resources  
Joseph DaSilva, Vice President for Administration and Finance  
Richard Glejzer, Provost  
Bernadette Alden, Director of Marketing and Communications  
Robert Ziomek, Vice President for Institutional Advancement  
Jeannette Smith, VP of Student of Affairs

\*Denotes remote participation

For recording purposes only, the Trustees met for a Board Professional Development session prior to this Board of Trustees meeting. Trustees learned about the College's procedure for complying with the Massachusetts Whistleblower Law.

Attending in person were Trustees Boodram, Clarke-Mitchell, Therrien, and Reilly. Attending remote was Trustees Keator, and absent from this session were Trustees Dufur, Burdick, Marshall, Barrett, Kowalczyk, and Reynolds.

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 Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on February 15, 2024, with Trustee Boodram presiding as Chair.

Trustee Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and began with a review of the items in the consent agenda as outlined in the meeting materials and asked if there were items in the meeting materials that members wish to be removed and discussed individually.

Hearing none, Trustee Boodram then asked for corrections to the minutes as provided from the prior meetings listed on the agenda as item 2a, and other reports listed as item 2b. Hearing no corrections, upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

**VOTED:** to approve the consent agenda as presented.

### **Committee Actions**

#### *Honorary Degree Recipients*

The Executive Committee met on February 2, 2024, and discussed honorary degree recipient candidates recommended to the Board. Biographies and recommendations were provided to Trustees in advance of this meeting.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, with no further discussion and upon roll call vote, it was:

**VOTED:** to approve Shannon Holsey, Paul Mark, Brian Boyles, and Anne Nemetz-Carlson as recipients of an Honorary Doctorate to be awarded at the Class of 2024 Commencement exercises, as recommended by the Executive Committee of the Board.

#### *Nursing Trust Fund*

The Fiscal Affairs committee met on January 30, 2024, and discussed establishing a Nursing trust fund to use revenues generated above expenses to pay operating costs in subsequent years.

Upon motion duly made and seconded to approve the establishment of a nursing trust fund, discussion on the motion followed.

The nursing trust funds comprised of student fees would be rolled forward from year to year, and access would be by vote of the board of trustees. As an example, President Birge referenced the residence hall trust funds that roll-over year to year and these funds are used to support things such as technology upgrades.

Clarification was provided as to the use of the term trust fund as it relates to state universities.

Trustee Barrett proposed an amendment to the motion: The trust fund shall be reviewed every two years beginning in June 2026.

With no further discussion, following a roll call vote, the motion on the floor was amended to include the review of the trust fund every two years beginning in June 2026.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, with no further discussion, following a roll call vote it was:

**VOTED:** to approve the establishment of a Nursing Trust Fund with roll-over fund balance to support the program expenses in subsequent years. The Fund will be reviewed every two years beginning in June 2026.

## **Fiscal Report**

On behalf of Trustee Marshall, Chair of the Fiscal Affairs Committee, President Birge provided a fiscal summary review for FY24 budget actuals through December 30, 2023, the FY24 forecast, investments, and capital projects.

### *Budget*

Total actual revenues as of December 30, 2024, were at a \$243K deficit. The majority of this is coming from state revenues and is a timing issue as the College operates on a cash basis.

- Expenses:
  - Line AA – full time employees was \$220K above budget because of the 4% collective bargaining salary increase employees received
  - Line CC – special employee comp is underspent in the amount of \$357K. This is attributed to Adjunct faculty and student employees running below budgeted expectations
  - Line GG – energy costs are tracking at \$11K below budget due to milder winter weather
  - Line TT – special payments is underspent by \$589K mainly because payment for MSCBA (student housing debt service payment) was moved from fall to spring and will level out
- Overall, there is a savings in expenses of \$1M and net revenue is \$776K for the six months ended December 31, 2023.

### *FY24 Forecast*

State revenue is up \$1.4M to cover the 4% plus 4% salary increases. Although fall enrollment was 21 FTE below projections, payer mix increased tuition revenue. Spring '24 enrollment is up nine FTEs over budget. The uses of reserves are forecasted just under \$1M vs. \$2.5M that was budgeted. Administration is cautiously optimistic the need for uses of reserve funds will continue to reduce.

### *Investments*

With the success of the College's investment strategy, the committee discussed how investment income could be used as an additional source of annual revenue for the college. It was recommended that administration contact the College's auditor and the investment firm for advice on recording the income. VP DaSilva will return to the Committee with a recommendation at a future meeting.

### *Capital Projects*

VP DaSilva provided a review of the capital projects planned for FY24-28 allocations. These included electrical upgrades and HVAC work in the Amsler Campus Center, Quad ramp replacement, and data center renovations. These will be funded through DCAMM and require a 20% match from the College which is budgeted.

The State's Fair Share allocation to MCLA is \$1.3M and will cover Venable Hall roof replacement at an estimated \$700K and backup generator power for the Townhouse residences. These funds do not have a matching requirement.

## **MCLA Foundation and Campaign Report**

VP Ziomek presented on the MCLA Foundation and Campaign to date. This included a review of:

- Staffing in the office of Institutional Advancement
- Summary of the Foundation established in 1977
- How donations support MCLA
- Fund allocations within the Foundation
- Goals of the Pathways campaign
- Phases of the campaign

In response to a question regarding the Foundations \$28M in assets, VP Ziomek explained that this consists of the endowment funds, property, and pledged income.

## **President's Report**

President Birge provided his report including some of the recent recognition of the work of MCLA's faculty members. Dr. Kebra Ward received the American Institute of Physics grant for \$110K to engage African American Students of Color in physics. Dr. Paul Nnodim published a book on the African philosophical phenomenon of Ubuntu encouraging community equality. Dr. Jenna Sciuto was selected as one of only two international researchers to spend three months in Iceland researching Icelandic writer Svava Jacobsdottir.

The College's strategic planning process has begun and 20-25 people have been identified to serve on a steering committee. Jana Boyer and Carolyn Dehner are co-chairs of the strategic plan steering committee. One member of the committee will be an MCLA Trustee. Subcommittees will be identified next followed by goals from the subcommittees. Overall, it is anticipated that over 100 members of the MCLA community will contribute to the plan.

MCLA's formal response to the College's NECHE reaccreditation visit has been submitted. While the report can not be shared until action is taken in April, President Birge highlighted that one of the College's nine strengths presented at the NECHE exit is MCLA's board of trustees.

Since the College's NECHE reaccreditation visit, MCLA:

- Reduced draw on reserve funds – strengthening financial position - \$1.5M reduction
- Continues to see increasing enrollment
- Has seen retention rate increase from 85% to 93% fall to spring year over year
- Continues to see the Pathways campaign outpace projections
- Diversified revenue sources as recommended with the hiring of a conference and event director
- Started the strategic planning process
- Reworked an existing web position to support communications and improve the College's web presence

The Pathways Campaign continues to move forward including 100% giving from this board and the campaign board.

The President's Office will begin issuing calendar invitations to trustees to attend important campus activities, performances, lectures and sporting events to providing additional opportunities for Trustees to interact with campus community members.

The hiring of a Conference and Events Director was questioned. Trustee Barrett expressed concern that this position is not in the budget as presented to the Trustees and that the decision for hiring should lie with the Board of Trustees.

It was noted that the Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the budget and management of that approved budget is the responsibility of the President. The specific position in question is intended to increase revenue through rentals and conferences.

### **Other Business**

In response to a question regarding the publicizing of faculty recognitions such as those presented at this meeting, President Birge noted that this information is discussed at admissions events, shared over social media channels, and in other ways to reach prospective students.

With regard to the recent closing of The College of St. Rose and MCLA's opportunity to support displaced students, President Birge reviewed efforts made by staff to date. MCLA was recently identified as a teach-out partner and will host an event on our campus for St. Rose students. Members of the Office of Admission attended an event hosted at the College of St. Rose, as well.

### **Chair's Report**

Trustee Boodram commented on the recent retreat of the Board of Trustees including the action to develop a self-assessment tool for this Board. He encouraged trustees to participate in the process.

Following this meeting is a reception where Trustees will have the opportunity to meet faculty recognized during this session.

### **Adjournment**

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

**VOTED:** to adjourn the meeting at 6:28 p.m.