

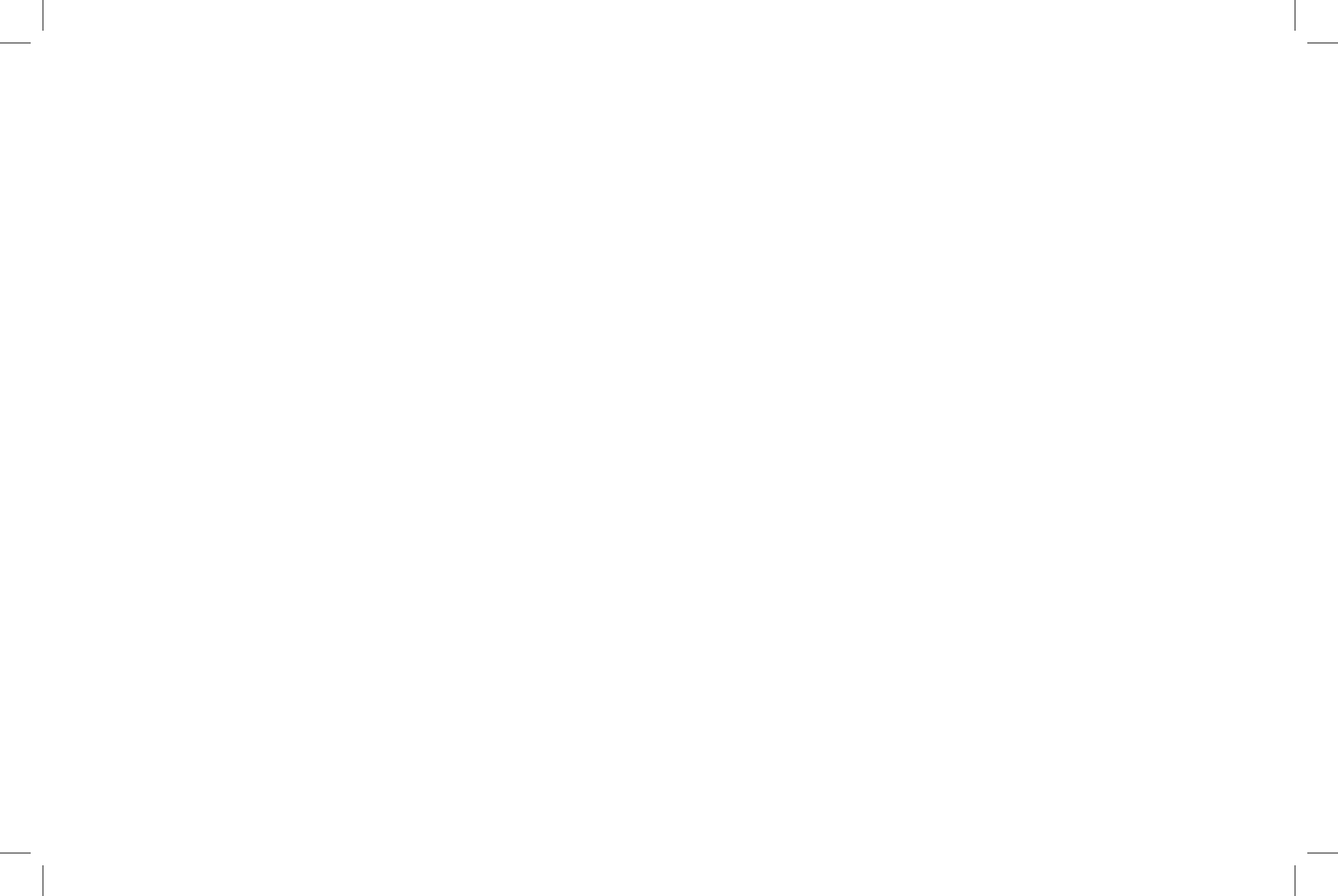


20
26

127TH ANNUAL

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
COMMENCEMENT

SATURDAY, MAY 16 | 11 A.M.
AMSLER CAMPUS CENTER
NORTH ADAMS, MA



Processional

Opening Performance *Don't Stop Me Now* by Queen
Naomi Blake, Matthew Boulware McKnight, Howard Brown, Rory DiVenuto,
Helen Kahn, Alexia Moses, Kathleen Najarian, Jaden Nesmith, and Dylan Schenck

Greetings Dr. James F. Birge, *President*
Eva Bassallo, *Class of 2026*
Peter Fekete, *Master of Education 2026*

Conferring of Honorary Degrees Dr. James F. Birge, *President*

Commencement Address Michael Bobbitt
President & CEO of Opera America

Presentation of Candidates Provost Richard Glejzer

Closing Dr. James F. Birge, *President*

Recessional

TRADITION OF THE GATES

Historically, European universities were often located in walled cities or towns, requiring students to pass through gates or arches to enter the university grounds. The gates symbolized the transition from the secular world to the world of learning, marking a crucial milestone in a student's academic journey. This tradition was carried over when universities were founded in the United States, and over time, the practice of passing through the gates became associated with two essential events: Convocation and Commencement.

Convocation, held at the beginning of the academic year, is a formal ceremony welcoming new students to the college community. Commencement, held at the end of the academic year, is a graduation ceremony where students receive their degrees and are recognized for their academic achievements. Passing through the gates at Convocation and Commencement serves as a symbolic way of marking the beginning and end of a student's academic journey, reminding them of the significance of education and the role that universities play in shaping individuals and society.

Today, this tradition continues at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and passing through the campus gates remains a profound and deeply meaningful ritual for students past and present. In 1894 the institution was founded as the North Adams Normal School to provide teacher training to students in North Adams. The first education teachers who attended the Normal School passed through the gates of Murdock Hall, the original North Adams Normal School building that still stands on the MCLA campus today.

As MCLA has grown and evolved over the years, the long-standing gate procession ceremony at Convocation and Commencement has remained a paramount component of the institution's identity. The gates of Murdock Hall serve as a reminder of MCLA's roots in teacher education, the important role that the college has played in the Commonwealth, and the transformative power of a liberal arts education.

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

To the members of the class of 2026:

Congratulations on reaching this milestone achievement in your educational lives, receiving your college degree!

You came to MCLA during a time of great change and uncertainty in the world, and you stayed the course. Throughout your time as an MCLA student, you have shown us your grit, determination, and resilient spirit. You have overcome challenges, made lifelong friends, discovered your purpose, and grown both personally and professionally into the amazing individuals you are today. I am honored that MCLA was a part of that journey and proud that we provided this pathway into the next phase of your lives.

This commencement holds special meaning for me as well. After many years of proud service to this institution, this is my final commencement as president of MCLA. I can think of no better way to close this chapter than by celebrating all of you. You represent everything this college stands for, and watching you cross this stage fills me with tremendous pride and optimism for the future.

Today I welcome you into MCLA's family of alumni. This is a strong and knowledgeable group that will be your connection to your years at MCLA. I encourage you to use the various networks available to you as part of our Alumni Relations program.

Please also take a moment to thank your Trailblazer Team, faculty, staff, family, friends, and even yourself, for the years of support and hard work to get to this place. It is my hope that you take that sense of teamwork and camaraderie to share with others as you move forward in your chosen path.

On behalf of the Trustees, faculty, staff, and administrators of MCLA, I offer my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for a bright and impactful future.

James F. Birge, Ph.D.
President

GREETINGS FROM THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION

Dear MCLA Class of 2026,

It seems most appropriate to begin this message with, “Congratulations!”, on behalf of MCLA’s faculty. We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments. AND this day is more than a celebration of what you have accomplished, what you have earned through your hard work and willingness to challenge yourself. It is also a celebration of what you have given to this community. And so this message is both “Congratulations!” and “Thank you!”

Thank you for pushing yourself to your limits, and sometimes beyond; for showing up to class and engaging in hard conversations; for making time to think and explore while working to support yourself and your loved ones; for competing on athletic fields, performing in the theatre, crafting works of art, music, writing, and research; for bringing your full self to this community, with all of your curiosity and questions, your demands and complaints and laughter and joy. Thank you for creating spaces of belonging for yourselves and for those around you. Thank you for challenging us - your professors - and MCLA as an institution. Without you, we would be less, in so many ways.

Because of what you’ve gained at and given to MCLA, you are part of this community, and you will remain so. You are entering a world full of challenges, of pain and heartache and countless injustices that you will not be able to fix all by yourself. And you do not have to. Lean on each other. Connect with those around you. Ask for help when you need it. Give yourself time and space to dream. And then, in small steps, begin to build that dream into reality. None of this is easy. And, in the wise words of Octavia E. Butler, visionary, dreamer, and builder of worlds: “There’s no single answer that will solve all of our future problems. There’s no magic bullet. Instead, there are thousands of answers – at least. You can be one of them if you choose to be.”

With gratitude and hope,
Kerri Leyda Nicoll, MDiv, MSW, PhD
Professor of Social Work
President, MCLA Faculty Association

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With gratitude and humility, we respectfully acknowledge that Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts stands on the ancestral homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, who are the Indigenous peoples of this land. Following tremendous hardship after being forced from their valued homelands, they continued as a sovereign Tribal Nation in Wisconsin, which is where they reside today. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

— Land Acknowledgment from the
Stockbridge-Munsee Community



HONOR SOCIETIES AND SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

ALANA

Kente Cloth

ALL ACADEMIC SCHOLAR ATHLETES

Gold Sash with MCLA and MASCAC Insignias

ALPHA CHI NATIONAL COLLEGE HONOR SOCIETY

Gold Medallion on a Blue and Green Cord

ALPHA LAMBDA DELTA FIRST YEAR NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Gold, Red, White Cords

CHI ALPHA SIGMA NATIONAL COLLEGE ATHLETE HONOR SOCIETY

Bronze Medallion

DELTA MU DELTA BUSINESS HONOR SOCIETY

Purple, Gold Cords

MULTICULTURAL ADVANCEMENT

Black, Green, Red, and Yellow multi-color Cords

PHI ALPHA THETA HISTORY PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY

Madonna Red and Blue with Multi-Colors
Tassel Cords

PI GAMMA MU HONOR SOCIETY

Blue and White Cords

PI SIGMA ALPHA POLITICAL SCIENCE HONOR SOCIETY

Red, White, and Black Multi-Colored Tassel Cords

PSI CHI PSYCHOLOGY HONOR SOCIETY

Gold and Blue Cords

RHO PI SIGMA NATIONAL RESIDENCE HALL HONORARY

Blue, White Cords

SIGMA PI SIGMA PHYSICS HONOR SOCIETY

White and Green Cord

SIGMA TAU DELTA ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

Red and Black

STUDENT PHILANTHROPY PROGRAM

Blue and Gold Cord

WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES MINOR

Purple Cords

STUDENT VOLUNTEER

Silver Cords

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Red and Blue

HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Mohan Boodram | Doctor of Public Service

Mohan Boodram has dedicated more than three decades to expanding access and equity in higher education, and his ties to MCLA run deep. He served as a Trustee of the College for thirteen years, including three years as Chair of the Board, and continues his engagement with the institution as a member of the MCLA Foundation Board of Directors. Throughout his tenure, he was a steadfast advocate for affordability, inclusion, and the enduring value of a public liberal arts education.

Boodram's professional career spans senior leadership positions at some of the nation's most distinguished academic institutions. He served as Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid at the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Associate Dean for Enrollment and Student Services at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at Harvard Medical School. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics from Yale University and a Master of Arts in Statistics from Harvard University.

Dr. Mary K. Grant | Doctor of Public Service

Dr. Mary K. Grant is a nationally recognized leader in public higher education and a proud alumna of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, where she served as president for thirteen years. In that role, she advanced civic learning, student success, and institutional growth, leaving a lasting impact on the College and the North Adams community. She currently serves as president of Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), the nation's only independent public college of art and design, where she champions the essential role of creativity in education and civic life.

Dr. Grant has also served as chancellor of the University of North Carolina Asheville and as president and CEO of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. A first-generation college graduate, she has spent her career expanding access and opportunity and is a passionate advocate for equity, inclusion, and the transformative power of public higher education. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Welfare Policy from Brandeis University and has received honorary degrees from Williams College and Eastern Connecticut State University.

HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENT & COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

Michael Bobbitt | **Doctor of Fine Arts**

Michael J. Bobbitt is a nationally recognized arts executive, producer, and artist whose career bridges public policy, organizational transformation, and creative practice. He serves as president and CEO of OPERA America, the national service organization dedicated to supporting opera companies and artists across the country. Before joining OPERA America, Bobbitt served as executive director of the Mass Cultural Council, where he led strategy and operations for a \$29.7 billion creative economy, secured more than \$60 million in COVID relief funding for Massachusetts arts organizations, and successfully advocated for the arts to be embedded in statewide health, education, and economic policy.

Prior to his public service, Bobbitt led two producing theaters, including New Repertory Theatre in Massachusetts and Adventure Theatre MTC in Maryland, where he commissioned more than 50 new works and pioneered sensory-friendly and autism-inclusive performances that became a national model. An award-nominated playwright, director, and choreographer, his work has been produced at the Kennedy Center, Ford's Theatre, Washington National Opera, La Jolla Playhouse, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company, among others. He is the recipient of the Kennedy Center Gold Medallion and has been invested in the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. He holds an M.B.A. in arts innovation and a B.A. summa cum laude in interdisciplinary studies, with executive education at Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Business School. MCLA's conferral of the Doctor of Fine Arts continues an honor previously bestowed upon him by Dean College.

ART

Shyane Gladu
Jenni Murphy

Enaya A. Ogletree
Max Sweeney

ARTS MANAGEMENT

Conall Eoni Mannion
Jonny Tobey

Stephanie Trotto

BIOLOGY

Elizabeth Brown
Lyn Corbett
Cinderella Khoury

Abigail Kline
Hailey Peabody
Grace Stewart

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Cameron Alibozek
Edward Bonney
Sean Callahan
Eleana Casey
Michael P. Cellana
Stephen Leonard Donnelly II
Makayla M. Duquette
Joshua Hemstock
Brandon Hyte
Kumar Lewis

Jacob James Malburg
Troy Andrew Michalak
Connor Murray
Connor Nagy
Averin Paradise
Jaxen Potter
Thomas Rice
Stephen Wayne Riley Jr.
Ryan Rush-Booth
Sukeigh Sukiennik

CHEMISTRY

Tyler Patrick Pettit

COMMUNICATIONS

Anthony Andolina
Tonimarie Basil
Ainslie Lafko

Benjamin MacFadzen
Kyle Manzolini
Lucas Smith

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Brandon Scott Barde
Ryan J. Frazer
William Garrity
Bryan M Hall

Declan O'Brien
Ella Smith
Kaylee Strayer
Dakota Turney

EDUCATION

Abby Bird
Maggie Helene Closinski
Kionna Hayes

Lauren Kimball
Mary Joanne Kipp
Erin Marie Streck

ENGLISH

Caitie “Kai” Amuso
Ashlyn Faith Bill
Colby Crawford
Quinn Goldstein Daugherty
Annemargaret Furgal
Elizabeth Vickery Haight
James Julian
Lauren Kimball
Joseph King
Freya Langley

Matthew R. Lewellyn
Laura Lewis
Michael Lynch
Avery Manzolini
Brigette Marcil
Juno G.A. Post
Elliott Pratt
Natalie Rowan
Clarke Stading
Casey Tereza Vieira

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Eric DuPont
William Flynn
Austin Meyette
Zachary Ryan Morin

Mo Piantoni
Madison Pratt
Madeleine Straw
Hudson L. Todd

HEALTH SCIENCES

Francesca Alcime
Mariama Bayo
Emma Beckwith
Samantha Depson
Eva Raine Eberwein

Michael Harris
Stephanie Laconto-Doherty
Audrey Melson
Simeon Jericho Mercier
Jaci E. Tart

HISTORY

Veronia Bella
George Gratton

Zachary Turner

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Norah Barber
Andrew Callahan
Tea Caravello
Monica Jean Carpenter
Kaiya Cocliff
Ella Formel
Porscha Hamilton

Rosaliz Hernandez-O'Neil
Evan Hines
Chelsea Krutiak
Catherine Patriquin
Kristopher Safford
Anna Howland White

MATHEMATICS

Sam Broderick

Tania Reppucci

MUSIC, INDUSTRY AND PRODUCTION

Jacob Bluestein
Helen Kahn

Joseph King
Adam Loubsky-Lonergan

PHILOSOPHY

Evie Ross

PERFORMING ARTS

Max Murray

PHYSICS

Sam Broderick
Tea Caravello

Eric DuPont

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Allie Bayer
Charles Edward Tumavicus Darling

Connor Diehl
Daniel Izyk

PSYCHOLOGY

Ty Jacob Aubin
Joseph Matthew Barboza
Eva Bassallo
Mackenzie Beckwith
Kevin Blake Jr.
Katherine Burdick
Callie Cook
Blake Cribbs
Abby Farnum
Justine Lee

Emma Elaine Matthews
Jaydence Meribela
Shannon O'Brien
Zabion Powell
Connor Rarick
Haley Salzarulo
Jayna Marie Schmohl
Gianna Tarantino
Craig Williams

RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGY

Makayla M. Canino
Darius Ahmad Cicero
Lily Angelina Fortin
Cidnee Frymire
Thomas Hickey
Jasmine Hooper

Rylee Joy
Allyson Elizabeth Krzanik
Averie McGrath
Katrina L. Nakaya
Alexis Pingelski

SOCIOLOGY

Francesca Alcime
Emily Castle
Cacey Desruisseaux
Paige Dufur
Logan Leja

Angelle Mann-Russell
Ali Ponder
Christopher Gessit Vargas
Michael Scott Wormuth Jr
Kacie Lynn Yerrick

THEATRE

Howard Brown
Kathleen Elizabeth Najarian
Max Murray

Ahmed Moustafa Reda
Jaden Nesmith

CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED GRADUATE STUDIES

Daniel J. Gibbs
Olivia Marie Harrison
Hudson L. Todd
Colin Klepetar

Whitney Ann McRobbie
Marie L. Prizzi
Ivelisse A Valdez Cuesta

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Sarah Lipinski
Masooma Mukhtari
Kelly Ott
Lloyd Peters

Paul Roeder Jr.
Thomas Thurston
Aleasia Yeaton

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Ryan P. Biros
Alexandra Kjeldgaard Case
Sam Davis
Peter Malcolm Fekete
Rebecca Geary
Erin Kinnas

Richellmarie E. Luckey
Stacie Morris
Brittany Schilling
Erin Marie Smith
Amanda Terzigni
Alexis Rose Vachereau

Conferral of a degree occurs when the registrar finalizes the student's academic record and confirms that all requirements have been satisfied. Participation in the Commencement ceremony does not constitute conferral of the degree. Similarly, inclusion of a student's name in such publications as the Commencement program does not confirm eligibility for the degree.





MCLA

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
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