



**Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of October 24, 2019**  
**Murdock Hall Room 208**

**Members in attendance:**

Denise Marshall, Chair  
JD Chesloff, Vice Chair  
Mohan Boodram  
Brenda Burdick  
Susan Gold  
Frederick Keator

**Others present:**

Dr. James Birge, President  
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

Chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

President Birge began with a review of names proposed to serve as 2020 Commencement Speaker. He provided a handout with a brief biography for Dr. Shaun Harper, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, and Lt. Governor Karen Polito.

Trustees discussed the merits of each person proposed, and past commencement speakers.

A motion was made to request that Lt. Governor Polito serve as the 2020 Commencement speaker. The motion was tabled for discussion, then withdrawn.

Trustees proposed additional options for honorary degree recipients and commencement speaker including Tara Westover, Megan Rapinoe, Paul Mark, Steven Boyd, Niraj Shah, and Ellen Bernstein. They discussed feedback from students with regard to speakers and it was noted that the student body typically likes someone who is highly visible and, therefore, unaffordable or difficult to attract to MCLA. The optics of having a political figure speak was also discussed.

Further names including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Fawn Weaver, Marianne Pearl and Jenn Smith were added for both HD recipient and speaker options.

After discussion, the commencement speaker options were presented as Lt. Governor Karen Polito, Niraj Shah, Shaun Harper, Megan Rapinoe, and Fawn Weaver.

A motion was made to request Lt. Governor Polito speak at the December Academic reception and be conferred an honorary degree. Following discussion the motion was withdrawn.

President Birge will continue to vet the list of proposed speakers and honorary degree recipients. As allowed per by-laws he will select a speaker and follow past practices for requesting they serve as commencement speaker.

Lastly, Chair Marshall inquired for other business. None being brought forth, upon motion duly made and seconded, it was **VOTED** to adjourn at 4:40 p.m.