

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA)

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Fifth-Year Review

Submitted September 26, 2008 by
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
North Adams, MA 01247

Section I: Report Preparation

Under the leadership of President Mary K. Grant, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) began preparation for the fifth-year review in early fall of 2007. The executive cabinet, which consists of Jim Stakenas, vice president for administration and finance; Denise Richardello, vice president for enrollment management and external affairs; Marianne Drake, chief advancement officer; Charlotte Degen, dean of students; Monica Joslin, dean of academic affairs and Steve Green, vice president for academic affairs; were responsible for the standards pertaining to their areas. Vice President Green and Dean Joslin served as the chairs for the fifth-year report. The NEASC fifth-year review has been a frequent agenda item during regular meetings of the cabinet, as well as Board of Trustee meetings.

Cabinet members worked with staff in their respective areas to review the relevant standards, and in most cases staff members assisted with the writing of the standards. Peter Allmaker, associate dean of computer support services; Jerry Desmarais, treasurer; Maureen Horak, associate dean for library services; Linda Kaufmann, associate librarian; Terry Miller, director of learning services; and Jason Canales, institutional research; were among those who provided input.

A Web site was created for the NEASC fifth year report. A link to the NEASC standards was provided and both the draft report and the MCLA strategic plan were posted. All members of the campus community had access and an opportunity to provide input to the report.

In this fifth year report, the college provides responses to all 11 standards, as well as an update and progress report on the five issues raised by the visiting team in 2003. These issues also were discussed in our second year follow-up report in 2005. In addition, we report on our strategic planning efforts, our program review and evaluation process, and our goals for the next five years.

Section II: Institutional Overview

Subsequent to the fall 2003 evaluation by the NEASC visiting team, MCLA entered into a period of tremendous productivity. We worked hard to address each of the five areas the visiting team identified in 2003 (these are fully discussed in the next section “Special Areas of Emphasis” and in the appropriate standards), and made great progress on those and other important areas.

This past five years has been a period of growth at MCLA. In fall 2007, we enrolled 1,550 undergraduate students, an increase of nearly 100 (about 6 percent) since the 2003 NEASC visit. We have, in accordance with our strategic planning goals, created three new major programs (Arts Management was established in 2006. In 2008, MCLA began the Art major and the Political Science and Public Policy major.) In 2009, the college will introduce an Athletic Training program.

In fall 2007, MCLA also offered a new course delivery method, “Fast-Track,” for adult learners. This alternative completion program in the areas of business administration and interdisciplinary studies enrolled 35 students in the first year. The B-HIP (Berkshire Hills Internship Program) was implemented in 2005. This arts administration internship program proved to be highly successful. Between 14 and 16 students enroll each summer, with additional students doing their arts-related internships during fall and spring semesters. We continue to expand experiential learning opportunities for students, and held our sixth annual undergraduate research conference in spring 2008. Internship opportunities, service learning opportunities, and study abroad opportunities are available to our students. We intend both to expand these offerings, and to require that each student has at least two experiential learning opportunities by the time they graduate. Additionally, it is MCLA’s goal to strengthen the first year experience by implementing a first year seminar.

The number of full-time faculty members at MCLA has grown by approximately 12 since the 2003 visit. In addition to faculty, we filled a number of other new positions. In the area of technology, we established an Academic Technology Center and hired a director of academic technology. In addition, we hired a director of computer services to lead the conversion of our student information system from PLUS to Banner. Having made great progress in the area of technology, we will hire a chief information officer to oversee all computer operations on campus.

We also added an associate dean for continuing education in the academic affairs division, and are in the process of hiring an associate dean for assessment, planning and research.

During the past five years, MCLA realized significant improvement to our campus facilities. Several projects have been particularly significant. Among these are:

- The opening in fall 2006 of a totally renovated Murdock Hall,
- The opening in fall 2007 of a state-of-the-art, synthetic turf soccer field,
- Significant renovation of space in Bowman Hall to accommodate new offices and laboratories for the Psychology Department was completed in spring 2008, and
- A major addition to the Berkshire Towers Residence Halls is now under construction. Once completed, this addition will provide important new programming space for our students.

In addition, we completed work in nearly all of our buildings on campus. These projects included new or refurbished labs for environmental studies, languages and graphic arts. They also include renovated art studio spaces, new offices in several buildings, and a striking refurbishing of our library space.

Notably, the college during this time also completed a new space and facilities plan that points the way toward further construction and renovation projects to be accomplished in the next several years. Chief among these is a new Center for Science and Innovation that will provide our science programs with state-of-the-art facilities.

We also engaged in numerous technology upgrades for the campus. We switched to the First Class e-mail, Web portal, and information system in 2006, which opened the way to easier communication. We created a position for a Web communications manager, who has been instrumental in upgrading our Web site. Major college documents are posted online, and Web pages for each department were improved. The conversion of our student information system from PLUS to Banner has been a lengthy process, but is close to completion. Finally, we introduced a laptop requirement for students entering MCLA beginning in fall 2005. As a result, we are nearly to the point where all of our students have laptop computers on our wireless campus.

Following comments from the NEASC visiting team in 2003, the college quickly began discussion on how to proceed with a more productive strategic planning process. After work with a consultant, President Grant initiated a new and inclusive strategic planning process in winter 2004. This was followed in May 2004 with a campus-wide strategic planning retreat that has been continually held during the week after commencement.

The strategic planning retreats allowed us to share with one another our views on progress made toward reaching the goals we developed. In some instances, speakers from on campus and outside experts addressed those assembled on the issues under discussion. Also in response to a NEASC visiting team concern, a new academic program review process began in 2004. Faculty in each of our academic majors participate in this process, which calls for internal and external assessment every five years. We now are beginning year five of the program review. Two or three of our programs were evaluated each year of this review. Each completed review produced an affirmation of the good work being done within our academic departments, and some reviewers have commented on further improvements – such as added staff – that could be made with greater resources. Nearly all of our reviewers have provided advice on improvements that could be made to our learning outcomes assessment process.

Two of our programs have been reviewed in a different process. First, our Education major – which is subject to significant state-mandated policies and procedures – undergoes a review overseen by the State Department of Education. Secondly, at the request of the Department of Higher Education, all of the business administration programs in the Massachusetts State College system have undergone a special review. A consultant was hired, and he spent a year collecting information about the programs, and developed an overall report, in addition to individual reports for each college. The MCLA report provided us with some sound direction for the next few years.

Program review was not exclusive to academic programs. Last year, our Athletics Department brought in outside reviewers. We also had external reviewers provide reports on our student affairs division and our computer services and facilities operations.

MCLA has a long history of involvement in the community and throughout the region. Recent years, under the leadership of President Grant, have brought a major upsurge in this activity. Examples of projects for which MCLA serves as the lead partner include:

- The Berkshire Compact for Higher Education, which outlines how the county can move toward assuring a college level education for all who aspire to it.
- The Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative (BWLI), for which the college took significant responsibility and which serves as the “technology” hub for Berkshire County teachers.
- The Berkshire Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Pipeline Network, which strives to increase student interest and engagement in the sciences, and provides professional development opportunities for educators in Berkshire County.

We also increased our collaboration with other colleges in the region, both in terms of academic programming and cultural presentations. For instance, Williams College, Southern Vermont College, Bennington College and MCLA collaborated in spring 2008 when an inaugural symposium was implemented. The Four College Issues Forum brings discussions of national and global issues to the area. The first forum brought noted environmentalist Amory Lovins, chief executive officer of the Rocky Mountain Institute, to North Adams. The second lecture in this series will take place in the spring of 2009 and will bring Professor Anita Hill to our region.

Our involvement in the community also increased. In 2005, the college opened MCLA Gallery 51 on Main Street in North Adams. Since then, hundreds of visitors from the community have joined students, staff, and faculty to enjoy a wide variety of artwork displayed in the space. In addition, the number of students interning in local businesses and agencies has increased, as has volunteerism by students and college staff.

Today, there is a much greater understanding of the role that the college plays in the region and, over recent years, an increasing number of area residents have become aware that MCLA contributes significantly to the quality of life here.

Under the leadership of President Grant, the college plays not only a role in the region, but also on the state and national level. MCLA is a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), and this year, President Grant also serves as the president of COPLAC.

Section III: Special Areas of Emphasis

The NEASC accreditation team identified the following five areas in 2003 that MCLA needed to accomplish:

1. Establish a five-year strategic planning cycle that is data-driven and comprehensive
2. Develop campus-wide assessment, including periodic program review in academic and non-academic units
3. Develop policy and personnel manuals for faculty and staff
4. Achieve enrollment levels and faculty staffing appropriate for the institution's mission
5. Ensure appropriate levels of staffing and use of the college's library and information resources

In this section, we will focus on the above five areas.

1. Establish a five-year strategic planning cycle that is data-driven and comprehensive

Strategic planning is a priority for all campus divisions. Departmental and divisional goals were articulated, and prototypes and action plans were developed and submitted to the appropriate cabinet member. Many of the proposed initiatives were supported with resources. These initiatives assisted the institution in reaching one or more of the five institutional goals set in 2004. The five major strategic planning goals are:

1. Increase enrollment
2. Improve retention
3. Achieve financial strength
4. Set and achieve learning outcomes and program review
5. Enhance student life

We moved toward meeting these goals by employing such strategies as:

1. Capitalizing on the Berkshires
2. Expanding and enriching student life opportunities
3. Formalizing collaborations that expand our reach and resources
4. Increasing the use of technology
5. Improving the program mix
6. Raising the public profile of the college

As stated in our two-year report, MCLA contracted in 2004 with the Rensselaerville Institute, which guided us in the initial phase of the strategic planning process, now in its fourth year. Annual strategic planning retreats have taken place since June 2004. These inclusive retreats have included faculty, staff, students, and members of the MCLA Board of Trustees. A brief document outlining the goals and the strategic planning process and achievement is

available in a hard copy “short form” as well as a more detailed “long form.” Both documents are accessible on the MCLA Web site.

The strategic planning process has resulted in many accomplishments. Some initiatives are complete, others still are in process. We will continue our strategic planning efforts and look forward to additional positive results.

A partial list of accomplishments to date:

To increase enrollment and improve retention;

- An Arts Management major was created and instituted in fall 2006,
- An Art major was approved and instituted in fall 2008,
- A Political Science and Public Policy major was approved and instituted in fall 2008,
- A 2+2 biotechnology track has been developed in collaboration with Berkshire Community College,
- An Athletic Training major was approved by the Board of Trustees and is under evaluation by external reviewers,
- An articulation agreement with the University of Massachusetts was developed and a 3+2 Pre-Engineering Program was implemented in fall 2006,
- Collaboration with Greenfield Community College is making some of our courses available in the Pioneer Valley, and
- Fast-Track, a degree completion program was implemented in fall 2007.

Many initiatives were developed to improve retention and enhance student life:

- **LEAD Academy**

A LEAD (Leadership in Education, Action and Development) Academy (summer leadership and community services program for new students) was implemented in 2005, and has enrolled from 20 to 30 students each summer (approximately 9 percent of the entering class). The LEAD program is a four-day action program for students, incorporating community service and civic engagement as integral components. Also included are workshops on time management, community living, effective group work, academic success, leadership skills and team building. Students who participate in this program continue to stay engaged and become leaders.

- **Peer Advising**

A peer advising program also was implemented as a result of our strategic planning process. The Peer Advising (SWAT: Students Working to Assist Transitions) Program is designed to support first year students. It offers peer tutoring and peer support during one of the most difficult years for college students. Between 25 and 30 upperclassmen serve as peer advisors, and are trained to assist the Advising Center during the fall advising period.

- **Multicultural recruitment**

MCLA has increased enrollment through an urban outreach/multicultural enhancement program as we continue to develop relationships with high school counselors, non-profit and educational preparation programs. The college president created a full-time position to lead their effort. Our Multicultural Overnight program makes MCLA accessible to students from cities such as Boston, Springfield, and New York. In addition to the Multicultural Overnight program, we added a North Shore Overnight, geared toward Lawrence and Lowell high schools. These two-day programs are open to both juniors and seniors. They focus upon multicultural experiences at MCLA, providing prospective students the opportunity to connect with students, faculty, and staff members through a variety of activities.

This is a campus-wide effort of our ALANA (African, Latino, Asian and Native Americans) office, the Residential Program and Services Office, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and, most importantly, students. MCLA continues to see advancement in application numbers from ALANA students. In 2005, we received 227 prospective ALANA applications, and in 2007 we received 345 ALANA applications – a 51 percent increase in two years. The increase in ALANA applications has resulted in an increase in ALANA enrollment.

- **Financial aid awareness**

To raise awareness and increase applications for financial aid scholarships, notices were posted in our student newspaper, the Beacon, flyers were distributed and electronic notices were placed on Faculty and Staff Announce and on the Student Announce (part of the First Class system). Our financial aid office reports a 20 percent increase over last year in applications for financial aid scholarships for this year.

2. Develop a campus-wide assessment, including periodic program review in academic and non-academic units

Our program review cycle began in 2004 with a look at two programs – English/Communications and Psychology. Three additional program reviews began in 2005 and two more followed in 2006. Another two reviews began in 2007 and should be completed during the 2008/2009 academic year, while the final three reviews will begin this fall.

By Department of Higher Education mandate, our Business Administration program was assessed when an outside consultant/evaluator reviewed all business administration programs in the state college system.

As stated in our two-year report, every academic program is engaged in learning outcomes assessment. There is some variability among the academic departments with respect to establishing sound measurable learning objectives, and we have received useful comments from our external program reviewers. We also had additional consultation. Martha Stassen, director of program assessment at the University of Massachusetts, conducted a workshop with department chairs and other faculty in September 2005. In addition, MCLA faculty members attend the annual New England Educational Assessment Network assessment conference. MCLA faculty, staff and administrators also attend other conferences, such as those sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and

Universities with a focus on assessment. We anticipate hiring an associate dean for assessment, planning and research to support faculty and staff in these efforts.

Learning outcomes were established for our Core Curriculum Tier II courses (MCLA's general education curriculum) as well as for the Tier III, Core Capstone course, which, as of fall 2006, is a graduation requirement for all students.

Most recently, on June 10, 2008, Ann Rancourt, associate vice president for academic affairs at Keene State College, conducted a workshop on learning outcomes and learning outcomes assessment at MCLA for faculty members. The workshop was organized by our professional development coordinator, with special invitation to core domain leaders. Representatives for all four core domains were in attendance, and follow-up work will take place over the summer and fall.

- Surveys identifying learning outcomes of the core curriculum are completed by graduating seniors. In addition, the *ACT (American College Testing) Reason for Leaving Survey* is filled out by students who withdraw from the college, to help us to better understand the reasons why students leave MCLA, and to provide feedback for continued improvement. An active retention task force was established. Its members are reviewing at all aspects of the student experience to gain insight into factors affecting student retention.
- A "Graduate Survey" also is sent annually to students, six months after their graduation, to determine employment success and graduate school admission.
- During course registration, students are asked to fill out a survey to provide the college with feedback regarding the registration process, course scheduling and related issues.

Non-academic units

Many non-academic units at MCLA were evaluated in recent years. Student Affairs uses the *ACT Student Opinion Survey*, which provides student opinion on the array of student services on campus.

- The Residential Programs and Services Office (RPS) periodically has participated in the *Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) and Educational Benchmarking (EBI) Resident Study* since 1999. Resulting information is utilized to advance RPS and other MCLA services, which are the subject of the survey. This survey is now distributed bi-annually.
- An external consultant was brought in to review the Student Affairs Division. An outcome of this review was to move the Athletics Department into Student Affairs.
- A review of the Athletics program took place in 2007. As a result, MCLA created a full athletics facility maintenance plan. We designed and implemented the President's Advisory Athletic Council (with faculty, staff, student and community representation). The Council will advise President Grant on additional recommendations made through the program review.

- Campus dining (ARAMARK) and the college bookstore (Follett), both contracted services, conduct several service evaluations each year. This information is used to develop and tailor new programs and services for students.
- A state-mandated study of space utilization by Rickes Associates, assessing our current classroom space usage, was completed and provided data for our recently completed (2007) campus master plan.
- We also developed an emergency management plan and a chemical hygiene plan.
- MCLA has participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since the pilot year, 1999. The Retention Task Force analyzed the data and made recommendations based on the results. For example, to strengthen student advising, we developed common value statements for advising and also for the liberal arts.

Following the study of the NSSE data, it was clear that we needed to inform the campus of the importance of high impact experiences. For the strategic planning retreat this spring, we invited Dr. George Kuh, chancellor's professor and director of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University Bloomington, and the founder of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), to be our keynote speaker and to engage the campus in conversation. Dr. Kuh provided data regarding high impact activities and challenged us to work to ensure that each of our graduates experience at least two of these activities.

- The campus has for many years distributed the CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) survey during our New Student Orientation, to collect comparative data on the entering students. This body of data has been used by the institution to provide information to the student affairs staff, our retention task force, our admissions staff, and to the strategic planning retreat participants.
- As stated in our two-year report, we underwent a significant assessment of our Facilities Department, bringing in a director of facilities from another college. The evaluator looked at work shifts, supervisory capabilities and equipment needs, and made recommendations.
- The computer services administrative areas went through a program review. The report helped in changing supervisory oversight and reporting lines.

Expertise has been sought and provided in reviews of the Office of Admission and the Financial Aid Office. It also is notable that the college contracted with Market Street Research, a well-respected marketing research company, to conduct a market feasibility study for MCLA. These data have been very helpful as we improve our recruitment strategy.

3. Developing policy and personnel manuals for faculty and staff

We continue to improve upon both the quality and the ease of access to campus policies and manuals through printed and electronic media. All policies are posted on our internal Web site. An advisor's handbook was completed and given to every advisor on campus in 2003. We

update the handbook as necessary so academic advisors have up-to-date information. All key academic policies appear in the college catalog, which is accessible in hard copy and on the MCLA Web site. We also produce a student handbook each year.

The Human Resources Office issued in fall 2004, and updated in 2005, a hiring guide for the college, and a new personnel manual is under review. An emergency response handbook and a chemical hygiene plan were completed and are continuously updated. With respect to fiscal affairs, college internal controls were revised in November 2005 and are reviewed with our auditor annually. All fiscal policies are in this document.

Lastly, a “new faculty and staff orientation” program was held in each of the last four years, prior to the start of the academic year.

4. Achieve enrollment levels and faculty staffing appropriate for the institution’s mission

In our two-year report, we stated that we had seen a slow but steady increase in enrollment. In 2005, we reported 1,428 enrolled in our undergraduate programs, while in fall 2007 we had a total of 1,550 undergraduate students. We saw a decline in graduate students from 393 graduate students in fall 2005 to 291 in fall 2007. Under the leadership of the director of admissions, who was hired in 2005, many new and expanded recruitment initiatives have been implemented, such as an enhanced Web site, the Multicultural Overnight and expanded open house programs. The applications for fall 2007 were up by 21 percent, compared to fall 2005.

Consistent with our strategic plan, we continue to add to our full time faculty. Two consecutive years of a state-created, early retirement program had led to a significant loss of faculty with very little state funding provided for replacement. We increased the size of our faculty in subsequent years, and plan to continue to do so as needed on into the future. Our expanded roster of academic programs also will lead to a further need for additional faculty.

Year	Full Time Faculty
2003 – 04	79
2004 – 05	78
2005 – 06	85
2006 – 07	86
2007 – 08	88
2008 – 09	89

5. Ensure appropriate levels of staffing and use of the college’s library and information resources

This year, MCLA hired an associate dean for library services whose leadership skills offer much promise for further improvements in our library. We made some physical upgrades (new carpeting, furnishings, lighting and ceiling tiles) and plan to add another professional librarian in FY09. We continue to ensure funding for database subscriptions and other materials, and last year the vice president for academic affairs provided extra funding for book purchasing. Those funds, combined with money in our Title III grant, will help us to continue to update our collection.

We found increased circulation of library materials (books, media and journals) and somewhat flat interlibrary loan activity from FY03 to FY05. Library usage trends seem to

have changed in FY06: general circulation decreased (21 percent from FY06-07), while interlibrary loan transactions increased (31 percent from FY06-07). These trends, taken in tandem with the significantly increased database usage reported below, may indicate that library information resources continue to be used by the student body, which has a total FTE of 1,543, but that different formats are changing the information landscape. This trend also may reflect a cumulative effect of declining currency in the book collection, which recently started improving with increased funding. New acquisitions in FY08 likely contributed to an increase in circulation of nearly 17 percent in that year, despite the fact that the library was closed for six weeks for renovation. Over the same year, interlibrary loan decreased by 9.7 percent.

Year	Total Circulation	Interlibrary Loan Transactions
FY 2003	16,478	2,493
FY 2004	18,441	2,823
FY 2005	19,649	2,792
FY 2006	16,107	4,284
FY 2007	12,706	5,623
FY 2008	14,864	5,076

Reference services continued to be active during this time, showing annual increases until FY07, when the number of questions declined slightly, by 7 percent, and by almost 11 percent in FY08. Information literacy instruction (ILI) to students has remained steady from FY03 to present, showing small increases or decreases from year to year. Student use of databases, indicated by the statistics from the library’s subset of EBSCO databases, has grown every year, showing an increase of 20 percent in FY07 when several new data bases were added, and an increase of 2 percent in FY08.

Year	Reference Questions	ILI Students	EBSCO Searches
FY 2003	2,820	350	66,958
FY 2004	3,301	406	97,402
FY 2005	3,559	413	105,768
FY 2006	4,636	337	122,839
FY 2007	4,291	313	147,159
FY 2008	3,827	367	149,497

Information Resources:

In our two-year report we stated that “the college has made a strong commitment to mature our information technology resources,” and that “technology is a focus area among our strategic planning directions.” We have made significant advancements; all of our students now have laptop computers, we are a wireless campus, and we moved to Blackboard Vista as our LMS. We implemented Banner as our student information system for billing, financial aid, admissions, and course registrations. Faculty, for the first time, submitted their end-of-semester grades online in May 2008.

Banner will provide additional areas of self service for students to review their accounts, grades and advising information.

Since the accreditation visit in 2003, the college has accomplished the following with respect to technology:

- Created a position for a CIO in June 2008
- Started in fall 2006 the implementation process to change our student information system from PLUS to Banner.
- Created a “Center for Academic Technology” and hired a director of academic technology
- Created a position for a Web communications manager
- Added additional help desk support staff
- Purchased and implemented the First Class Web portal system for use of e-mail and Web communications
- Established an Academic Technology Advisory Group (ATAG)
- Implemented a laptop requirement for all incoming first year students in 2005
- Played a central role for the Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative (BWLI)
- Hired additional computer science faculty
- Created a wireless campus for Internet access
- Room selection and assignment process is online

Section IV: Review of the Standards

STANDARD ONE: MISSION AND PURPOSES

The MCLA mission statement is as follows (College Catalog 2007, p. 4):

“Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts is a public, residential, liberal arts college, which offers both undergraduate and graduate programs. Its distinctive purpose is to provide a high quality alternative to private liberal arts institutions at a lower cost.

Special features include selective admission, small classes, individualized attention, and academic excellence in an attractive college setting. A challenging curriculum provides flexibility for motivated students to shape their own course of study and encourages them to combine traditional coursework with experiential learning, such as internships, study abroad, and other field experiences. Working with a diverse student body in an intellectually challenging environment, MCLA faculty and staff develop liberally educated citizens with the knowledge, perspectives, critical thinking abilities, and values necessary to become active members of their communities and leaders in their chosen professions.

To accomplish this mission, we seek to develop curricula that integrate liberal arts and professional studies; affirm the value of excellent teaching and reward scholarly and creative activity; expand opportunities for experiential learning to include field experiences, community service, international programs and independent studies; create a campus community that fosters intellectual, cultural, social and recreational activities that enrich education and where the value and worth of all people are affirmed and celebrated; achieve greater diversity within our faculty, administration, staff, and student body; challenge students to succeed and support them in their efforts; and extend our cultural and educational resources to enhance the quality of life in the Berkshires and the Commonwealth.”

MCLA’s mission statement is reviewed regularly by faculty, staff and the Board of Trustees to ensure that it continues to fit with the nature of the college as a liberal arts institution. It provides direction for our institutional strategic plan and program development, as well as other activities. Our ongoing assessment process takes place with our mission as a key guide. Our membership in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) is consistent with our mission.

MCLA’s mission statement was approved formally by the campus governance process, our Board of Trustees, and the Department of Higher Education (formerly BHE).

MCLA’s “purposes are concrete and realistic” and the mission defines the institution as a liberal arts college. The mission not only is regularly reviewed, but also guides new program development and other college activities for student learning and development. The governing bodies make sure new programs are in alignment with the mission. The mission statement is included in the college catalog, and appears on the college’s Web site.

Institutional Effectiveness

Our strategic plan is in alignment with our mission and new initiatives must be in alignment with our strategic plan. The strategic planning process was implemented in 2004 and involves the entire campus. Annual strategic planning retreats have been conducted, and at our last two-day retreat (May 2008), approximately 100 faculty and staff were in attendance each day. (A copy of the strategic plan is enclosed.) The strategic plan provides direction for program development, implementation and resource allocation.

STANDARD TWO: PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Planning and evaluation is a campus-wide process. We hired a consultant in 2003 to assist with the process for the development of an institutional strategic plan. We also implemented a five-year academic program review cycle in fall 2004. Non-academic programs and departments also are evaluated.

The campus plans and evaluates in a broad and systematic fashion, and involves all campus constituencies in the process. Two recent examples are our ongoing strategic planning document and the more recent approval of a campus master plan.

Our most recent strategic planning retreat was held on May 20 and 21, 2008, featuring our keynote speaker, Dr. George Kuh. The first day focus was on strengthening the undergraduate experience for students, and the second day of the retreat was devoted to a discussion of what employers are looking for in graduates. Brian Fitzgerald, executive director of the Business-Higher Education Forum, spoke on “What is required of 21st Century Liberal Arts Graduates.”

Planning

As mentioned under standard one, the strategic planning document provides a guide for the campus regarding short and long term planning. The work of The Berkshire Compact for Higher Education, for which MCLA is the lead partner, also has been informative to MCLA. For example, data from a needs analysis for Berkshire County indicated the need for a degree completion program for adults in Berkshire County. In response, MCLA developed and implemented the Fast-Track program in fall 2007. This is keeping with the college’s goal of meeting the educational needs of the region.

For academic planning purposes, the academic vice president meets annually with each department chair to review department plans (for example: new or expanded programs) and department needs in such areas as staffing, budget, equipment and facilities.

Evaluation

As noted, the mission is reviewed periodically, and serves as a guide for new program development. Since the 2003 NEASC review, MCLA has developed three new majors, Arts Management, Art, and Political Science and Public Policy, all of which speak to the MCLA mission. External reviewers, as required by DHE, reviewed the proposals – and also commented on how the proposed majors meet the mission of the college. Following the external review, the proposals were sent to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) for board review and approval.

Since 2004, all academic programs have undergone a program review on a five-year cycle. Academic departments internally prepare a written program review report. The report is evaluated by two external evaluators, who later meet with the department members, the vice president, and the dean. Following the on-campus visit, the external reviewers submit an evaluation report to the vice president and department chair. The reports from the external reviewers are used by the departments to inform further planning, assessment, and curricular modification. They also often comment on resource allocation of staffing and space.

The domain leaders for the college-wide core curriculum have been involved with curriculum assessment since its inception in 2001. Learning outcomes and assessment rubrics were developed by faculty members and approved by the governance process. With more

faculty involved in assessment, an increased interest emerged and a college-wide workshop on learning outcomes assessment was held on June 11, 2008.

For many years, the college distributed a college-wide exit survey to all graduating seniors. The survey was reviewed and updated for spring 2008 to align with changes in the core curriculum, and the results will be shared with the core domain faculty in early fall 2008. This survey is one component of the overall core program assessment.

A group of faculty members and student affairs staff is exploring the use of electronic portfolio for course and program assessment, and to document extracurricular involvement. A college-wide committee (staff and faculty) reviewed various software systems during fall 2007, and a pilot group explored the use of electronic portfolio in more detail during spring and summer 2008. The goal is to implement a college-wide e-portfolio for students to facilitate integrative thinking and document their learning outcomes and experiential achievements.

It is of great importance to faculty, staff and administrators at MCLA to know that students meet our learning outcomes, whether at a course or program level. The college provides support for faculty and staff attendance at assessment conferences. The coordinator of professional development also is part of the New England Educational Assessment Network (NEEAN) board, and MCLA faculty members attend NEEAN's annual conference. MCLA invited assessment consultants from NEEAN to campus for work with faculty members. The college is an active member of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and faculty and staff attend their annual conference and regional conferences.

Several of our faculty members are part of the national Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) and for the last two years have held biweekly meetings each semester, with 10 -12 faculty colleagues discussing issues pertaining to teaching and student learning. Presentations range from syllabus development to assessment to electronic portfolio. A goal is to host a summer 2009 conference at MCLA for faculty members from nearby colleges, with the focus on teaching and learning.

In addition to the faculty professional development committee, we have an Academic Technology Advisory Group (ATAG). ATAG works with the coordinator of the Academic Technology Center. On May 16, 2008, the faculty (with the coordinator) held a full day professional development program for faculty teaching with technology. Nearly half of the MCLA faculty attended this successful program.

Assessment is a priority for the college, and we currently seek to hire an associate dean who will oversee assessment and planning. This will provide a more centrally coordinated assessment process on campus.

Institutional Effectiveness

A variety of information sources contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of our planning and evaluation methodologies. These issues frequently are embedded in discussions at the cabinet level, may occur at meetings of department chairs, individual department meetings, our strategic planning retreats, or in the reviews outside evaluators provide for us in the program review process. Such discussions help us on a continuous basis to be aware of what we are doing, how well we are doing it, and what changes would be beneficial.

STANDARD THREE: ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

A table of organization is included with this report. It is distributed to all new faculty and staff during an orientation that takes place each year before the fall academic semester starts.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) is appointed by the governor and holds regular board meetings and committee meetings. The committees are: Academic Affairs, Fiscal Affairs, Student Affairs and an Executive Committee. Special committees are convened as necessary, such as a committee on enrollment management. Meetings are conducted to inform and discuss college policies, fiscal issues, new initiatives, admissions data, etc. The chair of each committee presents to the full board at the board meetings, at which all official voting takes place.

An all-day board retreat is held annually to inform, update and educate its members on campus initiatives, goals and the mission. The members of the board are appointed by the governor and represent a wide variety of backgrounds. MCLA is fortunate to have a highly skilled and involved board, the members of which attend many campus events and gatherings.

The board annually reviews the performance of the president and periodically evaluates its own effectiveness. Board members receive regular electronic updates from President Grant regarding statewide and college issues and events. The MCLA campus receives a biweekly newsletter from President Grant, keeping the campus community updated on statewide issues that pertain to the college, as well as events and news from the college community. The president also meets annually with all academic and administrative departments.

The college president is supported by a cabinet consisting of key officers in charge of academic affairs, student affairs, administration and finance, enrollment management, external affairs and advancement. These individuals are in continuous communication with the president, with each other, and with the various individuals and groups reporting to them.

The academic vice president is directly responsible to the chief executive officer (president). The academic vice president and dean, together with faculty and the governance committees, are responsible for academic program quality. Courses offered off-campus or online must meet the same requirements as on-campus offerings, and are subject to the same evaluations. MCLA has no fully online programs; however, it is likely that in the near future MCLA will have at least one fully online program to meet the needs of adult learners.

The MSCA faculty contract defines the governance structure that includes five standing committees (All College Committee, Curriculum Committee, Academic Policies Committee, Student Affairs Committee and Graduate Education Council). Faculty members predominate on all but the Student Affairs Committee. The governance committees make recommendations to the president, who has the ultimate oversight and approval. All meetings are open to the campus community and we welcome participation. Students also are represented on every governance committee.

The effectiveness of all components of institutional governance is a subject for discussion in various venues, and attempts are made as needed to ensure appropriate functioning of all boards and committees.

STANDARD FOUR: THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

All academic programs at MCLA are consistent with our mission. MCLA offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees, and has numerous articulation agreements with community colleges. MCLA's residency requirement is 45 credits. All new academic programs undergo a rigorous review and current programs participate in a program review process.

Our academic policies apply to all programs, and are outlined in the college catalog, which is available in print and electronically at the college Web site. All undergraduate programs have a graduation requirement of 120 credits, including 39 upper level credits, completion of the core curriculum, and a minimum GPA of 2.0. The learning goals and requirements are outlined in the college catalog.

The vice president for academic affairs has the oversight of all the academic programs and holds regularly scheduled meetings with the department chairs. The vice president and dean for academic affairs also meet with department chairs and other department faculty to discuss initiatives such as strategic planning and program development. These occasional meetings help departments refine and work on action plans that support the institutional mission and the strategic plan. In addition, the president and the vice president meet annually with each academic department to keep the faculty updated on important issues and to hear of any issues of concern to the academic departments.

Each academic program undergoes a program review every five years, a review that includes external evaluators. The external evaluators conduct an onsite interview with the department, and in response to a report and the visit, provide an evaluation of the program, including the defined departmental learning outcomes and the departmental assessment process.

Each new course – or course revision – is reviewed and approved by a departmental curriculum committee prior to review by the governance committees (College-wide Curriculum Committee and All College Committee). Final approval is by the college president.

The college allocates funding to support each department. These accounts tend to remain fairly consistent from year to year. These funds can be supplemented by requests to the vice president for additional resources. Faculty members are encouraged to attend professional conferences and workshops to stay current in their fields.

In all degree programs, students enroll in introductory courses to the disciplines, and later enroll in upper level courses (having completed pre-requisites) to ensure they receive a solid understanding of the material appropriate to that major program. Students in all programs have the opportunity in their junior and senior years to progress to independent study, internships, study abroad, and in some cases undergraduate research, to further experience a depth of learning that will prepare them well for careers and/or graduate programs.

As previously stated, MCLA became a wireless campus in 2005, and requires all incoming first year students to bring laptop computers. As of fall 2008, all students will have laptop computers, as will all faculty members. Our newly renovated Murdock Hall offers the latest instructional technology in each classroom. Also, a Center for Academic Technology was created to support faculty with integration of technology in teaching. The Center for Academic Technology continuously offers individual or group instruction or workshops covering all aspects of teaching with technology.

Information technology training for all incoming students takes place during their orientation program. Continuous year round support is provided by a help desk that is monitored from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.

All academic departments review their course inventory, and delete courses not offered in recent years. New courses are approved and other courses are updated to reflect current teaching. All approvals are listed on the college Web site. All such reviews of programs and department curricula are done by faculty and reviewed by a curriculum committee, most of whose members are faculty.

The college has not eliminated any academic programs in the past five years, but has created three programs – Arts Management in 2006 and Art and Political Science and Public Policy in 2008. We also are working to convert a sports medicine concentration to an Athletic Training major and expect that program to be approved in 2009. Part of our strategic planning is to expand our program offerings and we do so always keeping in mind the institutional mission, available resources, and commitment to excellence.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

The undergraduate curriculum at MCLA is divided into three areas: approximately one-third general education (core curriculum) that provides an “introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry” and general liberal arts skills; another one-third provides a more in-depth study in a student’s chosen major; and the last one-third provides students the opportunity to enroll in electives to further enrich their undergraduate experience.

The general education curriculum (core curriculum) is required of all students. All students also must complete a major and all major programs require students to take courses in the field at introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels. Nearly all programs have a required capstone experience, as does the core curriculum. In addition, experiential learning is not only possible, but encouraged. Our goal is for students to engage in at least two such high impact experiences during their years at MCLA; service learning, internships, independent studies, undergraduate research, study abroad or at another college (MCLA is a recent member of National Student Exchange) are among the many options.

General Education

The general education curriculum – a distributive curriculum – was replaced with a developmental curriculum, the core curriculum, in 2001. A further refinement of the core curriculum took place in 2004.

The core curriculum is divided into three tiers. Tier I is comprised of four areas: quantitative reasoning; language arts; computer technology; and critical thinking, reading and writing. Students need to complete one course in each of the four areas. These skills are foundational skills, and students are advised to complete the courses during their first year.

Tier II is comprised of four areas of study (domains); creative arts, human heritage, self and society, and science and technology. Students are required to complete two courses from each domain. At least one course in the science and technology domain needs to be a laboratory science. The domain level courses will engage the students in:

- Comprehending the possibilities and limitations of various fields of human inquiry;
- Understanding the complex interplay of beliefs, values and practices that characterize disciplined systems of knowledge; and
- Adopting diverse perspectives to function in our multicultural world.

Tier III requires participation in an interdisciplinary capstone course, in which students enroll after completion of Tier I and Tier II, and is a graduation requirement for all students entering as of fall 2006. The core curriculum counts for 40 credits toward graduation.

The Major or Concentration

All majors have been approved by the college governance process, MCLA's Board of Trustees, and by the Department of Higher Education (DHE). All majors and concentrations are listed in the college catalog, as are the curriculum requirements for the programs. As noted earlier, all majors contain an appropriate sequencing of courses ranging from introductory courses to highly sophisticated advanced courses. The potential is great in all programs for students to participate in experiential work that moves the student into a hands-on level of learning that is such a meaningful part of the contemporary learning experience.

As mentioned earlier, since the last NEASC review, we added an Arts Management major (fall 2006), and Art and Political Science and Public Policy majors. In all major programs students make use of up-to-date technology to support their learning and their information retrieval. All of our major programs provide sound preparation for graduate training and careers.

Graduate Degree Programs

MCLA has one graduate program, a Master's degree in Education (M.Ed.). The program offers students a variety of areas of concentration; reading, administration, instructional technology and others. The college also offers a Certificate in Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS), a program first offered in summer 2005 with 12 students enrolled, and again in summer 2007 with 28 students enrolled.

Information on the college's graduate program is available on the Web site and in the graduate catalog. We continuously update printed and electronic information to document that the standards are met. The courses are taught by full-time and part-time faculty with appropriate credentials in the field. Acceptance into the program is evaluated by the Education Department. The criteria for acceptance are stated clearly in the application material, available in printed or electronic format. A full-time license officer helps us to ensure that the program is in compliance with all state regulations.

Students enrolled in the program are required to complete a year-long research oriented thesis (EDUC-783/ EDUC-784) that serves as a capstone course. The program prepares students for the field of education, and meets the standards of the Massachusetts Department of Education.

In addition, the Education Department offers a summer Leadership Academy for teachers who wish to become school administrators.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

MCLA awards both Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees, which are appropriately named and reviewed by the DHE. As mentioned, the MCLA curriculum offers courses within the core, the major as well as electives. All programs are designed for a student to complete in four years. However, some students elect to double major or add concentrations, and may stay for an extra year or more. The college continuously reviews programs at the

department level, curriculum committee level – and must seek approval for any changes, modification, or addition to the curriculum by the internal governance structure. Final approval is given by the president.

The college catalog (available in print and electronic format) outlines the departmental learning outcomes and credits required to complete the major or concentration. All faculty members are encouraged strongly to include the learning outcomes for the course in the course syllabus.

The learning outcomes for the core courses were developed (and reviewed) by core domain faculty with domain leaders providing guidance. The academic dean meets twice each semester with the domain leaders to review progress and evaluation of the core. Each semester, a survey is distributed to all students enrolled in core courses. Results of the survey are shared with the domain leaders, who then work as needed with faculty members within their domain.

All courses listed in the college catalog have been reviewed by the governance process as previously outlined. Credits for experiential experiences such as internships and independent study must be reviewed by the department chair as well as the academic dean. This ensures the academic integrity of such experiences. Pre-college level or remedial work does not count toward graduation requirements.

Credit for prior learning must be reviewed by the offering department and approved by the department chair and the academic dean. Students who seek prior learning credit obtain the appropriate forms at the advising center, where they receive instruction on the process and learn about the levels of documentation they need to produce. The prior learning policy was reviewed in spring 2008.

Department chairs regularly update the departmental flow sheets to make sure that graduation requirements are stated clearly. Also, the college catalog (print and electronic publications) lists graduation requirements. Each department chair provides a graduation clearance, signing off that a student met the requirements for the major while the Registrar's Office provides clearance with respect to the college requirements. The college implemented the Banner student information system, and students soon will keep track of their college requirements online.

The institution works to ensure academic integrity. The student handbook and college catalog outline the policy for academic dishonesty and plagiarism, and faculty members are expected to report to the registrar within 14 days after the discovery of an incident the student's name, course title, date of occurrence, type of dishonesty, sanctions imposed, and any further action requested. A copy of this notice is sent to the student involved, including the charges made against the student that, if proven, would justify failure or other academic sanctions.

The Fast-Track program, developed by the Division of Continuing Education in collaboration with the Business Administration and Economics Department, offers an alternative model to program completion. The courses must meet the same standards as the regularly offered courses. However, the courses are offered in a condensed time period, require additional out-of-class time, and were developed with the adult learner in mind. Fast-Track meets a need in Berkshire County for flexible course options that fit working adults' schedules. Some Fast-Track courses are offered on campus, online, and offsite in Pittsfield and in Great Barrington.

The faculty played a critical role in design of this program, and many of our full-time faculty members also teach Fast-Track courses. Students enrolled in the program have e-mail access to faculty and opportunities to interact with them during posted office hours.

All transfer students are required to complete a residency requirement of 45 credits. Unless a student is accepted under the transfer compact, the student must complete the core curriculum requirements at MCLA. Transfer is made easier through the articulation agreements we have with 25 community colleges and through the work of our admissions staff who work carefully to ensure the appropriateness of credits accepted in transfer.

Transfer of credits into the master's degree program must be reviewed by the Graduate Education Council and is limited to transfer of six credits into the program.

Assessment of Student Learning

MCLA employs several methods to assess student learning. Individual professors distribute course surveys to make sure that the learning outcomes of the course are achieved. At the department level, some departments require a portfolio for graduating seniors. Others survey their graduating seniors.

As previously noted, a team of faculty and administrators is exploring the use of e-portfolio, and it is our intention to see the implementation of e-portfolio for course and program assessment in 2009.

Each academic department ultimately is responsible for the department's learning goals for the program – and for the assessment of student learning. The academic affairs division provides support for departments to attend conferences, invite consultants, and to cover the cost of departmental retreats for program review.

During the past two years, approximately 20 faculty members participated in a biweekly seminar series as part of our involvement with the CASTL project, which focuses on teaching and learning. Informal presentations by participants serve as professional development for faculty and allow them to explore further ways in which learning may be assessed.

As discussed previously, all academic departments participate in a process of program review which allows them to examine their teaching, and brings in outside reviewers to evaluate each department's work.

Students in their junior and senior years have the opportunity to engage in independent study and internships. These experiences are assessed by the professor with whom the student is working in the case of independent study, and by both the supervising professor and onsite supervisor in the case of internships. Feedback is continuous in both instances, which allows students to learn as much as possible from these important experiences.

The institution collects data from multiple sources to understand the learning experience of our students. These range from formal quantitative course evaluations to more open-ended commentary from teachers or site supervisors. Anecdotal material written by students who evaluate their own experience often is available. The program review process noted earlier allows departments to examine their evaluative approaches and also to have these commented upon by outside reviewers. *The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)* data also provide the institution with feedback from students.

Institutional Effectiveness

We continually collect data to allow us to effectively evaluate our academic programs and student learning. A variety of data help us to understand how our students learn, and our program review process brings in the views of outside evaluators on the approaches of our academic departments.

STANDARD FIVE: FACULTY

MCLA employs excellent faculty who are appropriately credentialed and qualified to teach in their respective programs. We have a sufficient number of full-time faculty members, supplemented by a modest number of adjunct faculty. However, in line with the strategic plan, we expect to expand the number of full-time faculty members as we increase both our enrollment and the number of major programs.

In addition to teaching responsibilities, all MCLA faculty members serve as student advisors, and most are engaged in professional work and attend professional conferences in their fields. It is important for faculty members to stay current in their fields, and every effort is made through the college budget to support faculty in this endeavor. Most faculty members also serve as representatives for their department at various college events, such as admissions open houses and other events in support of our recruitment efforts.

Many faculty members serve as advisors for clubs and organizations, sponsor internships, are involved with service learning and independent study, and, very importantly, conduct research with students. It is worth noting that we had nine of our then 15 majors represented at the spring 2008 undergraduate research conference.

A college-wide process is in place for appointment of faculty. A departmental search committee, often with representatives from other departments (or external when appropriate) reviews the applications, completes phone interviews, and conducts on-campus interviews. The committee recommends to the vice president who, in turn, makes a recommendation to the president. MCLA is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer with a longstanding commitment to increasing the diversity of the employee community.

Faculty workload is outlined in the faculty contract. A faculty member is expected to teach 12 credit hours per semester, serve as an advisor for department majors, and hold a minimum of three office hours per week. This last requirement also is true for part-time faculty.

Part-time faculty members are hired in departments when extra sections of courses are needed or when a specific area of specialization not covered by current faculty is needed. Good examples of this latter need would include the social work or criminal justice “practitioner” series, or the occasional need for specialty courses in art or music.

The contract between the faculty of the Massachusetts State Colleges and the Department of Higher Education spells out both the process and the criteria for personnel actions. Evaluation for reappointment, promotion, and tenure involve faculty colleagues, committees and department chairs prior to reaching the vice president for academic affairs. In the evaluation process, the prime criterion is teaching effectiveness, measured both through student evaluations and that done by peers who observe the classes of those being evaluated. Teaching, student advising, and various categories that are examples of one’s continuing scholarship are subject to evaluation. These criteria cover the range of areas of most common concern.

To support faculty involvement with their scholarly activities, the academic vice president in recent years has set aside an increasingly significant portion of the academic affairs budget to support research, writing and travel to professional conferences. These funds, along with a small amount of professional development funding in the contract, cover a reasonable portion of professional development needs of most faculty.

The contract also includes statements that define both academic freedom and academic responsibilities available to and expected of faculty members.

Teaching and Advising

Teaching, as noted earlier, is the primary focus of our faculty and the college endeavors to support excellent teaching in many ways. The Academic Affairs Office provides support for professional development for faculty attending conferences and workshops that deal with various aspects of teaching. On campus, we find faculty discussions built around teaching issues and teaching techniques. One example is our involvement with CASTL.

A second example is our creation of a Center for Academic Technology. Finally, our Professional Development Committee is comprised of faculty and is supported by funding from the Office of Academic Affairs. This committee supports activities dealing with teaching by sponsoring workshops and bringing speakers to campus.

The Advising Services Office oversees the advising of undeclared students and supports all students. Advising workshops are provided for academic advisors annually and typically are well attended. These workshops keep advisors up-to-date with any curricular or policy changes, and provide an opportunity for review of current policies and best practices. Policies, procedures, and processes are spelled out in the college catalog and other documents available to all students and the faculty and administrative staff who advise them.

Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

The number of faculty engaged in scholarly work has increased steadily. The contract between the faculty and the Department of Higher Education requires that all faculty members under evaluation for a personnel action must speak to how they are engaged in “Continuing Scholarship.” This phrase allows faculty to choose among several evaluative categories, but all relate to scholastic contributions.

The college has increased the resources to support scholarly research, and also encourages and supports faculty who seek resources through the acquisition of grants.

MCLA further supports research, as previously noted, through professional development, most particularly to assist faculty to attend professional conferences. In addition, four campus annual incentive awards support faculty scholarship.

Student research also has increased substantially. Faculty are encouraged to include students in their research where feasible, and the Academic Affairs Office has established a program of mini-grants that students can apply for to support their research and/or travel to conferences to present their research. Our Undergraduate Research Conference takes place annually to allow students to present their scholarly work. The number of students who participate and disciplines represented at this conference have both increased markedly.

Finally, it should be noted that the college has established an institutional review board.

Institutional Effectiveness

Frequent meetings of the vice president and dean for academic affairs with department chairs, individual faculty, or entire departments allow for opportunity to better understand the effectiveness of teaching, advising, and scholarship. This is supported further through evaluation of personnel actions and the program review process discussed earlier.

STANDARD SIX – STUDENTS

Admissions

A key priority for the college is to increase enrollment of both undergraduate and graduate students by employing strategic initiatives determined by our strategic plan. An enrollment projection for both new and returning students was developed to reflect enrollment targets through the year 2010. (For admission of graduate students see Standard 4).

MCLA has substantially increased first-year student applications and enrollees since 2004. The freshmen applications grew by 29 percent and freshmen enrollees by 21 percent. The fall 2007 entering freshmen class was one of our largest since the fall of 1996. MCLA is pleased to report that the percentage of minority students has increased through enhanced recruitment efforts such as the Multicultural Overnight program where urban students visit the college and spend the day attending classes, and also experience an overnight stay. This program has been very successful in converting students from inquirer to enrollee.

MCLA's admissions standards follow the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's requirements as prescribed for all public four-year colleges. These standards are published in the college catalog and on the college Web site and focus on academic performance in a student's class work. Students' high school transcripts demonstrate successful completion of required academic units and the required overall GPA to be eligible for admission. SAT or ACT scores also are required. According to the Department of Higher Education's requirements, the determination of admission is based on a sliding scale, which matches students' standardized test scores, with high school grade point average.

Up to 10 percent of newly enrolled freshmen may be exempted from the high school GPA and SAT criteria when, through closer inspection of their transcripts, they clearly demonstrate college readiness and reasonable potential for success. In addition, students who disclose learning disabilities are exempted from the requirement to submit SAT scores.

All first year students are assessed for course placement in college writing, mathematics, reading and modern language. This assessment includes a combination of ACCUPLACER algebra and reading tests. In addition, some students complete an additional mathematics survey test which faculty review to determine appropriate math placement and to identify students who exceed the required mathematics competency. Such students are waived from the course requirement. Students also produce a writing sample in response to a faculty-developed prompt. These writing samples are reviewed by a team of faculty who, by applying a common rubric, place students in an appropriate college level writing course. Faculty also identify students whose writing exceeds the required writing competency. Students with SATV scores 500 and below complete the ACCUPLACER reading test. Students also complete a placement test in Spanish, French, or Italian to determine their appropriate modern language course level. Students who demonstrate deficiencies in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics are required to enroll in the appropriate developmental class to support their reading, writing, and/or mathematics competencies. These students are required to either successfully complete the appropriate class or to retake the placement exam and demonstrate competency in the appropriate area. While most students enroll in developmental classes in their first fall term, a small number enroll in the summer seminar as part of the "Individual Enrichment Program." Students who participate in the summer seminar complete their remedial coursework and benefit from an intensive and extensive introduction to college life, including living on campus, participating in workshops, and interacting with upper-class mentors to more fully understand both the rigors and opportunities that are inherent in college life.

Retention and Graduation

Strategic enrollment growth is key at MCLA. The college continues to integrate the importance of student retention as part of overall planning. MCLA's entering freshmen class has grown, but we have seen the first-to-second-year retention rate drop slightly, from 74 percent for the fall 2003 cohort to 72 percent for the fall 2005 cohort. Even though the first-to-second-year retention rate has dropped slightly, we have seen the second-to-third-year retention rate increase slightly from 59 percent for the fall 2003 to 61 percent for the fall 2005 cohort. Also, 59.5 percent of students from the 2005 fall cohort completed their first year at MCLA with a GPA over 3.0, as compared to 54.6 percent for the 2003 fall cohort.

Because of the critical nature of retention as an element in the future growth of MCLA, President Grant created the Retention Task Force (RTF) in the summer of 2004. This group – made up of faculty, staff and students – works together to analyze and better understand campus life and the factors that pertain to student persistence and graduation. The group draws on a wide range of internal and external information – both qualitative and quantitative – and promotes and supports the implementation of several strategic action steps for the college:

- LEAD: Leadership in Education, Action and Development program (summer 2005)
- Peer advisors, known as the SWAT team: Students Working to Assist Transitions (spring 2004)
- Expand our existing first year student reading program to a campus-wide community reading (fall 2008)
- Building a campus-wide understanding for student engagement using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Encourage informed campus-wide discussions concerning student engagement and educational practices that foster student success and persistence
- Develop a campus statement concerning the value of the liberal arts
- Develop a statement concerning advising for the entire campus to facilitate appropriate and consistent advising
- Develop a statement concerning diversity by the Diversity Task Force

The ultimate intention for the entire campus is to have a positive impact on student learning and graduation rate of students at MCLA. The six-year graduation rate for the 1997 fall cohort (reported in 2003) was 47 percent, which was the same as the 1999 fall cohort (reported in 2005).

Decisions about the continued academic standing of enrolled students are based on clearly stated policies, and applied by faculty and academic administrators. These policies are published in the college catalog, in the academic advisors handbook, and on the MCLA Web site. Policy review is ongoing and practices are monitored and adjusted as needed.

Student Services

MCLA systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its student population through orientation, use of a "Planning and Profile Survey," CIRP and outreach through advising services and the Individual Enrichment Program, which complement the academic placement testing program. Student interests, needs, and information about college services are integrated into day-to-day business from the point of new student orientation

through commencement. Following commencement, Alumni Affairs, with Career Services, extend the community building with students as Alumni provides newsletters, programs and continuing electronic networking.

All MCLA student services are guided by a philosophy reflective of and linked to the mission. The liberal arts character of the college is embedded in programs and the way business is conducted within student services. The mission statement for the Student Affairs division is circulated widely; it is on the Web, provided annually at the division summer retreat, and reviewed annually mid-year. Each department is required to align services and activities with the mission and assure for commensurate evaluation.

MCLA offers an array of student services. Students enrolled in Fast-Track are provided special support and access to the entire portfolio of campus-based support services. The student records system has fully implemented the Web-based “Student Tools,” which provides access to all course and academic information. All student services information is available on the Web site, and students employ Web-based applications for communication and some self-assessment and referral support. These Web applications extend office-based support. Many services are available at least one night per week to ease access for evening students. Each service area logs student involvement and these data, reported in the annual reports, suggest appropriate services and consistent access. “Student at Risk” notices serve as another component to student support and are distributed widely and coupled with service intervention resources.

Because MCLA has a three year residency requirement for traditional age college-going students, a specialized, integrative developmentally based support system is woven into the overall residential programs and services division’s annual plan. Each residential area creates a unique character through program development with residential area directors, resident student advisors, and distinct area advisory boards. Faculty and staff connect with programs through invitation and a series of established annual traditions, which include a faculty, staff and student basketball tournament, the Valentines Gala, a Halloween “Boo Bash,” and “Cocoa and Conversations.”

Student financial aid programs involve more than 1,300 MCLA students annually. The services are easily accessible, centrally located, and connected to course registration offices and the Bursar’s Office. Awards are based on the equitable application of clear and publicized criteria. All students are furnished with a paper or electronic version of the college’s financial aid guide and award letter guide, which describe the application process and the programs available. Financial aid counselors also are available to assist students on an individual basis with the complicated financial aid process. Financial aid is awarded on the basis of demonstrated need. Students with the greatest need will receive priority in the awarding procedure if they meet published application deadlines. To meet an individual student’s need, we employ a combination of grant assistance and self-help (loans or part-time employment). Although the majority of the aid processes is need-based, the office also processes merit-based scholarships and a growing number of private alternative loans.

MCLA promotes student leadership, community service, and athletics as critical components of the extended curriculum and out-of-class programs. Student leadership is organized around a common definition, weekend immersion training programs, topical training sessions, and an annual leadership conference which has involved up to 15 visiting college campus groups and enrolled over 200 participants. MCLA is known as a “go to” college in the region for leadership training.

The recreational and intercollegiate athletics programs are underpinned by sound educational policy, standards of integrity, and the institution's purposes. The college's athletic program is in NCAA Division III and is a member of the Massachusetts State College Athletic Conference (MASCAC). Students and coaches subscribe to defined standards of participation and play. They are informed about and embrace the MCLA code of conduct. Additionally, the athletics program provides a specific student athlete handbook and requires students to sign a pledge of agreement to the code of conduct. Athletes participate in all campus support services and are pointed toward these services by coaches, assistant coaches, and athletic department staff, as well as by faculty and other staff.

Student services staff are qualified by formal training and work experience to address the needs of students effectively. They are supported by an ongoing series of in-service professional development opportunities (professional memberships in NASPA and NEACHUO, ASJA, conferences, professional list serves, in-service sessions and Webinars on relevant topics, etc.). Facilities, technology, and funding are adequate to implement the institution's student service policies and procedures.

The annual student handbook provides a set of clearly stated ethical standards to guide student services and student's behavioral obligations. Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are listed in this publication. This handbook is provided to every student and linked to student government in its production design. The daily schedule calendar that is a part of the handbook serves students as a resource and is visible testimony to its use. The college Web site also provides access to the handbook. Additionally, a student help guide is distributed three times a year and is available on the Web site.

College policies regarding the kinds of information included in students' permanent records and policies regarding the retention, safety and security, and disposal of records is contained in the college catalog and the student handbook. Information-release policies concerning the rights of individual privacy, the confidentiality of records, and the best interests of students and the institution are listed in the FERPA annual notice, which is posted on the Web and in the student handbook.

Institutions with stated goals for students' co-curricular learning systematically assess their achievement. The college's student services division conducts evaluation and assessment in many ways. The ACT Student Satisfaction Survey is administered biennially. The National Survey of Student Engagement was employed annually and will move to a biennial administration schedule. The EBI also is administered biennially. These surveys are complemented by topical surveys conducted through the course registration process such as: academic advising, course schedule, and academic services.

Each program area continues to collect and employ student participant satisfaction information and related learning outcomes. This information is compiled and reported at least annually, and is used to inform action planning and program plans for forthcoming years.

Institutional Effectiveness

Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, MCLA assesses its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and evaluates the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. A complement of integrated information sources are utilized to illuminate students' needs and interests, evaluate student involvement, assess student learning and ascertain students' perspective concerning his/her experience. The CIRP, ACT Student Opinion Survey, NSSE and the EBI instruments are coupled with information gathered through student survey and focus groups. While many

campus groups consider these data, especially the units in Student Affairs, the Retention Task Force schedules and conducts review and analysis of students' experience and considers this information in light of overall retention rates and retention rates of particular student cohorts. Information gleaned from this analysis is shared and it informs program development and planning. Program evaluation and best practices information obtained through this evaluation are used to set goals and strengthen services and improve student achievement.

STANDARD SEVEN: LIBRARY AND OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

Since 2003, the Freel Library – like the other state college libraries – has continued to face challenges, but has made improvements in three areas identified in planning as major issues: space, funding, and staffing. The library’s refurbished main floor better accommodates the way students learn, and additional funding sources led to expanded electronic collections. MCLA also has plans for increased staffing. With the arrival of a new director in March 2008, the library has the opportunity to create a vision that places this facility in the center of teaching and learning and as an active partner in creating a culture of learning.

Connecting the library with MCLA’s strategic priorities and goals in a concrete, practical plan will benefit both. MCLA’s vision and mission will provide direction for a new library strategic plan that includes measurable, achievable goals. A library that creates an appealing learning environment will help the college achieve several key strategic priorities in its current plan: to increase student retention and enrollment, to ensure academic excellence, and to strengthen the student life experience.

In alignment with the college’s interest in promoting lifelong learning in a liberal arts environment, the new library director hopes to find ways to increase information literacy efforts; create flexible, student-centered library space that encourages collaboration; and use technology to increase access to information and enhance learning.

Within the college’s planning goals, one strategic direction is to “increase the use of technology.” In 2006, MCLA implemented First Class. The campus switched to WebCT (now Blackboard Vista) as a more powerful online course delivery system. With the campus fully wireless for Internet activity, a faculty computer replacement schedule was adopted, which placed emphasis on faculty accepting and using laptops instead of desktop computers. During the past three years, library funding has increased, but still falls short of previous funding levels. In FY03 the state eliminated the Educational Resource Materials (ERM) funding, which, at \$225,000, formed the bulk of the library’s materials budget. At that time, the college created a materials budget for the library and since then consistently funded that line at \$80,000 per year. Additional grants and gifts supplement the materials budget.

Fiscal Year	Materials -- trust budget line	Materials --Academic Affairs Contribution	Materials – Title 3 Grant *	Materials Expenditures- -Hardman Endowment**	Total Funds for Materials
FY 06	80,000	-	20,000*	11,556	111,556
FY 07	80,000	-	14,000	4,867	98,867
FY 08	80,000	20,000	26,000	10,000 est.	136,000

**originally \$10,000, but additional funding was added for databases.*

***expenditures, rather than available funds, are reported here since this endowment also covers equipment and preservation*

In addition to funding books, media, periodicals, microform, and annual subscription databases, these funds cover the annual cost of consortia such as NELINET, which provides OCLC services for cataloging and interlibrary loan, and C/W MARS, which provides the integrated library system, i.e., the catalog and circulation systems. To make the most use of the funding, the staff emphasizes electronic databases rather than print journals, which provide greater journal access at a lower cost. Membership in NELINET, C/W MARS, MCCLPHEI – a consortia of Massachusetts public institutions – and WMRLS, the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System, provides access to database subscriptions at optimal pricing.

We continue to strive to provide funding for the range of up-to-date materials that will support our students and faculty, and conversion of print subscriptions, grant funds, and gifts through the Advancement Office have all made that a more reachable goal. We are not there yet, but expect to grow closer to this goal each year. On-going efforts to seek funding for capital improvements have met with success. Special funding in 2007 was provided by the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) to replace the roof of the library and ceiling tiles. MCLA also provided funding from local resources to replace the carpet and furniture on the first floor.

Thanks to the library's Web site, MCLA students and faculty have 24/7 global access to high-quality information sources. The library subscribes to authoritative online resources, and makes them accessible and easy to use through enhancements in technology. Faculty can integrate many of the library's full-text electronic resources into their course management systems, Blackboard Vista and First Class. Wireless access throughout the campus, including on all floors of the library, allows the use of instructional technology and the library's online resources anywhere. Along with wireless, the college laptop program increases access to the online library for all students, whether they are in the library or at a remote location.

All campus buildings now provide access to wireless Internet services which include e-mail and access to the student information system, Banner. Bandwidth was increased in each of the past three years, and college online resources reach remote classroom locations, including the Pittsfield Intermodal Education Center, Berkshire Community College, Greenfield Community College, and MCLA Gallery 51.

In 2007, MCLA added digital editing and production equipment in the TV studio, a language lab, has improved instructional technology in 26 of the 32 class rooms, and relocated the general computer labs to the newly renovated Murdock Hall. The college also relocated the digital piano lab to a new space and provides a digital drum set for use by student musicians.

MCLA made staffing changes to increase and make more efficient the human resources available to help with teaching and learning. The college increased personnel in support of instructional technology by .5 full time-employees. Also, the Media Services Department moved from the library staff to become part of Computer Support Services to acknowledge that today's instructional media is not stand-alone but connected to other campus technology. This move also allows the Computer Help Desk to assist faculty with technology-related issues.

Freel Library currently has a total of five full-time and six part-time staff members (totaling 2.05 full-time employees) and approximately 16 student assistants (totaling 2.45 full-time employees). Since 2003, the library has had two staff members in professional MLS librarian positions – the associate dean of library services and the public services librarian, a tenured member of the faculty. The retirement of a full-time periodicals clerk in spring 2007, the resignation of the library director/associate dean in May 2007, and the absence of a new director until March 2008 underscored an ongoing concern about appropriate and adequate staffing, but also demonstrated the ability of the staff to meet challenging situations. The public services librarian served as acting director, the full-time clerical position became part-time, and a decision was made to create a full-time professional position. The college plans to fill a position in 2008/2009 with an electronic services librarian who will fill multiple roles.

The Computer Support Services Department has grown since the 2003 NEASC visit. The department has added a network/wireless technical position, a Web manager, and as noted above, added media services staff. In support of academic technology, MCLA created the Academic Technology Center, which has 1.5 full-time employees in support of faculty use of technology.

Current full-time library staff members take advantage of professional development opportunities by attending workshops, roundtables, and other networking and training opportunities offered by WMRLS, C/W MARS, NELINET, and MCCLPHEI. The library assistants for circulation and cataloging attend roundtables in their areas, and the part-time reference/archivist assistant regularly attends workshops in areas of interest. The public services librarian and the reference/archivist assistant have presented papers on local history to professional organizations. The computer staff have access to NERCOMP, a statewide CIO group, and a consortium consisting of state and community college computer departments for assistance, advice, and opportunities for professional development.

The Freel Library reaches between 300 and 400 students every year through formal library instruction. Many additional students receive individual instruction when they come to the library – approximately 120 reference transactions a week were provided in FY07. The public services librarian creates written brochures that explain how to use library tools and resources. The library Web site also includes research guides, remote access instructions, explanation of tools such as the journal finder, and a special section for home access and distance students. Although the library and college have no formal information literacy program, the college's commitment to lifelong learning and liberal arts could provide a good foundation for better integration of information literacy into the curriculum. For MCLA students, CCCL 100, "Computing and Communication," is a core class requirement covering computer use for productivity and communications.

With grant support from the Davis Educational Foundation and a Federal Title III grant, MCLA established the Academic Technology Center, and from this center hosts the Academic Technology Advisory Group. The center, with advice from the committee, provides training on technology specifically for faculty. The training ranges from the use of classroom equipment, to software needed to offer online courses, to Web-based tools such as wikis, podcasts, and online discussion groups.

Faculty, staff, and student technology assistance is available through the Computer Help Desk, which is staffed from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. during the regular semesters, by a full-time manager and specially trained students. It also is the center for student laptop hardware and software repairs. The help desk is designed to work face-to-face with users to answer questions. The help desk manager can access, with permission, control of a user's computer remotely to investigate and solve problems.

Workshops are offered to faculty and staff about access to student information on the Banner system. Most recently, sessions were held regarding advising and online grading. Faculty and staff also have access to technology productivity courses offered through our Division of Continuing Education. This spring, two technology days were held respectively for faculty and staff under the sponsorship of Academic Technology, Computer Support, and Human Resources.

Freel Library staff and student assistants generally are knowledgeable about library policies and procedures. Many circulation and interlibrary loan policies and procedures are made in cooperation with C/W MARS, and a limited lending agreement with Williams College is clearly articulated and adhered to. The library has software in place that ensures that only authorized library users access the subscription databases. The ability to post persistent links to electronic journal articles in course management systems also reduces potential copyright infringement. Although the library posts the current circulation policy on the library Web site, most existing policies need to be updated and posted.

Faculty, staff, and students new to the MCLA campus must review and accept our Acceptable Use Policies when logging into our e-mail system for the first time. All IT policies and procedures are also posted to the Web. The sophistication of our system includes traffic monitoring and packet shaping. We also support universal authentication credentials to reserve resources for our campus community.

Students increasingly prefer electronic access, and the library offers a good selection of research databases, including more than 30 subscriptions with well over 12,000 full-text titles. Membership in the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System provides additional access to electronic resources. Print subscriptions to journals and newspapers, at 80 titles, cover popular resources not available through aggregated databases. The library's collection of more than 165,000 volumes includes many strong academic titles but lacks currency.

The audio-visual collection is well-used and sizeable, with more than 6,400 popular and academic titles of videos and DVDs. In addition to standard interlibrary loan services from any library in the country, the library's membership in C/W MARS enables students to request books from across Massachusetts for rapid delivery to MCLA. Journal articles requested through interlibrary loan increasingly arrive through quick delivery in electronic format.

Faculty take a lead role to ensure that student use of appropriate information resources is an integral part of their education. The librarians collaborate with faculty about resources and research strategies students might find useful and actively solicit suggestions for the collection. Library instruction, whether in the classroom or library, is generally focused on a particular research assignment, to ensure relevance. The librarians regularly use collection development tools that enable them to select books and other resources that are targeted at specific levels of academic difficulty. The library Web site and the ability to integrate online library resources with First Class and Blackboard Vista also encourage the use of appropriate information resources and technology.

The library Web site directs students to the appropriate resources from any Internet-enabled location 24 hours a day. A special page contains directions and resources for distance education and commuting students. The library and computer support services have collaborated to simplify the authentication process, so that students can easily log on to library databases remotely. At student request, the library also extended its hours on Friday and Saturday. The MCLA library card is recognized at other campuses and public libraries in the area, which increases convenience for commuting and returning students.

Access to campus-wide information is facilitated through First Class. Faculty, staff, and students are provided with a unique login that allows access to the e-mail system, the campus network, and Banner self-service information. With the wireless infrastructure, students can gain access to materials anywhere on campus including course information posted by faculty via Blackboard Vista or e-mail.

Online information access through First Class and the college's faculty tools and student tools provides course and grade-related information. The next generation for MCLA is Banner Self Service, which extends access to bill paying and advising.

Besides upgrading technology, we enhanced our library and computing facilities.

In summer 2007, the college installed new ceilings and ceiling lights on the library's upper and main levels. Over the winter break in 2007-2008, the library installed new carpeting, new custom furniture, and created an overall new design on the main floor, which increased the number of tables and seats available for study. More important, the new design enabled the library to create a more comfortable space that allows for collaborative learning. The new tables are conducive to laptop use and provide flexible seating and use. Students and faculty

responded with enthusiasm to the new look. The upper level is spacious and sunny, with a large reading room reserved for quiet study. With some new furniture and thoughtful redesign, the stacks on this floor could be turned into an appealing browsing and study space.

Shared spaces in the lower level, with learning services, faculty offices, and a classroom in close proximity, offer opportunities for collaboration, but pose challenges since space is in much demand. Over the years, the library lost space that could be used for core functions. The college archives, for example, located in the lower level, would benefit from being integrated with the local history resources on the main level. Maintenance issues, such as temperature control and windows that leak during heavy rains, pose additional challenges.

In January 2007, all of the computer labs were moved to the newly renovated Murdock Hall. New computers were provided for each lab. We installed a comfortable and visible help desk. The offices for the technology support department also were moved to be close to the labs. New furniture in the walk-in labs was designed to accommodate the resident desktop computers and stations specifically for students who bring in their personal laptop computers. We also placed additional power outlets in all classrooms specifically to power laptops with low batteries. Campus specialty labs make available Geographical Information Systems, modern language, digital editing for media, and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as needed. The Murdock renovation also provided a new space for the Academic Technology Center. This training lab for faculty was specifically placed near the computer labs and outfitted with new equipment to show our interest in technology was sincere and important.

The Innovative Millennium system, provided by C/W MARS, enables the library to carry out its day-to-day operations in circulation and cataloging. This system proved to be reliable and adequate for current needs and provides statistical reports. The library gathers statistics, both manually and electronically, on all aspects of its operations, including the budget, cataloging, circulation, reference, database use, and information literacy. NELINET, C/W MARS, Ebsco, and other database vendors all offer the library access to the level statistical information needed for assessment and planning. The college provides access to budget information through the Anyview system within the Great Plains accounting package, and the Computer Support Services Department is able to provide the library with additional information about student use of library resources, both remotely and on campus.

The Banner student information system provides many options for viewing and reporting data. These options, when fully implemented in 2009, will include self-service access for faculty and students, specific report writing capabilities, and the ability to have data extracted and sent to desktop computers so it may be viewed and manipulated in Microsoft Excel.

The Freel Library is an active member of MCCLPHEI (Massachusetts Commonwealth Consortium of Libraries in Public Higher Education Institutions). Each year, the library compiles and submits data to the group, which provides useful comparisons. MCCLPHEI emphasizes assessment of library effectiveness by encouraging member libraries to participate in LibQual and other library assessment tools, to develop an assessment resource Web page for member libraries, and to dedicate its FY08 summer conference to analysis and follow-up of LibQual survey results. Freel Library hopes to take advantage of these assessment resources and discussions and is considering conducting a LibQual survey in the next academic year if funding allows. In addition, the new strategic plan that the library staff will develop will include measurable goals that assess the library's effectiveness in providing services and resources that promote student learning.

With “Increased use of Technology” as a strategic direction in our campus planning, every year the role of technology is evaluated throughout the campus. This review is extended to budget preparation. The Academic Technology Advisory Group reviews classroom technology and was instrumental in selecting the classroom equipment for our classroom use.

Lastly, faculty members serving on the ATAG generated a report, entitled the “Listening Project.” This report is based on faculty interviews about their computer uses and needs. Although the college has yet to review this document (August 2008) formally, we look forward to utilizing this information.

STANDARD EIGHT: PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The MCLA campus consists of 11 buildings for administrative, academic, athletic, and student service functions; 1,021 beds in three high-rise buildings and an apartment complex; and an athletic facility consisting of softball and baseball fields, tennis courts, a grass soccer field and a brand-new, synthetic turf soccer field which opened in the fall of 2007. The college also utilizes 15 properties purchased and renovated by the MCLA Foundation for faculty and administrative offices.

During the spring 2007 semester, the college moved back into a completely renovated Murdock Hall. The 44,000-square-foot building had essentially been gutted. It now houses three faculty departments, computer support services, eight classrooms for computer labs, and five conference rooms. Other areas renovated or upgraded on campus to accept the departments displaced in the renovation include: Mark Hopkins Hall where classrooms were turned in to faculty offices through the use of office partitions, furniture, a newly renovated house – provided by the foundation – which now holds the History, Political Science, and Geography Department; and work was completed in May 2008 in Bowman Hall to accommodate the Psychology Department.

Through rental agreements with our students, the Massachusetts State College Building Authority (MSCBA) completed several deferred maintenance projects for the residence life buildings, including new steam lines, roofing projects, and elevator renovations. The MSCBA is contracted to complete a new emergency generator for the Berkshire Towers and a \$4 million lobby renovation to be completed in early 2009. All campus facilities and Foundation properties are maintained by campus personnel. Deferred maintenance projects are determined through local planning meetings and the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) CAMIS System, a computerized monitoring and request system set up by the state. The facilities staff administration meets weekly with the vice president of administration and finance. In addition, two or three times each year all of the maintainers, custodians, grounds keepers, and trades workers meet for what are called “All Staff” meetings, to talk about upcoming projects and to provide a forum for questions and answers.

Technology resources now are more prevalent across campus. The entire campus has wireless access to the Internet. The system was designed to provide this access to external spaces such as the academic quad, so on nice days students could study outside of the library and faculty could take technologically rich courses outside. Wireless printing also is provided in Bowman Hall, Murdock Hall, and the Freel Library. To support this new technology, we added a position in the computer support area and a full-time Web manager.

To support instructional technology, MCLA established the Academic Technology Center in Murdock Hall which is staffed by 1.5 full-time employees. The media services department was reorganized within the computer support area since classroom media support now equates to computer-related support. So that the renovated Murdock Hall would be technologically up-to-date, the Academic Technology Advisory Group (ATAG) established a standard for classroom media. This equipment includes a document camera, overhead projector, laptop computer (with telestrating capabilities), DVD player, VCR player and appropriate stereo amplification system to be used with all media equipment. This standard was replicated in nine classrooms. MCLA has technology in 26 out of 32 classrooms across the campus, providing a ceiling-mounted projector and Internet access. The same technology in the Academic Technology Center is used for training. Within our secure environment, we provide access to online resources, including library holdings and student information.

Faculty members were involved with the selection of the furniture for the Murdock classrooms. The new furniture includes comfortable chairs with articulating backs and tables for one or two students. The table concept was to embrace students' use of laptop computers and to support more flexible classroom use.

The availability of Title III money allowed MCLA to renovate the visual arts laboratory, create a language lab in Bowman Hall, develop a digital editing studio and improve our TV studio with digital editing equipment. In all cases, faculty were involved directly in the selection and installation of these new classroom resources. During the Psychology Department renovation in Bowman Hall, faculty were intimately involved with the development of the floor plan and the size and configuration of various labs. Lastly, concerning classroom spaces, during the MCLA campus master plan process, a study was performed by Rickes Associates which looked at classroom utilization, seating, and appropriate technology.

As a state institution, all facilities projects must adhere to state law and the rules and regulations based on local building codes. For example, any change of use of space on campus must be monitored by the state building inspector. The local building codes guide the renovation particularly for electrical work and plumbing.

DCAM requires that feasibility studies are completed on all large construction projects. Projects over \$1 million require DCAM supervision and management. MCLA does have the ability to manage projects of less than \$1 million, providing the college staff has the appropriate construction supervisor's license. Our director of facilities has such a license.

With regard to environmental concerns, MCLA purchased LCD computer monitors, laptop computers, and small form factor desktops to reduce power requirements. We installed photovoltaic cells to produce a small amount of electricity and to function as a learning lab for students. We have established a "Green Team" and the Center for Ecological Technology has established our carbon footprint.

Renovations made to our athletic complex and the installation of the synthetic turf field was managed by an outside consultant. For future projects, MCLA bid through DCAM for access to three architectural firms to serve as "house doctors." Because MCLA went through a successful bidding process through the "Designer & Selection Board," we can choose from one of three firms when feasibility studies, construction documents, or project management services are needed.

MCLA recently completed a campus master plan which was approved by our Board of Trustees in January of 2008. During a two-year process, MCLA used previous planning documents developed through Eva Klein & Associates Group, the Gordon King Associate Group, and the Rickes study for classroom management, mentioned earlier. The ultimate campus master plan was developed with participation by faculty, administration, staff, students, trustees, and local community leaders. The campus master plan top priority for MCLA is a new Center for Science and Innovation.

Space planning is the purview of the president's cabinet, which consists of senior staff members. This group meets periodically to review space issues and make determinations on moves and appropriate accommodations for all divisions on campus.

MCLA implemented several new electronic systems in the past three years to assist in campus communication, data collection and management, and to strengthen data security, integrity and individual privacy. All data systems require a unique user name and password selected by the user. This is required for access to the campus network, Blackboard Vista, and First Class e-mail system. Additional security is in place for the payroll system – the HRCMS and the Great Plains accounting systems and Blackboard financial management system run by

our foundation, as well as the Banner student information system. In addition, unique student-identifying numbers are created by the system, taking MCLA away from the previous use of social security numbers. All campus community members – faculty, staff and students – are required to use the First Class e-mail system so all e-mail processes are in-house.

MCLA has experienced a minimal amount of network downtime. Computer support staff monitor network activity and set security parameters with A/V, spyware and spam filtering. All systems, including network login, are controlled.

MCLA does not have a formal evaluation of its physical and technological resources, although twice each year we survey help desk users. The addition of a chief information officer will further support the regular assessment of technology on campus. Efforts are made on a bi-weekly basis to inform the campus community of our projects and to understand internally the priorities we must set to keep our campus plant in good shape and to plan ahead for projects and renovations. President Grant's bi-weekly newsletters often contain information about facilities upgrades and campus projects. In addition, the vice president of administration and finance meets with the facilities staff on a weekly basis and the technology staff on a bi-weekly basis, to stay current with priorities of these departments. Lastly, regular reports are made to the president and to the Board of Trustees on pending projects and project updates.

STANDARD NINE: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Financial support for educational quality and academic programs has been consistent at the departmental level and has increased in terms of support for special programs and equipment. The budgeting process provides each academic program with a specific budget amount that over the last six years has been no less than the funding of the year prior. Departments allocate these resources to their needs and also have an opportunity to request additional funding for projects, travel, and equipment through the budgeting process. These flow from campus strategic plan priorities. The college reviews these special requests along with the justification of how they fit into the strategic plan, and allocates resources beyond those to the departments when resources are available and the project or equipment meet planning goals.

MCLA's financial position is dramatically stronger in FY08 than the previous 10 years. This financial strength was built on a strong budgeting process, program support based on an effective planning process, and day-to-day management principles guided by an expert business office staff. In FY08, the quarterly reports show positive account balances in all trust funds, including a stability account that did not exist five years ago and now has an account balance of almost \$2.5 million. This particular account was established to offset the accrued leave balances from all employees.

The MCLA Board of Trustees is organized with a fiscal affairs committee, which reviews the college's budget and makes a recommendation to the full Board of Trustees for approval. This budget includes all personnel matters, major purchases, as well as ongoing contracts with explanation to the trustees about the nature of these expenditures. The fiscal affairs committee also has the ability to recommend fee increases to help balance the budget each year. All such actions are brought to the board with explanations of external funding sources such as the state, contributions from the college's foundation, and grants and other resources that come into our operating budget.

The college's strategic plan contains five goals relevant to the future of MCLA, including "Financial Strength." To this end, the administration and finance area is charged with making sure that all contractual arrangements are at the best cost to MCLA, that the budget is balanced every fiscal year, and that all resources – such as the state appropriation – are used not only appropriately but fully every academic year. State resources do not roll from one year to the next. Further, it is incumbent upon the administration and finance area to know what access we have to funding sources given emergencies. The ability to project ahead over multiple years is hampered by the inability to know what the state appropriation will be.

For example, the college's financial practices are monitored through several financial ratios. In addition, our ability to borrow funds for large projects is tracked through debt management practices. Our budget process is set up so that we take into account how our operating budget is used, not only by each department but within each division, with the bulk of resources needed to sustain debt service and long-term projects focused in one particular area. This said, we are able to fully understand how far our local resources can go, know what our income will be based on enrollment, and plan to take full advantage of the state appropriation.

It is very clear that our strategic planning process and budget allocations substantially support academic purposes and programs of the college. The *Department of Higher Education Performance Measurement Report* each year shows that the major expenditures for MCLA are in the area of instruction. Further, we can state that plant operations, the bulk of which are for academic buildings, go to support our mission. Lastly, student services support lends itself to

the academic support since there is a focus on retaining students and enhancing their academic experience with extracurricular activities. We recognize that our resources go toward education in the classroom and support for projects and programs outside of the classroom that enhance educational opportunity.

MCLA recognizes the importance of financial aid when it comes to the recruitment and retention of our student population. The Board of Trustees is very cognizant of the cost to attend MCLA when it looks at its ability to raise fees to support operations. These conversations of the trustees usually include an understanding of how ancillary costs, such as food service and housing, impact a student's ability to attend. In FY07, MCLA's tuition and fees were calculated to be 8 percent of the State Median Family Income (SMFI). This 8 percent is consistent with the segment average of 7.8 percent of the SMFI and is significantly lower than the northeast average of 9.3 percent.

These factors show the sensitivity and concern that MCLA remain affordable and accessible to our students and their families. Further, MCLA contributes a significant portion of its operating budget to financial aid services. Between our institutional support and the MCLA Foundation, \$1.2 million of our budget this past year was committed to direct financial aid to our students. The Financial Aid Office is cognizant of the proposed fee increases for the next fiscal year and incorporates those fee increases in the budgets it builds for our students. Further, our financial aid staff is committed to working with students individually about additional financial aid through loans, federal programs, and the local resources that we have to offer to our students.

The MCLA budget process includes all administrative and academic department chairs, senior staff, the president, and ultimately the Board of Trustees. Academic and administrative budget managers are provided an operational budget amount on which they base their department's operating budget. Further, these administrative budget managers can ask for additional resources for special projects. These additional numbers are rolled up into a list which is reviewed by the division heads and ultimately the college president. Once the budget is balanced, it is forwarded to the Board of Trustees Fiscal Affairs Committee.

The Administration and Finance division prepares a quarterly report for the trustees, which is discussed at open meetings. These quarterly reports include executive notes that point out highlights in changes in account balances, changes to revenue, and changes to expenditures. These reports include real dollars for each of the separate trust fund accounts and percentages of revenue received and expenses. The Board of Trustees' Fiscal Affairs Committee also reviews any expenditure over \$50,000 when those expenditures differ from the annual operating budget submitted for their approval.

Operational risks are minimized through a strong internal control document that is reviewed annually by our private auditing firm and periodically by the state auditor's office. The internal controls have been updated to be consistent with state law and our operational needs.

Regarding risk assessment, the campus has an Emergency Management Team A that looks at day-to-day operational risks that concern the safety of our students and working population. Senior staff meet yearly to look at overriding risks that may impact the college operations.

MCLA has tracked its financial status through four important ratios. These include a primary reserve ratio, return on total net asset ratio, a net operating revenues ratio, and a viability ratio. The analysis for these ratios shows positive trends in all four over the past six years. This trend analysis helps MCLA see the trajectory of their financial strength. MCLA

forecasts the expected ratio result based on changes to the college's budget. Using these forecasts, we are able to determine how our financial position will change based on expenditures, debt service or increasing/decreasing revenue. As stated earlier, the college established a stability fund to offset the balance sheet leave accrual that we must be able to support. In its planning, the college anticipates its ability to access the income from these stability accounts in the future to support campus projects and endeavors.

MCLA, with the help of the MCLA Foundation, our grant writer, and administration and finance staff look for new revenue source opportunities. In the past five years, we sought significantly more grants and received more grant funding for a variety of programs. All of these programs are tied directly to our strategic planning goals. Further, our review of contracts provided us with opportunities to increase commissions from auxiliary enterprises and gifts in kind from these services to strengthen the institution. No gift, grant, or service is accepted unless it benefits us in a direction determined by the strategic plan. The college within the last three years hired a grant writer to specifically look at opportunities to bring additional resources to the campus. Grant resources received over the last five years included a Title III grant for \$1.8 million, safety grants to support safety awareness and safety training, a CHOICES grant for alcohol education program within our Student Affairs Division, STEM, and CITI grants. Debt management also plays a role in providing appropriate resources to support programs. MCLA approved a debt management policy to guide borrowing of funds.

The Fiscal Affairs Committee of the MCLA Board of Trustees reviews the financial quarterly reports, reviews and approves the college's budget, serves as the audit committee for the board by meeting with our private auditor to review audit information, and reports information from all of these sources directly to the Board of Trustees at their regularly scheduled meetings. In addition, there are times when information from this committee is shared directly with the Academic Affairs Committee, the Student Affairs Committee, the Enrollment Management Committee, and the Board of Trustees' executive committee. For example, in this past year, each of these committees met to talk about the expected fee increase for campus operations.

MCLA received unqualified audits from our private auditor, O'Connor & Drew, 1515 Hancock Street, P.O. Box 9109, Quincy, MA 02269, since our 10-year accreditation visit. The *Department of Higher Education 2007 Performance Measurement Report* lists the past five years that the college received unqualified audits from 2003 until 2007.

The MCLA Foundation was established to support the mission and goals of MCLA through advocacy and fundraising to help meet the needs of the college. To this end, the foundation conscientiously supports MCLA and its alumni through very specific programs and outreach. The foundation makes clear and concise statements when requesting funds from alumni and other supporters through written communication. All donations received are acknowledged by the foundation, and annual processes include endowed fund reports that show the value of their contribution and an acknowledgement of spending as the donor intended.

Foundation operations are guided by legislation. M.G.L. Chapter 15A: Section 37 "Foundations created for public institutions of higher education; governing boards; annual reports; audits" was enacted in part to establish organizations acknowledged by the legislature to receive endowment matching funds written into the state's budget process.

Fundraising programs such as scholarship events and our major gift initiative come with a prospectus that declares the intention of the college, its needs, and how funds will be used once they are raised.

The MCLA Foundation fully supports MCLA. The foundation provides this support by promoting the college and supporting student access as the basis for all fundraising efforts. The foundation also purchased property adjacent to the MCLA campus for college use. The complete renovation of the Murdock Hall building required a college contribution to gain the state capital support for the renovation. The MCLA Foundation raised more than \$850,000, thus providing the entire matching amount to this program. The foundation also makes significant contributions to MCLA's Financial Aid Office for scholarships. Further, the foundation supports community-wide events intended to bring community members, including noted guest speakers, to campus to support our educational mission.

The MCLA Foundation has a board composed of 16 members. The foundation also has 160 corporators, including community leaders and alumnae. The board recognizes six subcommittees, including the Property Committee, Fundraising Committee, Endowment and Trust Committee, By-Law Committee, Nominating Committee, and Audit Committee to concentrate on the details of the group's efforts.

As stated above, MCLA's internal controls and budgeting process all are done within written guidelines. These guidelines include those typical of internal controls such as segregation of duties, cash management, debt, and fiscal reporting required.

The fiscal operation of MCLA is guided by internal controls, audited by a private auditor, and monitored by the Office of the State Auditor. The state appropriation is managed through the state's MMARs records system and all allocations are tracked by the Division of Higher Education. Grant funds such as our Federal Title III grant are assigned a monitor to review funding use. The above provides an intimate level of evaluation for the college's fiscal condition and financial management.

STANDARD TEN: PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

MCLA has clarified and strengthened its standard for public disclosure. The emphasis on the Web site as the leading source of information for students, prospective students, and the general public has been established.

Items which need to be included as information on the Web site have been reviewed by the president's cabinet. The Web communications manager has the major responsibility for the continual update of our Web site, and works to ensure that all identified components are available and easy to find. She checks for requests for information daily and responds to those requests within 24 hours. In AY08, the college's Web Advisory Committee began work on a redesign of the MCLA Web site, to be completed by the end of 2008.

Items specifically identified in the standard not previously found on the Web site or in printed materials have been reviewed by the appropriate offices and updates will be completed. The college is in the process of improving access to its institutional research data by posting information on its Web site. This information includes the college's common data set.

Per the Commonwealth's "Open Meeting Law," the college holds public meetings, which include all board of trustee meetings and its related subcommittee meetings. In addition, the campus community is consistently involved in decision making and college faculty and staff are aware of and involved in such planning as our strategic planning efforts and the creation of our master plan.

The college's most recent audited financial statement is presented to the Board of Trustees for review and approval. Quarterly financial statements are presented to the trustees at meetings announced and open to the public. In addition, a private auditor attends a meeting of the board of trustees once a year to discuss fully and publicly the college's financial position. Financial documents are available upon request and are sent annually to the state auditor's office, which makes the information available through the state's Single Audit. The college's financial information also is available from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

In addition to being available in print format, the college catalog – which is revised every two years – is available online. The catalog contains undergraduate and graduate programs, course descriptions, academic policies, and information about faculty and staff.

All college publications were strengthened in the past two years by hiring a communications specialist who reviews all major publications prior to publishing. She compiled a publications style guide to be used by individuals who work on such documents, and works with the Web communications manager to ensure that Web addresses cited in publications lead to actual sites.

STANDARD ELEVEN: INTEGRITY

MCLA works to ensure that all activities sponsored by the college are in line with our mission. The college follows a variety of documents that provide high ethical standards. These include state and federal laws relevant to higher education, FERPA, the State College Affirmative Action guidelines and collective bargaining agreements that our employees are governed by. The Massachusetts State Colleges *Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity/Diversity Plan* was updated July 1, 2007. The college also instituted an institutional review board that follows federal guidelines for the review of research involving human subjects.

Further, the standards set by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) provide important guidelines for us. We make known our commitment to high ethical standards through statements in our college catalog, student handbook, and various other documents. We continuously monitor our own adherence to our high standards. One way we do this is to explore seriously all complaints that may be made about our internal operations to ensure that our standards are relevant, up-to-date, and not in need of amendment. In instances where we feel that changes may be needed, we move expeditiously and thoughtfully to make such amendments.

The college instituted a network user agreement for information technology in 2004 that identifies ethical behavior with regard to the use of technology, emphasizing academic integrity and high ethical standards. The agreement applies to the college community – faculty, staff, and students.

Users are subject to sanctions for violating this or any other applicable MCLA policies, which sanctions may include loss of electronic accounts and/or access to MCLA electronic resources. Neither the existence nor the enforcement of this or any other MCLA policies precludes the enforcement of any federal, state or local law or regulation that pertain to the same or related subjects.

- MCLA reserves the right to limit or deny access in response to evidence of violations of federal, state or local laws.

To ensure that academic policy changes are communicated promptly, a staff member in the registrar's office is designated to manage the update process. All policies are available on the campus' internal Web site. When appropriate, academic policies are included in the undergraduate and graduate catalog and in the student handbook. All printed material also is available in electronic format.

The MSCA faculty contract outlines issues of academic freedom and responsibilities in Article V (p. 57/58). As stated, with academic freedom come responsibilities. "Institutions of higher education are committed to the search for truth and knowledge and to contribution to the solution of problems and controversies."

The college has policies and procedures in place for faculty grievances, academic appeals by students, and student disciplinary issues. The collective bargaining contract (MSCA contract) Article X, B outlines the procedure for faculty grievance. With regard to academic appeals for students, a process is in place and outlined in the college catalog. The student handbook includes policies and guidelines for disciplinary issues. Such cases may be heard by the college's judicial board. (Student Handbook; Student Code of Conduct)

In 2004, President Grant convened a diversity task force. The mission statement describes our commitment to support a multicultural and diverse campus:

“MCLA is a campus of diverse individuals who come together to attain the educational mission of the college. We are committed to supporting a climate/culture that appreciates, values, and honors the many faces of multiculturalism and diversity in our society.

Recognizing that an MCLA education, both in and out of the classroom, should advance the knowledge, growth and empowerment of individuals and groups, the Diversity and Multicultural Task Force seeks to identify and support initiatives that will;

- integrate issues of social, cultural and physical diversity (e.g., ethnicity, class, gender, social identity, etc.) into the curricular, co-curricular, and work life of the MCLA community; and
- reinforce the role that MCLA has to foster respect, inclusion and justice for citizens in a democratic society.”

The Human Resources Office arranges an orientation for all new employees to the college, to introduce them to the organization of the institution, services, and policies. All new employees are provided with an informational folder.

Institutional Effectiveness

The college uses all assessments and evaluations of its work to insure that the work we do is consistent with our high standards of institutional integrity. MCLA regularly reviews its internal policies with regard to integrity.

Section V: Future Plans

MCLA instituted a strong strategic planning process and set five major goals as noted earlier in this report. We have many related initiatives underway. Over the next five years, we will continue to focus on our goals as follows:

- I. Foster Academic Excellence: Set and Achieve Learning Outcomes and Program Review
 - Support new or expanded program development, both undergraduate and graduate
 - Continue our program review process, refining it as necessary and implementing recommendations
 - Further develop our First Year Experience program
 - Ensure that all graduates have experienced at least two high impact activities
 - Continue to refine the learning outcomes assessment process
 - Implement the use of E-portfolio
 - Continue to collect NSSE data every other year
 - Improve classroom and laboratory space on campus
 - Hire an associate dean for assessment, planning and research
- II. Increase Enrollment / Improve Retention
 - Continue to work on our recruitment process
 - Continue to work toward increased retention
 - Continue to collect and study NSSE data and ACT withdrawal data to improve retention
 - Continue toward greater diversity within our student body, our faculty and our staff
 - Create a Center for Student Engagement
- III. Enhance Student Life Programs
 - Increase student programming space
 - Make needed improvements to the Campus Center
 - Continue to involve students in peer support programs
- IV. Achieve Financial Strength
 - Continue to advocate for increased state appropriation
 - Continue to increase the endowment
 - Continue and increase our Major Gift Program
 - Continue to seek grant opportunities
 - Work to ensure that all members of the campus community understand the importance of supporting the institution
 - Expand scholarship funding through increased endowments
- V. Strengthen and Support the Use of Technology
 - Hire a chief information officer
 - Complete the implementation of the Banner student information system
 - Become the “technology hub” for all teachers in the region
 - Redesign the Web site
 - Create an online portal of professional development offerings for teachers

Finally, as a general goal, we will continue to develop ways in which we can most completely meet our responsibilities to Berkshire County and the region, as the only four-year public college in the area.