



**THE SEARCH FOR A
VICE PRESIDENT FOR
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

MCLA

**THE MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
NORTH ADAMS, MA**



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Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) announces a national search for a new Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). Serving as a key member of the College's senior leadership team, the VPAA will report directly to and partner with MCLA President, Dr. James F. Birge.

MCLA's next VPAA will be visionary and academically focused as a leader, experienced as a teacher and scholar, accomplished as a strategic thinker and planner, consultative by nature, decisive in practice, and informed about the needs of the 21st century learner. MCLA is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts designated public liberal arts college and a campus of the Massachusetts state university system. As the only public liberal arts college in the Commonwealth, MCLA belongs to the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), a distinctive national collaborative of 29 public liberal arts college where academic rigor and high impact educational experiences are central to the undergraduate program.

MCLA expects to welcome its new VPAA to our community in the summer of 2018.



ABOUT MCLA

Since its inception in 1894 as the Normal School in North Adams, MCLA has provided educational access and exceptional learning opportunities for its students. In 1932, the Normal School became the State Teachers College of North Adams and in 1960 the name changed to North Adams State College. In 1997, with eyes focused on the horizon of a new century, the College assumed a distinctive mission as Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

MCLA promotes excellence in learning and teaching, innovative scholarship, intellectual creativity, public service, applied knowledge, and active and responsible citizenship. MCLA prepares its graduates to be practical problem solvers and engaged, resilient global citizens.

This distinctive mission has been the basis of many accomplishments over the past 20 years. The US Department of Education has recently recognized MCLA as 1 of only 26 institutions nationally for offering a value-based education and whose graduates go on to high wage earning jobs. Additionally, current grants from the Mellon Foundation, the US Department of Education (Title III Strengthening Institutions), the National Science Foundation (two grants), The National Endowment for the Arts, and the American Cancer Society provide opportunities for MCLA faculty and students to deepen our commitments to the learning and teaching process. Moreover, exercising our innovative and

entrepreneurial roots, MCLA has launched new academic programs in the last year including majors in Health Science and Community Health Education; minors in Public History, Entrepreneurship studies, and Dance; and a concentration in electrical engineering. Finally, following President Birge's arrival in 2016, MCLA launched a strategic planning process that engaged more than 100 members of the community in the process of building upon the College's history of accomplishments. This is an exciting time at MCLA and the new VPAA will find experienced, energetic, and excited colleagues with whom to work.

MCLA serves as a powerful economic development engine for the city of North Adams and Berkshire County. The activity, energy, and vitality of MCLA's students, faculty, staff, and visitors, as well as the capital investments made in the campus and region, are transformative and irreplaceable. **The College has a direct economic impact on the community of nearly \$77 million, while MCLA's total annual economic impact on the region is over \$147 million.** This is a powerful return on the annual investment the Commonwealth makes in direct state appropriation to MCLA, and the College's civic, cultural, and community impact in the region is nearly incalculable.

More information about MCLA can be found at www.mcla.edu or in the MCLA [Factbook](#).

ABOUT THE BERKSHIRE REGION

Located in North Adams, MCLA is at the heart of the natural beauty and unparalleled cultural resources of Berkshire County and Western Massachusetts — a region with over 100 cultural attractions, many of them world-renowned including the Tanglewood Music Center, summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Jacob's Pillow (the longest running dance festival in America); several theatre festivals, including the Williamstown Theatre Festival and the Berkshire Theatre Festival; and Mass MoCA, the largest museum of contemporary art in the country.

For the past two decades, North Adams has been a city on the move transforming itself from an industrial economy to

a creative economy. The community has reinvented itself as a cultural destination and has worked to foster deeper connections among the College, cultural organizations, and the downtown business community. MCLA attends both to its critical economic role as a major employer in its area, and to its direct interaction with the community. The College provides leadership in efforts to support the ongoing revitalization of the communities of North Adams and the surrounding region.

More information about the region may be found online at <http://berkshires.org>.



DESIRED ATTRIBUTES OF THE NEW VPAA

The successful candidate at MCLA will possess a combination of personal qualities and professional experiences that match the expectations outlined in the **Agenda for a New VPAA** that follows in the next section. The VPAA will bring integrity, energy, empathy, and an uncompromising yet flexible work ethic to the role of chief academic officer. The successful candidate will have an earned doctorate or terminal degree, teaching experience, a track record of scholarly achievements, and evidence of successful academic leadership. In addition, the next MCLA VPAA will be:

- A passionate proponent of the liberal arts, understanding the special qualities of the public liberal arts college;
- A person who can lead by ideas with a style that is visionary, innovative, academically focused, action oriented, and fiscally responsible;
- Deeply committed to MCLA's mission and the student-centered, learning-centered culture that is prevalent on campus;
- A proven advocate for the needs of the faculty and the academic program, while actively contributing as a member of MCLA's senior leadership team to the College's welfare in consideration of all-institutional issues;

- An open and effective communicator who listens carefully, writes well, and speaks with clarity and inspiration;
- A person who values shared governance and who possesses the skills to effectively manage the College's collective bargaining agreement with faculty;
- A person with accomplished strategic thinking, planning, and implementation skills, while practicing collaboration as a means of implementation and decisiveness;
- Responsive to the needs of the 21st Century learner, developing programs and technologies in support of their interests and needs, while interpreting the changing face of higher education for all MCLA constituencies;
- An energetic and approachable campus presence, actively engaging in the student-centered life at MCLA while modeling traits that will enrich collegiality and community on campus;
- A person who demonstrates intersectional competence with an ability to develop a model of inclusivity throughout the College, and;
- A team player who can empower leaders, clarify roles, and hold team members accountable.



AGENDA FOR THE NEW VPAA

Candidates for the VPAA position will find at MCLA a vibrant College with a distinctive mission, a culture of academic rigor, a practice of transformative student-centered education, and a deep civic engagement ethic. In addition, MCLA provides a new VPAA with the chance to join an energetic administrative leadership at a moment of opportunity for the College.

One's ability to embrace the College's mission and the newly designed strategic plan will be essential to the success of the new VPAA. The VPAA's leadership philosophy should reflect a practice of setting high standards for self and others, an understanding and acceptance of human potential as seen in MCLA's students and faculty, and a style that combines collaboration and decisiveness. The new VPAA must value diversity and inclusion as a foundation for further establishing a meaningful learning community.

At this exciting moment in the College's history, as we envision the opportunity to build upon and enhance our success, the new VPAA's agenda will include:

Providing Academic Leadership – Championing the academic program and supporting the teaching faculty remain at the core of this agenda, as does the work of the VPAA as a member of the senior leadership team, where all-College issues and initiatives are consistently in focus. Balancing these demands calls for an open and responsive style of leadership. The VPAA will accept ongoing responsibility for listening to, motivating, and empowering faculty and academic administrators around efforts to strengthen current programs and formulating imaginative

ideas for new ones. The VPAA is in a strategic position to blend further the teaching and mentoring that faculty and staff offer as educators, while building on the notion that learning occurs in a variety of settings and in a variety of ways.

Embracing the New Strategic Plan – A new five-year plan, *Think Differently: Learning and Teaching for a Changing World*, forecasts eight goals to be addressed by 2022). The new VPAA will immerse themselves in the implementation of strategies to achieve each of these goals, all of which call for academic leadership at a variety of levels. The VPAA's efforts must focus upon further galvanizing institutional efforts to strengthen MCLA. The platform for creative thinking is clear, the timing for substantial influence at MCLA is at hand, and the opportunity to move MCLA forward is palpable.

Maintaining Robust Shared Governance – A healthy ethos of shared governance supports the academic program at MCLA and helps to clarify decision-making roles and responsibilities across the campus. The VPAA must understand the value of this system and be prepared to accept major responsibility for maintaining it. MCLA governs in accordance with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) policies with coordination through the state Department of Higher Education. As such, the shared governance structure for faculty is served by a statewide collective bargaining agreement with the Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA acting through the Massachusetts State College Association. The State of Massachusetts negotiates the contracts for MCLA's faculty union and then



the VPAA manages the contracts on the MCLA campus. Local authority for the College rests with the Board of Trustees.

Managing While Leading – In addition to nurturing a viable governance system at MCLA, the VPAA will be called on to manage and empower the academic affairs staff. The VPAA's current areas of responsibility include: all academic programs of the College (undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education); Freel Library; Berkshire Cultural Resource Center/Gallery 51; Academic Technology; Center for Student Success and Engagement; Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning; and the Registrar. Organizationally, the last four areas listed above report to the VPAA through the Dean of Academic Affairs. With responsibility for this wide range of academic activities and a significant number of professional and support staff, the VPAA's skill at delegating, evaluating, and holding accountable members of the academic affairs team will bring strength and clarity to the academic program. (See [Factbook](#) for Organizational Chart.)

Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion – With an increasingly diverse student body (23%), the VPAA must work to increase the diversity of the faculty and staff (7%) and must contribute to enhancing MCLA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a key ingredient to creating a meaningful campus climate. The stature of all underrepresented groups on campus is critical to the quality of life at MCLA. The new

strategic plan highlights MCLA's commitment to these values and the VPAA's fresh ideas and action toward this objective are welcome.

Enhancing the Quality of Student Life – Regardless of their status as undergraduate, graduate or continuing education, students are at the center of MCLA's educational program. Faculty, administration, and staff provide a supportive, warm, and distinctly caring dimension in the mentoring of MCLA students. It is no accident that students are drawn to the strong sense of campus community and a recognizable commitment to student-centeredness. The new VPAA must be comfortable with the personality of the MCLA campus and be authentic in their visibility, accessibility, and participation in the life of the College.

Encouraging Creativity – While the VPAA accepts ongoing responsibility to empower current faculty and support current programs, they must also further enhance the creative outlook at MCLA. The new VPAA should advance a vision for the College's academic future that is built upon collaboration with faculty, staff, and students, that reflects one's ability to "lead by ideas," and that includes curricular revisions that enhance the liberal arts and respond to the needs of students and communities.

MORE ABOUT MCLA



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

MCLA takes great pride in its academic offerings and its unique blend of liberal arts and professional programs.

The College offers 22 majors and more than 80 programs of study leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. Additionally, MCLA offers graduate programs including Post-Baccalaureate Educator Licensure, a Master of Education (M.Ed.), a Master of Business Administration (MBA), a Leadership Academy, and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS). MCLA is committed to liberal learning as the foundation to any academic discipline and successful post-college work. This distinction reflects an emphasis on the use of high impact practices that develop the applied knowledge, collaboration, communications, and critical thinking that are the foundation of engaged citizenship.

In addition to offering high quality academic programs, MCLA provides students with leading edge initiatives that enhance the learning and teaching culture. These initiatives include:

- **Undergraduate Research Conference:** The annual Undergraduate Research Conference, held each year in April, is a campus-wide celebration of the talent and dedication of MCLA students. Part of the college's [Undergraduate Research Programs](#), the conference encompasses a broad definition of "research," welcoming undergraduate scholarship and creative activity in all fields of study. Depending on the discipline, students display their work as a poster, an oral presentation, or a performance.

- **Honors Program:** One of the ways MCLA explores its Liberal Arts mission is to foster a cohort of passionate students – students who are intellectually engaged with each other and the world, who love books, writing, and learning for their own sakes, whose curiosity ranges beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries, and who crave intellectual challenges. The honors program aims to offer a home for such students.

- **Berkshire STEM Pipeline:** MCLA promotes increased engagement and success in the STEM fields through the collaborative Berkshire STEM Pipeline Network. Through MCLA leadership, the network provides professional development opportunities and resources for STEM educators and programs to promote STEM awareness and learning for students. Among other initiatives, the STEM Network coordinates a range of programs, including the Massachusetts Region I Science and Engineering Fairs for middle and high school students.

- **Feigenbaum MCLA Leads Initiative:** Created and enabled by the generosity of the Feigenbaum Foundation and spurred by Armand & Donald Feigenbaum's spirit and legacy of entrepreneurship and community development, the Feigenbaum MCLA Leads Initiative is intended to promote the creation of new curricular and co-curricular programming centered on innovation, entrepreneurship, community development, and leadership. MCLA launched the Feigenbaum Leads Initiative to establish new programming- such as an entrepreneurship minor-





designed to prepare students for the working world by engaging with it during their college years. One of the first projects launched, MCLA's Design Lab provides the community a space uniquely suited for collaborative work, while it's open, flexible, floor plan allows space for receptions, concerts, lectures, and community forums. Additionally, MCLA's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Challenge inspires student teams (20+ in 2017) to build business plans and solve problems locally and globally, with local mentors.

■ **Berkshire Cultural Resource Center:** In 2005, MCLA made the strategic and mission-driven decision to establish a presence on Main Street in downtown North Adams with the opening of MCLA Gallery 51, an art gallery and educational and community meeting space. The gallery serves as home to the Berkshire Cultural Resource Center (BCRC), an incubator that provides technical assistance, professional development, and programming to support the region's creative economy. BCRC offers a range of exhibition, internship, and training programs, including the Berkshire Hills Internship Program (B-HIP) and the *DownStreet Art* summer cultural program. As a resource, a gathering place, an intimate concert venue, and a source of activity for the business community, the Center has been instrumental in promoting the downtown business district. For MCLA, the work of BCRC has also created new collaborative, educational, performance, and presenting partnerships with neighboring Williams College.

■ **Berkshire Compact for Education:** The Berkshire Compact for Education is a group of regional civic, education, and business leaders who seek to ensure the well-being of each individual and the strength of our economy and community by raising the educational access, aspirations, and attainment of *all* Berkshire County residents.

The Compact's work focuses on:

- Raising aspirations among Berkshire County residents to view a minimum of 16 years of education or training as the norm.
- Convening county stakeholders to ensure that Berkshire residents have adequate access to education.
- Encouraging area residents to obtain the skills, technologies and tools they need to enjoy the opportunities presented by the evolving local economy.

FACULTY

A priority for MCLA, and the focus of one of the College's strategic goals, is excellence in teaching and learning. Leading MCLA's achievement of this excellence is a highly qualified faculty that supports student success and engagement in and out of the classroom. Many faculty members are recognized for their scholarship, sponsored research, artistic work, and scholarly publications in addition to their deep commitment to teaching and learning.

Faculty members plan and lead travel courses and service-learning courses, promote student internship opportunities, and mentor students in undergraduate research. A college-wide undergraduate research program provides students the opportunity to conduct research and present at MCLA's annual undergraduate research conference, as well as at regional and national conferences. MCLA faculty are also involved in the state-chartered Honors Program and mentor numerous discipline-specific and general honors societies that recognize student academic attainment. Many volunteer their time to work with students in a variety of other activities and interests, enriching the campus community, as well as the wider region. Currently, MCLA has 93 full-time faculty members and a student-to-faculty ratio of 12:1, promoting a deep and engaged learning environment for students. The College supports the development and improvement of pedagogy, scholarship, and service by all faculty, and recognizes that investment in faculty is an investment in realizing the mission and purpose of MCLA. Recent scholarly activity over the last four months of 2017 is presented [here](#).



STUDENTS

MCLA students are motivated, idea-driven, and community-minded. Whether living on campus or off, students have access to an array of student clubs and organizations that provide participation and leadership opportunities. Honor societies, service groups, athletics, multicultural clubs, and theater, music, and dance performance groups provide diverse opportunities for involvement. Together, these organizations are overseen by an active and engaged Student Affairs Division and the Student Government Association.

The total enrollment for the fall 2017 semester was approximately 1,588, of which 1,407 were undergraduates with the balance in graduate programs. Of the undergraduate student body, 85% attend full-time and 67% live on campus. Some \$18 million in financial aid is awarded to students, 46% of whom are Pell-eligible. Twenty-five percent of MCLA's students are first-generation, and average SAT and ACT scores are 1,030 and 24, respectively. Almost 40% of students come from Berkshire County, while 76% of students are from Massachusetts, and 23 states are represented in the student body. MCLA is especially proud of its student diversity: 23% of undergraduates come from diverse backgrounds.

MCLA offers graduate and continuing education academic programs through the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) Sixty-one percent of DGCE students enroll from Massachusetts and the majority enroll part-time. Approximately 375 students currently enroll in DGCE programs. The DGCE program offerings include the MBA, the M.Ed., and the Degree Completion program for adult learners which is housed in the College's Pittsfield, MA location.





TRAILBLAZER ATHLETICS

MCLA's 13 NCAA Division III athletic teams share primary affiliation with the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC). These teams- distinguish themselves in the classroom and on the playing field. During the 2016-2017 academic year 52.4% of student athletes maintained above a 3.5 gpa. Participation in athletics correlates positively with student persistence, retention, and graduation rates.

CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

The MCLA Center for Service and Citizenship promotes community service, volunteerism, and mentorship. The Center coordinates over 20,000 hours of student service on the part of students, faculty, and staff annually, and supports a range of programs in partnership with local agencies. Through these opportunities, students help identify and address pressing community needs, learn to work side by side with community leaders, and enrich their own learning. MCLA consistently appears on the [Corporation for National and Community Service's annual President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll](#).

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The MCLA Search Committee will accept nominations and applications on a rolling basis. The committee will narrow the candidate pool in early in April, although applications will be accepted until a new VPAA is selected. For the most favorable consideration applications should be submitted by noon on Wednesday, April 4.

Dr. Thomas B. Courtice is the search consultant assisting with this search. Nominators and prospective candidates may contact him at Courtice@tbcsearchconsulting.com or at 614/395-6631. Application materials should include 1) a letter that responds to the AGENDA FOR THE NEW VPAA, 2) a complete CV or resume, and 3) the names and contact information for three references, none of whom will be contacted until a later stage of the search and not without the candidate's formal permission.

Application materials should be submitted electronically to:

Graziana Ramsden, PhD
Professor of Modern Languages
Chair, VPAA Search Committee
MCLAVPAA@tbcsearchconsulting.com

All inquiries and applications will be received and evaluated in full confidence.

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination and affirmative action in its educational programs, activities and employment practices. The college complies with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations advancing equal employment. Applicants who will enrich the diversity of the campus community are strongly encouraged to apply.