



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Thursday, June 12, 2025
Murdock Hall Room 208 and TEAMS Video/Audio Conferencing

For recording purposes there was a Board development session prior to the Board meeting - MCLA Marketing – Present & Future Strategy - Ms. Kristin Nichols – Chief Marketing Officer

Trustees in attendance:	Mohan Boodram	Brenda Burdick	John Barrett III
	Jean Clarke-Mitchell	William Garrity	Buffy Lord
			Darlene Rodowicz

Trustees Absent: Frederick Keator, Denise Marshall, Yvonne Spicer

MCLA Staff in attendance:

James F. Birge	President
Bernadette Alden	Director of Marketing and Communications
Joseph DaSilva	Vice President for Administration & Finance
Jennifer Dix *	Budget Manager
Richard Glejzer	Provost
Kelli Kozak	Clerk
Joshua Mendel	Chief of Staff
Jeannette Smith	Vice President of Student of Affairs
Robert Ziomek	Vice President for Institutional Advancement

*Denotes remote participation

As allowed by executive order of the Governor of Massachusetts, in compliance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and 15A, Section 9, and with a quorum present in-person and via audio/video conference, the Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on June 12, 2025 with Chair Mohan Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 5:32p.m.

Chair Boodram reviewed the items in the consent agenda as presented and asked if there were items in the meeting materials that members wish to be removed from consent and discussed individually. Hearing none, Chair Boodram then asked for corrections to the minutes as provided from the prior meetings and reports listed on the agenda. Hearing none, he requested a motion to approve.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the consent agenda as presented.

- a. Minutes for Review & Action
 - i. Board of Trustees Minutes (April 24, 2025)
 - ii. Academic Affairs (May 21, 2025)
 - iii. Student Affairs Committee (May 22, 2025)
 - iv. Executive Committee of the Board (May 30, 2025)
 - v. Enrollment Management Committee (May 29, 2025)
 - vi. Fiscal Affairs Committee (May 20, 2025)
 - vii. Presidential Evaluation (May 9, 2025)
 - viii. Nominating Committee (June 4, 2025)
- b. For Information
 - ix. MCLA Foundation Report (See Advancement Report in Campus Update)
 - x. Financial Statements

Action out of Nominating Committee - Chair Boodram noted the board leadership transition for the next year. Based on the recommendation of the Nominating Committee he then called for a motion.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the following slate of Board of Trustee leadership: Trustee Lord as Chair and Trustee Clarke Mitchell as Vice Chair each for a one-year term commencing July 1, 2025 until a successor is chosen and qualified.

Fiscal Report - Trustee Marshall then provided a review of the reporting from the May 20, 2025 Fiscal Affairs Committee: At the Committee meeting VP DaSilva presented the FY25 Budget Actual report. As of March 31, 2025, the budget is tracking slightly better than projections. Revenues are down primarily due to a negative variance in tuition and fees, and expenses are also tracking down. Lower enrollments for the fall and spring semesters have put pressure on the budget. There is a projected revenue of 50k at year end. VP DaSilva presented the FY25 forecast budget projection revealing the effects of lower enrollment for both fall and spring semesters, and projected savings in expense items with a projection of \$47,215 net revenue at year end. The staff continues to work diligently to ensure that by the end of the fiscal year, the budget will have a positive balance.

VP DaSilva also presented the FY26 Preliminary Draft Budget to the Committee. The budget currently reflects an ask of “Uses of Reserves” in the amount of \$953,366 – operating budget shortfall of \$532,142 and Strategic Planning Budget Request of \$421,224. President Birge discussed the use of Reserve Funds for the Strategic Plan – similarly to the use of reserve funds in FY25. Details of major assumptions used are included in board materials.

VP DaSilva then presented to the Committee the performance of the two investment portfolios the college has through April 30th:

- a) Wells Fargo (Francis Investments) is \$11.8M from a \$10M initial investment.
- b) LPL Financial (Adams Community Investments) is \$6.7M from a \$6M initial investment.

At the Trustees meeting President Birge noted that the strategic plan funding request is being funded half from the operating budget and half from reserves if approved by the Trustees. There is a significant investment in marketing as the Board just heard in the Board Development session is a need. This plan positions us for an uncertain landscape. This is the Board’s strategic plan and the college is requesting their support.

Based on the recommendations of the Fiscal Affairs Committee, Chair Boodram called for a motion. Upon motion made and duly seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To approve the FY 26 operating budget as presented including the \$532,142 FY26 operating budget reserve backstop, also noting the 3% fee increase, 3.5% meal plan fee increase and \$421,224 to begin work of strategic plan in year one.

President’s Report - President Birge then presented his report.

- a. Strategic Plan Update – The plan formation is complete and the next step is approval by the Dept of Higher Ed. There was feedback around language and we feel that we welcome diversity of thoughts, ideas. We are maintaining language as submitted. This plan has had substantial input, and we feel it shows our priorities. The Attorney Generals Office and the Lt Governor have noted that we should lean into our diversity strengths. President Birge is proud of the plan and recently presented to faculty and staff.
- b. Sub-120 Credit Bachelor’s Degree proposal – There was then discussion of Merrimack petition to NECHE to offer a sub-120 BA. NECHE granted it to Merrimack and Johnson & Wales – both are fragile and in need of revenue. The issue is that the sub 120 diminishes the value and purpose of a Bachelors degree. COP met this week and expressed concerns. COP asked to remove the item from the agenda or to advocate with a pilot. This diminishes programs and professional requirements. President Birge noted that the Trustees should advocate against this to support 4 year higher ed. Discussion followed that this devalues the degree overall as well as complicates grad school applications as well. Also discussion of a 90 credit degree being only slightly more than 60 which is an Associates degree.
- c. There was discussion of Atlantic Coast Hockey rental revenue as well as a discussion of international students. President Birge responded that we are carefully monitoring and we have engaged with immigration attorney, and we have protocols in place for reacting if

needed. All are concerned for our students. We will be very prepared for eventualities, including legal support and intervening as we are allowed.

Chairperson's Report - Chair Boodram then gave his report.

He noted that the following Trustees have been appointed by the Governor and will take office on July 1, 2025.

- Thomas Bernard (replacing the vacant seat formerly held by Frank Reynolds) Tom is the former Mayor of North Adams, a former MCLA staffer and is the current Executive Director of the Berkshire United Way.
- Benjamin Downing (replacing the seat held by the Honorable John Barrett III) Ben is a Pittsfield native who is also a former state Senator.
- Rachel Hailey (replacing the seat held by Frederick Keator) Rachel is the owner of DEI Outdoors focusing on inclusion and creating a more accessible and equitable outdoor experience.
- Yina Moore (replacing the seat held by Mohan Boodram) Yina is the Founder of the Adams Theater with a background in Architecture and community development.
- W. David Halbert class of '03 as the Alumni appointee (replacing the seat held by Denise Marshall.)

Chair Boodram offered thanks to all of the outgoing board members for their service and wise counsel. He also noted that Ms. Allie Bayer – a rising senior and double major in Political Science and Psychology hailing from Boring, Oregon has been elected by her peers as student body representative to the Trustees and will take office on July 1, 2025 replacing the seat of William Garrity. He offered his thanks to Will Garrity for his student leadership and best wishes for the future.

Chair Boodram also noted the service of prior Board Chair Brenda Burdick, recognizing her for her dedicated service to the college and the community. He then presented Ms. Burdick with an engraved gavel in appreciation of her service as Chair.

Summer Authority for the President - Chair Boodram then noted that we have one more scheduled meeting this fiscal year via TEAMS only on June 24th to discuss the full results of the President's Evaluation and any other business that properly comes before the meeting. As we enter the summer season the Chair asked for a motion to authorize summer authority for the President.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was unanimously:

VOTED: To grant Presidential Authority to make such appointments and decisions that are necessary for the normal operation of the College during the summer when the board does not conduct regularly scheduled meetings.

President's Evaluation process update – Chair Boodram then noted the recent five-year process we had consultant mel Netzhammer, finalizing committee and then will share out to board, DHE

would like the report and the cover letter and board reaction to the findings. The Chair feels it is a good quality report.

Kleefeld Commendation to Foundation - At the previous meeting the Board voted to table the motion to commend the Foundation. Based on detailed documentation provided to the Trustees in advance of the meeting, the Chair reintroduced his motion. The motion was made and duly seconded. Discussion then followed. Trustee Barrett noted that he appreciates the amount of information the Board received but he feels from his personal perspective it is a quid pro quo situation, because it brings in the artists' work focused more on her art than students, Barrett asked that faculty do what is best for students, also noted gallery 51 in downtown, Trustee Barrett then moved to call the question.

Upon the question being called, Chair Boodram asked for and received a second to the motion to call the question. Following a roll-call vote, it was:

VOTED: To call the motion at hand for immediate action with no further discussion.
Trustee Garrity voted nay. The motion passed by more than a 2/3 majority.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was voted:

VOTED: To commend the Foundation for the valuable work in stewarding the Kleefeld gift in support of the college.
Trustee Barrett voted nay. The motion passed.

In conclusion, Chair Boodram noted a reception on the Bowman lawn immediately following the meeting. Under other business Trustee Barrett noted that he feels the college has a strong future ahead of it.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was voted:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:10p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Kozak, Clerk