



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Thursday, October 30, 2025

Murdock Hall Room 208 and TEAMS Video/Audio Conferencing

MINUTES

For recording purposes only, there was a Board Development Session in advance of the meeting. Assistant Dean of Athletics Laura Mooney and Derek Shell Assistant Athletic Director presented on Excellence in Athletics at MCLA and discussed logistics, expectations, progress and athletic programs.

Trustees in attendance: Allie Bayer Thomas Bernard Jean Clarke- Mitchell
W.E. David Halbert* Buffy Lord Yina Moore* Darlene Rodowicz
Yvonne Spicer*

Trustees Absent: Brenda Burdick Ben Downing Rachel Hailey

MCLA Staff in attendance:

James F. Birge President
Bernadette Alden Director of Marketing and Communications
Lynette Bond Dean, DGCE
Chief Dan Colonno MCLA Public Safety
Joseph DaSilva Vice President for Administration & Finance
Kate Flower Librarian
Richard Glejzer Provost
Kelli Kozak Clerk
Dianne Manning* Residential Life
Joshua Mendel Chief of Staff
Spencer Moser Assistant Dean for Student Growth & WellBeing
Kerri Nicoll Professor of Social Work
Jeannette Smith Vice President of Student of Affairs
Robert Ziomek Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Professors Whitney Gecker and Julie Walsh – Candidates for Tenure

Guests in attendance: Chris Pelland and Rob Ziegel* – Withum Associates

*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 October 30, 2025 with Chair Buffy Lord presiding.



Chair Lord called the meeting to order at 5:30p.m.

1. Consent Agenda

Chair Lord noted the first order of business is the consent agenda, which includes minutes of prior meetings as listed, the Foundation Report as provided in the campus update, and monthly financial reports from the Fiscal Affairs Committee meeting. The clerk's draft of the minutes from the last meetings listed on the agenda as item 1a and other reports listed as item 1b were sent to you. One correction was noted for the October 21 Academic affairs meeting, Chair Lord was in attendance. For the June 12, 2025 Trustees meeting Trustee Barrett voted "present" to the Kleefeld vote which should be recorded as an abstention.

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

- VOTED:** To approve the consent agenda with corrections as noted.
- a. Minutes for Review & Action
 - i. Board of Trustees Minutes (June 12, 2025 and June 24, 2025)
 - ii. Executive Committee of the Board (August 21, 2025 and Sept. 30, 2025)
 - iii. Student Affairs Committee (October 9, 2025)
 - iv. Academic Affairs (October 21, 2025 - pending)
 - v. Enrollment Management Committee (October 8, 2025 – pending)
 - b. For Information
 - i. MCLA Foundation Report (See Advancement Report in Campus Update)
 - ii. Financial Statements

Trustee Rodowicz then welcomed VP Joe DaSilva and Chris Pelland from Withum Associates to present our annual audit. The Fiscal Affairs Committee voted yesterday to recommend the Audit to the full Board of Trustees for their approval.

2. Audit Presentation

Mr. Pelland then presented the audit.

Withum issued two reports on financial statements, one with an opinion, one on internal controls. They use GASB and GAAP auditing standards and use a test basis for the audit. They have issued an unmodified clean opinion on the financial statement.

They have also reviewed internal controls, and have noted one finding on foundation side but it was a presentation finding. Previously they were recorded as current and this year should be recorded as non current. There were no material deficiencies. This had not been picked up in prior audits but was noted this year. There were no compliance issues. Withum is required to be independent of the college.



There were two new adjustments based on

- GASB-101 compensated absences resulted in an immaterial adjustment
- GASB102 – enhanced disclosures, no financial changes

Key estimates were provided by the state and college. There were no significant transactions this year. There were no disagreements or difficulties in the audit. No other findings to report to the Board. The Engagement does not include fraud determination but none was discovered in the course of the audit. All audits have two presumed risks to be mitigated. – risk of misstatement and risk of management override of controls. The Auditors report delivers an unmodified opinion with one note re foundation accounting as detailed.

Management provided discussion and analysis. Mr. Pelland detailed the balance sheet citing assets and liabilities. There was one change to the lease liability – reclassified 1.3million during final internal review. He then reviewed the income statement which is consistent at \$21million. The State appropriation is 33.4million and there is investment income of \$2million

Cash flows, investments, debt and non-cash transactions were reviewed as well noting a small decrease in cash.

Foundation financial statements:

- FASB accounting standards were followed
- Restatement of 17million as a non current

College financial statements

- consistent policies
- page 25 addresses new accounting pronouncements
- GASB 103 management discussion analysis change next year
- GASB 104 disclosures of capital assets
- GASB 101 and 102 implemented

Highlighted changes:

- P 32 public private partnerships aramark was pre amortized so it changed to include that exp
- P 41-43 – new enhanced disclosures based on GASB 102 – constraints on college, state, debt, unions.

Pension liabilities from the state are consistent to the past. Report on internal controls notes finding at foundation.



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President Birge noted that our primary reserve ratio is higher than the minimum required to be considered healthy.

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

VOTED: To approve the audit as presented.

3. Report out of Fiscal Affairs Committee - Trustee Rodowicz

- a. Chris Pelland, Principal from, Withum Smith+Brown, P.C. presented the audited financial statements for FY25 ending June 30, 2025 – an unmodified audit opinion was issued.
- b. VP DaSilva presented the FY25 4th Quarter Budget report. FY25 ended with an overall positive net revenue of \$809,459. There was a positive revenue variance of \$662,000 mainly due to funding provided by the state for collective bargaining agreements (some funding was not paid out in FY25, thus will become a FY26 expense), and has not yet been ratified. and Misc/Interest revenues were positive. Expenses were well managed and came in under budget (\$184,495).
- c. VP DaSilva presented the DCAMM FY24-28 Critical Repair Funding projects, Campus Signage Project, and Trombley-Westall Trailblazer Center in Bowman Hall. All funds have been expended.
- d. VP DaSilva presented the FY26 Actual Budget through Sept 30th revealing a revenue shortfall of \$1M that is mainly from the effects of lower enrollment for fall semester, timing on State Revenue and TRIO Grant, and positive variance in Interest. Total Expenses were under budget by \$760,455. Q1 is currently showing a Net Revenue loss of \$258,517. The staff continues to work diligently to ensure that by the end of the fiscal year, the budget will have a positive balance.
- e. VP DaSilva presented the FY26 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 \$298,563 net revenue loss at year end. The staff continues to work diligently looking at expenses to ensure that by the end of the fiscal year, the budget will have a positive balance.
- f. VP DaSilva presented the performance of the two investment portfolios the college has through Sept 30th:
- g. Wells Fargo (Francis Investments) is \$13.6M from a \$10M initial investment.
- h. LPL Financial (Adams Community Investments) is \$6.8M from a \$6M initial investment.

There was discussion of retroactive to July 1 of 2024 for collective bargaining pay outs.



4. Clery Report - Chief Dan Colonno then presented the annual Clery report.
 - a. Chief presented on Clery act required annual security report which was filed with dept of ed and sent to campus on October 1 as required.
 - b. Statistics – sex offenses included fondling 3, rape 1, domestic violence 2. These were all reported through Title IX not directly to campus police. Also noted all occurred on campus in residence halls. There were no hate offenses this year.
 - c. Chief Colonno also requests information from local police on crimes reported to them and crimes adjacent to campus.
- d. There were no arrests due to drugs, alcohol, or weapons. There were five drug and 11 liquor violations for student under 21 which comes through student conduct.
- e. No fires in residence areas, all systems are tested.
- f. Hazing incidents in 2025 will be reported in Clery beginning October 2026. Notifications were sent to campus regarding MCLAs hazing policy on October 17.

There was discussion and questions that domestic violence or dating violence are different but we had no reports. Also there are no patterns that we have recognized. Chief Colonno noted that our crime numbers are down and anecdotally probably below peers.

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

VOTED: To commend to accept the Clery Report as presented

5. **Title IX training – Dr. Jeannette Smith, VP Student Affairs presented the Trustees annual training on Title IX.**
 - a. Statistics how that Title IX is a significant concern on all campuses – including harassment and discrimination. VP Smith noted prevalence of sexual assault on campuses and its negative impact on long term mental health of individuals and community.
 - b. VP Smith noted Trustee obligations under Title IX:
 - i. Required to report if you have reasonable knowledge of an offense
 - ii. Understand title ix and related regs
 1. violence against women act,
 2. stop campus hazing act related to Clery report which includes hazing transparency report and report on hazing prevention;
 3. section 504 ADA non discrimination and compliance, discussion of providing info to students on IEPs as well.
 4. NCAA membership – and compliance equity in athletics disclosure sports sponsorship of equitable teams, designated senior women administrator. There was discussion of donations being applied equitably and we are clear that we fundraise for all sports.
 5. Clery act – transparency around campus crime statistics



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- iii. Trustees are required to receive training
- c. Massachusetts has state equal opportunity, non discrimination and title ix expanded protections. We are part of the state system plan which also informs our response.
- d. The overall theme is no sex based discrimination and equal opportunity at both federal and state level.
- e. VP Smith noted the staff involved in this work. Seven staff roles carry out this process. No two people should be in the same role.
- f. Title ix jurisdiction - MCLA must have control over the respondent, although we can supply supports for any student impacted
- g. VP Smith noted the following:
 - i. Information on making a report vs. filing a complaint
 - ii. Detailed reporting options including discussion that Trustees are mandatory reporters and must report promptly.
 - iii. Defined sex based harassment
 - iv. Detailed formal and informal resolution process, informal resolution cannot be accessed by student/employee occurrences
 - v. Title IX applies to all students, all staff, all contractors, volunteers, - the whole MCLA community
- h. There was discussion of required reporters vs. encouraged reporters, students and others are not required to report although everyone can report. Dr. Smith also detailed resources on and off campus.
- i. Discussion of federal impact on title ix and also what happens when a party to the title ix concern is a member of a collective bargaining unit on campus. We also have third party contractors who provide support. There was further discussion of student training that is provided online. It was also noted that public conversations on campus can be an area of concern. VP Smith also noted that trustees with general or specific questions can always reach out to her office.

6. President's Report

President Birge

- a. Trustee Hailey has resigned as of this afternoon for personal reasons. We will begin the process of filling her position but we do hope that she will be a nominee in the future
- b. Kleefeld Groundbreaking – The Foundation hosted a very nice event last week to celebrate the groundbreaking for the new Campagna Kleefeld Center for Creativity in the Arts.
- c. Campaign Update – The Campaign has been very successful to date and this is the last year of the campaign.
- d. Strategic Plan Update – The plan has been approved by Massachusetts Board of Higher Ed (BHE) after a year of work and will move forward with the support of Board reserve funding.
- e. The Reception for former Trustees will occur on December 11.
- f. The federal shut down has had limited impact directly to the College. There is no impact to fall federal financial aid. If it continues into January it will impact us. The



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- TRiO grant was renewed also prior to shut down. An area of concern is SNAP benefits not coming in November. We have sent an email with resources and the College is hosting the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition's food security summit on November 14.
- g. Trustee Rodowicz noted that the Bright Act has been recommended at \$3billion dollar level, it is well supported in the legislature. We have submitted a proposal for updates to lab space at Church Street Center and plan a larger proposal around Mark Hopkins Hall.
 - h. President Birge noted the faculty colleagues who are up for tenure, some of whom are in attendance tonight.
7. Chairperson's Report - Chair Lord then presented her report.
- a. Presidential Search Process Update
 - i. WittKieffer Associates has been chosen as the search firm by the Search Committee. WittKieffer's proposal was very strong, and they are experienced and well qualified. They will be meeting on campus constituencies. Timeline remains – March to April finalists and then a candidate chosen around April. Chair Lord also noted that the Search Committee is made up of highly capable representatives from across campus.
 - b. Honorary Degree Recipients

Chair Lord then brought forward from the Executive Committee a recommendation for two well-deserving honorary degree recipients for Commencement 2026.

 - 1. Mohan Boodram – Doctor of Public Service for his service to the college over many years as a Trustee, Chair, Foundation member and overall supporter of the College and its mission.
 - 2. Dr. Mary K. Grant – Doctor of Humane Letters for her lifelong commitment to education and her service to the College and the Commonwealth as the former President of MCLA and the current President of MassArt and an alum.

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

VOTED: To approve the recommendation that Dr. Mary K. Grant receive an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters and Mr. Mohan Boodram receive an honorary Doctorate of Public Service at the 2026 MCLA Commencement exercises.

Chair Lord also noted that there is a trustee luncheon in the dining hall with students on the December 11 Trustee meeting day and we have a reception to follow Board meeting in CSI 2nd floor mezzanine. All are welcome to join us.



Under other business Trustee Bernard noted the recent success of campus-wide Day of Dialogue. Chair Lord noted the upcoming Hardman Journalism Lecture on November 13.

Chair Lord then recognized two student from the gallery. The students had questions on various Student Government Association (SGA) matters. Chair Lord noted that the questions were not the purview of the Board but that college administration would get back to the students. It was also noted that it is not usual practice to recognize comments form the gallery.

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:16p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Kozak, Clerk