



**Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of December 9, 2021**  
**Audio/Video Conference**

**Members in Attendance**

Mohan Boodram, Chair  
Brenda Burdick, Vice Chair  
JD Chesloff  
Karen Kowalczyk\*  
Robert Reilly

**Others in Attendance**

James F. Birge, President  
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

\*Denotes remote participation

Upon establishing a quorum of the Executive Committee Members present, Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m. and began discussion of the President's performance goals for FY22.

Chair Boodram read each goal from the document provided to the Committee members prior to this meeting, and requested that each member of this Committee take stewardship of each goal with an eye toward preparing the presidential evaluation at the end of the fiscal year.

**1. Continue to build student enrollment recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing the fall 2022 student enrollment from 995 to 1,094, including undergrad and DGCE enrollment.**

Trustees discussed the plans to achieve this goal. President Birge stated that the number proposed is a stretch goal, but based on conversations with leaders of the enrollment and DGCE divisions, is possible to reach. An additional \$100K has been allocated to the marketing and enrollment lines for increased purchasing of names, additional targeted recruitment, and expanded advertising including billboards. As well, the College is currently seeing an increase in funnel activity for inquiries and applications for the fall semester. Transfer applications are double now what they were a year ago.

With regard to year over year enrollment comparison, it was stated that the College is down approximately 220 students from fall 2020. In fall 2019 there had been an increase in enrollment of 5% with total students of 1,350. The decline is a result of many factors including COVID and the market overall experiencing a decline in the number of high school graduates.

Trustee Reilly, Chair of the Enrollment Management Committee, commented on the efforts of the Enrollment Division staff relative to reaching targeted markets, and the contracting of Simpson Scarborough to assist with marketing for recruitment efforts.

In response to questions regarding enrollment level and its impact on the College's viability, President Birge stated that current enrollment numbers are worrisome and the FY23 budget will be tight without a significant increase in enrollment. It is likely that the Board will be approached to support operations through a reserve funding allocation. The College's largest expense is currently payroll and benefits, and efforts are focused on avoiding reductions in this expense.

Trustee Reilly will steward the student enrollment goal.

**2. Craft a dashboard of performance indicators that provide information about MCLA's advancement and our progress toward achieving them.**

Work has been done on the development of a dashboard, but saw less effort as resources remained focused on the pandemic and related tracking/reporting. Focus will resume to develop a dashboard that is easily read, relevant to the Trustees, and includes peer comparison data.

Trustee Boodram will steward the dashboard goal.

**3. Coordinate efforts with VP of Institutional Advancements and the MCLA Foundation Board to prepare for the next comprehensive campaign by establishing staffing infrastructure and volunteer campaign leadership.**

**4. Identify and contact major donors for the comprehensive campaign and secure early gifts totaling between \$3 and \$5MM.**

President Birge provided an update on the recent campaign trip to Florida which resulted in cash donations and securing future commitments with estate plans. Reconnection was made with a donor who was active during President Aceto's tenure, and this resulted in an unsolicited gift. These relationships will be leveraged further as work continues to achieve this goal.

As President Birge's time dedicated to campaign efforts increases, he will rely more on his executive staff and has confidence in their abilities to continue to manage the day to day operations.

Trustee Kowalczyk will steward goals #3 and #4 relative to campaign efforts.

**5. Expand MCLA's focus on equity by eliminating the first-year retention rate and the six-year graduation rate gaps between students of color and their entering cohort, and creating a more diverse academic community by attracting students and faculty/staff from under-represented communities so that 30% (vs 26% in fall 2021) of the student population and 15% (vs. 12% in fall 2021) of faculty/staff is diverse in fall 2022.**

Measurement of this goal will be challenging as culture is difficult to quantify. Creating a culture of equity is difficult without representation (14% of College faculty are people of color). Work in this area is being done more organically by faculty and staff, and not relying solely on the efforts of our Chief Diversity Officer.

Trustees discussed the use of student satisfactory surveys. Students dislike surveys and this is evident in their responses. The College has paused on some surveying while a mandatory climate survey is anticipated from the Department of Higher Education in the next year.

School spirit, and its noted absence by a student during the Student Affairs Committee meeting, were discussed. The College's student population represents the highest percentage of students accessing mental health services, and a large population who rely on the resources offered by the College. Student thoughts are not on MCLA, they are focused on themselves and managing through the day-to-day. Athletic teams that have losing records also contribute to decreased school spirit. Increased attention and clear expectations have been communicated with coaches and staff around athletics and winning records. Effort also has to be given to how we communicate and share prideful things with students.

Trustee Reilly speculated on the role of parents and educators, and a perceived shift of schools becoming more responsible for moral issues that students face.

Trustee Chesloff will steward the equity goal.

**6. Hire a nursing program administrator to research the need for a nursing program in the region and launch a nursing major, if indicated.**

President Birge provided an update relative to this goal. An associate dean of nursing has been hired and will join the College on February 1, 2022. The candidate selected has launched two programs at other institutions, is familiar with BORN (Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing), and knows the standards for accreditation.

There is some hesitation on campus around the development of a nursing program in part due to the salaries that nursing faculty will receive and the cost of the program. Support of the faculty is important to the success of a nursing program at the College and faculty will be involved in the analysis of what the need is for a nursing program.

Curriculum for the nursing program will be developed with a goal of delivering to BORN to allow a launch of the program in fall 2023.

The status of Berkshire Community College's nursing program was discussed. BCC's program is fully accredited for an associate degree in nursing. A partnership with BCC was considered, but they do not have the student numbers to feed MCLA because of their partnerships with four other institutions. A partnership with BCC will be pursued as the College develops this program.

A partnership with C. H. McCann Technical School will also be considered with their post-secondary LPN program. McCann's program currently uses facilities at the Berkshire Health Systems (BHS) North complex and will likely share simulation labs with the College. As well, the College will pursue the launch of an LPN program with MASSHire.

The nursing program as proposed will be attractive to prospective students for a number of reasons. The College has an existing relationship with BHS as a result of its radiological program, and BHS pays a percentage of student loans for each year the student works with BHS in radiology. BHS has proposed to do the same with a nursing program. In addition, a donor has been identified who will pay \$5K for 10 of the first cohort students enrolled in the College's nursing program. It is likely that each of the 25 first cohort students will received a \$5K scholarship based on donor interest in a nursing program.

President Birge also noted that the campaign includes \$3MM to cover the start-up costs of a nursing program, and that the associate dean's salary will be paid by donors as it is anticipated the Foundation will have more than a million dollars earmarked for the nursing program.

Trustee Burdick will steward the nursing program goal.

**7. Work with VP of Student Affairs and CDO to determine practices and strategies to enhance safe social and academic spaces for students.**

Students who speak about safe space are not referring to spaces free of criminal activity, they mean spaces that are safe emotional`ly and psychologically. Measuring of this goal will be challenging and will be reliant on the expertise of VP Smith and CDO MacDonald-Dennis.

Trustee Chesloff with steward the safe social and academic spaces goal.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m. by Chair Boodram.