



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
January 25, 2023  
87 Blackinton St, North Adams  
MS Teams Audio/Video**

**Committee members in attendance:**

Frederick Keator, Committee Chair\*  
Brenda Burdick, Board Chair\*  
Jean Clarke-Mitchell

**Absent:**

Robert Reilly

**Others present:**

James F. Birge, President  
Richard Glejzer, Vice President, Academic Affairs  
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk

\*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 Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of January 25, 2023, with Committee Chair Keator presiding was called to order at 8:49 a.m.

**Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program**

On January 11, 2023, the Board of Registration in Nursing (BORN) gave conditional approval for MCLA's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). BORN's approval is subject to the Department of Higher Education's (DHE) approval which is currently in process.

During the concurrent BORN and DHE approval processes, the DHE had a public comment period. At that time, the Berkshire Community College (BCC) submitted a letter expressing concerns with how MCLA's proposed program would impact BCC's program and student enrollment. MCLA responded to that letter as allowed in the DHE process. This letter was unexpectedly copied to BORN and interrupted their process as this type of letter was unprecedented. This series of events led the DHE and BORN to reexamine their processes and agree upon how they will handle other public institution applications to the two organizations.

MCLA's nursing program proposal is scheduled to be on the agenda for the MA Board of Higher Education's (BHE) February 14, 2023 meeting agenda. The DHE has drafted a recommendation to the BHE to "fast track" the second phase, which would mean that DHE staff would make the final determination after receiving the necessary peer program evaluations. If the program is approved in this fashion, it is anticipated that final approval by the Commissioner of Higher Education would be received in early April. With final approval, the College's goal is to confirm the program status with prospective pre-nursing students who will begin at MCLA in the fall 2023

Committee members discussed the College's relationship with BCC. President Birge noted that the relationship with President Kennedy has always been good, and feels their concern stems from potential loss of faculty and/or students.

The nursing student demographics of the two institutions were discussed. MCLA's students are typically between 18 and 20 years of age, where BCC's are 33-40 years of age (based on data that was publicly available.) Students attending BCC who wish to earn a BSN must leave Berkshire County for this education. MCLA's goal is to retain these students in the county to remain and be employed with healthcare partners in the region. As well, administration will continue to work with BCC to establish a partnership for nursing programs.

In response to questions from the committee regarding the two institutions' nursing programs, it was highlighted that MCLA's intent has been to offer differing program from BCC in order to strengthen the offerings of both institutions. The first step in partnering with BCC is to address the associate to bachelor degree transfer program.

It is anticipated that the Board of Higher Education (BHE) will approve the first phase of MCLA's BSN program application at their February 14, 2023 meeting and "fast track" the second phase, which would mean that DHE staff would make the final determination after receiving the necessary peer program evaluations. MCLA has secured peer evaluations that will be submitted to the DHE after the BHE approval on the 14th. The College's goal remains to have final approval by early March and confirm the program status with prospective pre-nursing students who will begin at MCLA in the fall 2023

### **Academic Advising and Support**

As part of the reorganization of academic support services that rolled out in the fall, Academic Affairs assigned four faculty to work with the 40 incoming undeclared students in the Academic Advising and Support office. The goal was to provide more concentrated academic advising and coaching to students who were at a greater retention risk. In addition, faculty worked closely with students who received midterm warnings and are currently supporting incoming transfer students who enrolled for the spring semester. The initial feedback received has been very positive and meaningful results are expected in both retention and graduation rates.

Early in the fall, MCLA was approached by an anonymous foundation looking to support our efforts to retain and graduate our most at-risk students – first generation, Pell eligible, students of color.

MCLA sought support for two options: one asking for funding to cover the cost to support all students entering MCLA with less than a 3.0 high school GPA; and another that supported every entering first-year student. This anonymous foundation selected the first model which will serve an additional 80 students and require between 13-15 faculty, each of whom would receive two course releases for their work across the year.

This foundation will also fund MCLA's implementation of the EAB Navigate software system that was funded under our recently completed Title III grant, adding an additional advising module that was out of reach without additional funding. In total, the foundation is supporting our efforts in student success with \$350,000 for the coming year.

Committee members further discussed the student population to be served by this program funding and if there are requirements for students with a 3.0 GPA to participate in the enhanced advising and support. Students are not able to opt-out of this advising arrangement. Students who do not meet the GPA guidelines of this program, but may still have difficulty transitioning to college, will be captured for advising through existing systems and programs to address student success.

### **Academic Program Reviews**

After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Academic Affairs resumed the New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE) required review process to evaluate academic programs on a seven-year cycle. The review process begins with a program self-study completed by the department that reflects on enrollment data and program assessments while also documenting recent changes and ongoing program development. Outside evaluators are vetted by Academic Affairs and two are selected to be on campus to meet with department leadership, faculty and students, and tour the relevant instructional and research spaces. Four programs are undergoing program reviews this year: Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics completed self-studies and evaluator visits in the fall, and Computer Science has completed the self-study with evaluation visit to follow later this spring.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting was adjourned at 9:27 a.m.