



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of January 26, 2023
87 Blackinton St, North Adams
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Mohan Boodram, Chair*
Brenda Burdick, Chair of the Board of Trustees*
Kathleen Therrien*

Others in Attendance

James Birge, President
Gina Puc, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives
Lisa Lescarbeau, Clerk
Bernadette Alden, Director of Marketing and Communications
Jana Boyer, Director of Enrollment Operations
Riley Elliott, Admissions Counselor and M.Ed. Student
Bonnie Howland, Director of Student Financial Services
Brigid Lawler, Executive Director of Enrollment Management
Waqas Mirza, Registrar

*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 Enrollment Management Committee of the Board of Trustees of January 26, 2023 with Committee Chair Boodram presiding was called to order at 8:31 a.m.

Welcome Brigid Lawler and Waqas Mirza

VP Puc began with introductions of newly hired Executive Director of Enrollment, Brigid Lawler, and Registrar, Waqas Mirza. Each spoke about their background and experience in higher education. Trustees each introduced themselves to Ms. Lawler and Mr. Mirza. VP Puc also introduced Ms. Riley Elliott who is an Admissions Counselor, but is attending this meeting to fulfill an obligation needed to complete work toward her master's degree.

Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Enrollment

Director Boyer reviewed upcoming accepted student days, scholarship overnights, preview days and an athletic preview day, all of which are scheduled throughout February, March and April. Specific dates are available on the College's website.

VP Puc noted that these dates are earlier than prior years and are driven by the need to align with the College's earlier acceptance dates.

Director Boyer reviewed the fall 2023 enrollment trends. There has been a 10% increase in first year applicants with a notable increase from outside of Massachusetts. Transfer applicants have increased by 50%. Majors experiencing an increase in applicants include art, biology, health sciences, math, performing arts and psychology. These stats are encouraging enrollment data.

In response to a question regarding transfer students, it was noted that current transfers are mainly from Berkshire Community College (MA) and Hudson Valley Community College (NY).

Current markers throughout the cycle project a healthier recruitment cycle and is indicative of the impact of in-person, face-to-face contact with prospective students, which was lacking during the pandemic.

Relative to majors experiencing increases in applications, it was noted that computer science experienced a bump in last year's enrollment cycle. Management will monitor growth in the recently launched data science minor and provide that information in future meetings.

Student Financial Services Awarding Timeline

Director Howland provided an update on student financial aid awarding for AY24 and FASFA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) completion. Awarding of student aid began in December 2022 and continues on a rolling basis in alignment with student acceptance and as FASFA forms are completed.

FASFA filing rate in Massachusetts is up overall by 5% and is a positive indicator for higher education institutions. To the contrary, only 12.9% of high school seniors in Massachusetts have filed a FASFA application, which is a 3% decrease from the same time last year.

VP Puc stated that a team from MCLA will go on the road for local financial aid events in conjunction with staff from Berkshire Community College and Williams College. These events are an effort to assist families and students in the completion of their FASFA filing. This program is of greatest assistance to families with first generation students who are unfamiliar with the complicated FASFA filing process.

Committee members discussed the Chair of the Board of Higher Education's proposal for what the State should do with the Fair Share tax revenue. His plan would award \$2,000 to every PELL eligible students and \$1,000 to all those with moderate need. The budgeted use of these funds at the State level will not likely be known until this summer, with a first look at a draft of the budget in February.

Director Howland commented on the MassGrant Plus program and its expansion to state colleges and universities. These funds are provided as an allocation to MCLA and are used to fill the gaps in student financial aid. Because of the timing of allocation of these funds, it is difficult for the College to plan and use these monies, some of which are retained to aid students in emergency situations.

Marketing Video Projects

Director Alden provided an update on the College's marketing activities, specifically video promotions. Efforts are focused on maintaining student engagement with the College and is done mainly through social media channels such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. Video continues to be the most popular way to reach a majority of the College's target audience.

Work has begun on a series of short films – 60 seconds – to highlight departments through fun and interesting questions, for example: "Can my therapist read my mind?" Departments slated for filming at this time are psychology, radiological technology, and health sciences.

Other video work underway includes vibe videos to encourage the audience to engage, innovate and explore the College. These videos will be different lengths and distributed across various social media platforms. Interview videos will highlight MCLA academic programs and include students and faculty with a focus on connections. Departments to be featured in the interview videos at this time are business, health sciences/biology and English.

As well, an athletic hype video is in the planning stages with filming to begin with the basketball program in February.

For print media, advertising will begin on the chair lifts at Bousquet Mountain in Pittsfield, MA. There are six different ads to be placed on the backs of six chairs. Bousquet Mountain was selected as they were the only ski resort willing to allow this type of advertising. Bousquet is attractive to the College as it has undergone considerable renovations and has become a popular destination in the Berkshires.

Academic Policies

Registrar Mirza presented on the College's academic standing policy and process. His focus is on reducing the number of academic warnings and student suspensions, improving outreach to students in the process, and reducing the number of students in poor academic standing.

Advanced warnings to at-risk students will be accompanied by required advising meetings and success plans. Efforts will focus on requiring students to complete their program within 150% the published length of their academic program to better align with federal regulations.

Work will be done to identify indicators to detect at-risk students earlier to offer additional support. Academic suspensions will only be issued at the end of the spring semester. Registration holds and reporting will be utilized to better enforce probation and suspension requirements and committee recommendations. This will provide students with better clarity to know what they need to do to return to good academic standing. Options are being explored for students on suspension to take MCLA courses as a non-matriculated student to raise the student's GPA.

VP Puc provided the committee information relative to a recently received anonymous donation of \$350k to be received over a few fiscal years. These funds will be used for intentional and intrusive advising for students at risk and those with a GPA of 3.0 or lower. The donation will support faculty advising fellows

who will have a course release to work with students. These funds will also provide additional software modules in EAB navigate, a case management and early intervention software package utilized by the College. The foundation will also assign higher education professionals as a resource to the College.

Nursing Program Update

VP Puc provided an update on the College's Nursing program, which is on the agenda for the February 6 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Higher Education with a motion to fast track the program through the Department of Higher Education to final approval. If the program is approved at the BHE meeting on February 6, it will be placed in the consent agenda for the BHE meeting on February 14.

Operational work to be done for the Nursing program includes building the program in the College's Banner application and develop needed codes for the courses. Students will be admitted into a pre-nursing program with official work in the nursing major to begin at the end of the student's second year.

As soon as program approval is received, Communications staff are prepared to issue public announcements, officially launch the program and begin recruitment efforts. The first-year goal is to enroll 35 students in the initial cohort in fall 2023.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.