

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Audio/Video MS Teams

MINUTES
October 15, 2026

Members in Attendance via Teams

Diana Rogers-Adkinson
Josh Mendel
Tom Bernard
Jeanette Smith
Luke Morrill
Ashleigh Hala
Brenda Burdick
Laura Mooney
Jean Clarke-Mitchell
Buffy Lord
Robert Campbell
Starly D'Angelo
Marissa Parker

1. Call to Order

Chair Clarke-Mitchell called the meeting of the Board of Trustees Student Affairs Committee to order at 8:30 a.m.

As permitted by executive order of the Governor of Massachusetts and in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30 and Chapter 15A, Section 9, the meeting was conducted with a quorum present in person and via audio/video conference.

2. Wellness Team and Wellness Programming

Vice President Jeannette Smith presented on the wellness team and wellness programming. This year counseling services will have their first social work graduate student in the spring semester.

Vice President Smith spoke about the strategic plan for the Student Affairs division and how that impacted the wellness department. Starting in Fall of 2021 the Student Affairs Division selected 5 goals to work on and out of that one of those goals focused solely on Wellness. This led to the hiring of Ashleigh Hala.

The wellness team focused on the 8 dimensions of Wellness and in 2022 MCLA became a JED campus. The SAMSAH Grant funded that endeavor. JED gave us 8 recommendations, which were shared with the committee.

In winter 2023 the Healthy Minds survey was conducted to gauge how our students are doing, we received 115 responses. In winter 2026 we conducted the survey again, we had fewer responses, only 56. We received a final report from JED that has 5 recommendations.

One of the ways we are operationalizing those recommendations is by increasing the Wellness fee. From FY '25 to FY '26 we saw a 2% increase in students seen for therapy. In health services from FY '25 to FY '26 we saw a decrease in the number of students seen in the office. The Care Team numbers have gone up from AY 24/25 to AY 25/26 (from 100 to 401). There could be several contributing factors for this. The top concern over both years is class attendance. Disengagement is the top factor contributing to a student's decline in their academic journey. This year we will be diving deeper into the data to examine student retention vs student wellness.

3. What is the cost of being well?

The wellness fee was increased from \$50 to \$125 per semester, for FY '27: \$169,293.

Operation budget: annual allocation, day-to-day needs, union requirements and employee benefits. Salaries: Full-time employees, part-time employees, GAs, students. FY '27 total: \$687,482.

Vice President Smith shared how we calculate the cost. Trustee Burdick encouraged her to take into account the cost of the entire campus and what the cost of educating them is, not just the students served.

Vice President Smith spoke about revenue from retention. If we had 56 out of state commuter students, their hypothetical retention revenue would be \$1,214,808. If we had 60 out of state residential students, their hypothetical retention revenue would be \$ 2,302,260.

The indirect cost is harder to calculate. There is reduced public health, classroom disruptions, harmful behaviors, engagement, attitudes, etc.

15% reduction this year's budget of \$122,506. Mitigations include student employment funding source shift to work study, SAMHSA grant funding, cut Uwill contract, consolidated hours of contracted, part-time staff.

Wellness has a strong team with a strong leader in Ashleigh Hala. Ashleigh has strong partnerships with colleagues across campus and backing from the rest of the Student Affairs leadership team.

Vice President Smith finished her presentation and Chair Clarke-Mitchell asked for questions.

Trustee Benard asked how the availability of clinicians in the area impacts the availability of referrals in the community. Ashleigh said that very few students require long term work, most are

having issues that only require 4-6 sessions. Typically, when students seek referrals it's for neurological testing (ADHD, etc.). Ashleigh spoke to the strong relationships her team has with the North Adams community, so they are able to call and get a student on an outside clinician's caseload.

Trustee Benard asked how students are doing with issues in the news that may be traumatizing. Vice President Smith stated that it's constantly changing, particularly with social media and how much access students have to the news. She feels that they compartmentalize and sometimes are not always aware because they are so focused on their own pressing issues. President Rogers-Adkinson stated that Cabinet is very aware of how much our students are impacted by the news cycles and they collectively decided to not put out a statement around the events at Cornell because they felt it would re-traumatize our students.

Chair Clarke-Mitchell acknowledged that trauma is a real thing and encourages the college to remind the students to continue to report and to not be ashamed. Ashleigh echoed what Chair Clarke-Mitchell said and added that they've been doing good work with the high-risk students.

Chair Clarke-Mitchell encouraged Ashleigh Hala and team to continue to think of ways to engage with mental health wellness. Jeannette assured her that it is happening in multiple spaces and in multiple ways on campus. Ashleigh also included that they are launching their first ever survivor support group and they had to alter the time because they had 10 students sign up.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Clarke-Mitchell adjourned the meeting at **9:24 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,
Marissa Parker