



Addendum No. 3
to
Brand Renewal and Influence Campaign - Request for Proposals

RFP 2026-BRNDRN

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA)
North Adams, MA

4/13/2026

This Addendum forms a part of RFP 2026-BRNDRN documents and modifies the original dated March 23, 2026, as noted below. Bidders must acknowledge receipt of this Addendum within their sealed proposal. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.

This Addendum is comprised of pages 1 through 5.

Responses to Questions

1. After bids are submitted, what does the remaining consideration timeline look like? Can you provide a finalists selection date, interview period, and contract award date?

We are unable to provide a timetable. The incoming president, who will be announced in the coming weeks will determine this.

2. Do you have budget already allocated for this contract (not the ensuing brand activation). If so, can you share the range? If not, how long is the allocation process expected to take?

We do not have a budget allocated yet.

3. Are you currently engaged with an agency for other projects? Is that agency participating in this RFP?

Yes. Some of our partner agencies are bidding on this project.

4. Can you disclose the name of your market research partner?

ADV Market Research

5. Are there defined KPIs tied to enrollment that this brand initiative must directly influence (e.g., application volume, yield rate, program-level enrollment), and how are these currently tracked?

The strategic plan enrollment goals are closely tied to this initiative.

6. How does MCLA currently measure brand lift and perception over time? Are there existing benchmarks for brand awareness, consideration, and preference?

Overall organic reach building, measuring ad performance against awareness growth in certain targeted geographic, income, and age group bands.

7. Can you share any existing persona frameworks developed by your research partner, and to what extent are these tied to behavioral data versus attitudinal segmentation?

We will do this once a firm is hired.

8. How are prospective student journeys currently mapped from initial awareness through enrollment, and where are the largest known drop-off points?

Our team is small, and we currently do not map accordingly. This is a growth area for us as we do not have the internal staff to properly support this type of work.

9. What role do program pages play in conversion, and do you have performance benchmarks (traffic, engagement, conversion rate) by program type?

We track program engagement closely and while we do market the institution as a whole, we closely watch top performing programs to understand overall marketplace need and growth on a national and global scale.

10. How does MCLA currently approach search visibility (SEO), and are there known gaps in discoverability for high-intent academic program queries?

We are extremely focused on SEO and work on this daily to improve search outcomes.

11. How does MCLA currently measure prospective student discovery across AI-driven platforms (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Google AI), and is there any baseline visibility or attribution data available?

We work with an SEO agency who partners with us to discover and understand our AI visibility.

12. How should success be defined for “AI-powered search and digital user experience” within this engagement?

We need to ensure that any new brand messaging and narratives translate to AI and quickly display results about popular AI search topics, so we stay front of mind and at the top of answers being produced on these platforms around certain questions where we know our brand’s narrative is successfully aligned.

13. What level of fidelity is expected for sample creative (directional vs. launch-ready)?

Launch ready as we do not have an internal team to support this type of work.

14. For recruitment materials, should we plan for full production or scalable templates?

A library of scalable templates to customize is suitable.

15. What level of production (video, photography) is expected now vs. future phases?

We have built our photography and video library over the past year, since it was outdated. We will need new production in the photography space. We do have a talented photographer in the region, Tricia McCormack, who does two large shots on campus each year. We also have a contracted photographer on staff for smaller needs throughout the year. We can utilize your photographer, but we would expect our photographers to be educated in stylistic direction and execution so the same look and feel can be carried forward. If preferred, we can utilize our photographers and have you train them at the onset. Videography needs are limited, and not a critical need.

16. How should digital integration recommendations be delivered (frameworks, UX concepts, channel playbooks)?

Complete scope with playbooks for ease of implementation considering the size of our team.

17. How will responsibilities be shared with the research partner, particularly for message testing?

See answer below to understand capacity limitations.

18. What internal resources are available to support production?

Marketing is a new team reporting to the provost, with three members: the CMO, who works 4 days/30 hours; a web communications manager; and a marketing manager who handles social media and some junior graphic design needs. We understand that we do not have the human resources currently available to implement the volume of work that needs to be accomplished, so we will rely heavily on our partner to support implementation.

19. Are there existing brand governance structures to build upon?

Yes. In 2019 we went through a brand project and there are some governances around that. Other must be built.

20. Who are the ultimate decision-makers for brand selection?

The incoming president (to be named), the CMO, and a select group from leadership.

21. Is there openness to evolving the logo, or should we focus on system-level updates?

This has not been discussed, but there may not be an appetite to adapt the logo or seal.

22. What key perception challenges must the brand address?

MCLA is a square peg in a round hole. We're public, affordable. We are also the state's liberal arts college, intentionally smaller, more residential. We pull more students from outside Massachusetts than any other public university except UMass Amherst. While we compete with many of the regional publics, we also compete with local private liberal arts and small institutions, some of which are quite prestigious. The name and mascot change have fragmented our brand recognition. We also added several non-liberal arts majors, such as Rad Tech and Nursing, which are growing, but not traditional liberal arts programs. Our student body shifted as we became MCLA (formerly North Adams State College), and the student culture has changed. (Example: Greek Life is no longer a student activity.) We are in a bit of an identity crisis and need to feel secure that the brand we adopt clearly states who we are, who we once were, and what our differentiating value to the world is.

23. Where does MCLA currently blend in vs. stand apart?

Please see response directly above.

24. Where is their appetite for bold creative vs. need for continuity?

Unsure, but we have taken steps in recent months to be bold and that has worked for our benefit.

25. Would MCLA facilitate the coordination and organization of the focus groups to test brand platforms?

When we can, we will. We may need the firm to help us with some outside groups if needed but internal groups to test is something we can support.

26. Are we developing a fully realized campaign platform or a strategic foundation for internal execution?

Fully realized campaign.

27. Should media strategy and channel planning be included or remain high level?

Currently, media is housed in a different area. We can hold off on this for now.

28. In the RFP, you mention advertising campaign activation of the new brand. Are you currently engaging in any paid media or comprehensive paid campaigns? If so, are you working with an external vendor for these efforts and what channels/placements are you active on?

We are currently working with a paid media vendor on a comprehensive campaign.

29. Which channels currently drive the highest engagement and conversion among prospective students (website, social, email, events, etc.)?

Social media is the leading tool for applications, followed by athletics, and a two-way tie between our search campaign and college fairs.

30. Is there a target budget range to guide scope and activation planning?

None at this time.

31. If prioritization is required, how should we sequence deliverables?

We can outline that at the point of contract refinement.