



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Thursday, December 11, 2025
Murdock Hall Room 208 and TEAMS Video/Audio

MINUTES

For recording purposes only, there was a Board Development Session in advance of the meeting. WittKieffer presented on the upcoming Presidential Search process.

Trustees in attendance:

Allie Bayer	Thomas Bernard	Brenda Burdick
Jean Clarke- Mitchell	Ben Downing*	W.E. David Halbert*
Yina Moore*	Darlene Rodowicz	Yvonne Spicer

MCLA Staff in attendance:

James F. Birge	President
Bernadette Alden	Director of Marketing and Communications
Joseph DaSilva	Vice President for Administration & Finance
Richard Glejzer	Provost
Kelli Kozak	Clerk
Joshua Mendel	Chief of Staff
Jeannette Smith	Vice President of Student of Affairs
Robert Ziomek	Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Guests in attendance: Chris Pelland and Rob Ziegel* – Withum Associates

*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 Board of Trustees of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on December 11, 2025 with Chair Buffy Lord presiding.

Chair Lord called the meeting to order at 5:30p.m.

Consent Agenda

Chair Lord noted the first order of business is the consent agenda, which includes minutes of prior meetings as listed, the Foundation Report as provided in the campus update, and monthly financial reports from the Fiscal Affairs Committee meeting.

The clerk's draft of the minutes from the last meetings listed on the agenda as item 1a and other reports listed as item 1b were sent in advance.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote with Trustee Downing not responding, it was :

VOTED: To approve the consent agenda

- a. Minutes for Review & Action
 - i. Board of Trustees – October 30, 2025
 - ii. Executive Committee of the Board
 1. December 4, 2025
 2. Approve release of Executive Session – August 21, 2025
 - iii. Student Affairs Committee – November 13, 2025
 - iv. Academic Affairs – November 25, 2025
 - v. Enrollment Management Committee – November 19, 2025
- b. For Information
 - i. MCLA Foundation Report
 1. (See Advancement Report in Campus Update)
 - ii. Financial Statements

Fiscal Update - Trustee Rodowicz then presented the Report out of Fiscal Affairs Committee:

1. VP DaSilva presented the FY26 Actual Budget through Oct 31st revealing a revenue shortfall of \$1.861M that is mainly from the effects of lower enrollment for fall semester, timing and no funding formula of \$615,606 on State Revenue, TRIO Grant, reduction in Mass Grant plus of \$255K, timing on reimbursement from the Foundation, and positive variance in Interest. Total Expenses were under budget by \$831,392. Q1 is currently showing a Net Revenue loss of \$1M. The staff continues to work diligently to ensure that by the end of the fiscal year, the budget will have a positive balance.
2. VP DaSilva presented the FY26 Forecast Budget projection revealing the effects of lower enrollment for both fall and spring semesters, and projected savings in expense items with a projection of \$1M net revenue loss at year end. The staff continues to work diligently looking at expenses to ensure that by the end of the fiscal year, the budget will have a positive balance.
3. VP DaSilva presented the “277 Ashland Street Project” – Campus Safety and Shipping/Receiving Buildings. In June 2023, due to the damage from rainfall and condition of the building to repair, the decision was made to permanently close the building and relocate both operations. Since the building and parcel of land were owned by the Foundation, initial plans were for the Foundation to mortgage the construction of a new structure, but the DCAMM Leasing Dept. would only grant a 10-year lease, and the local lending institution for the Foundation needed a 20-year lease. The new plan is for the Foundation to gift the parcel of land to the Commonwealth and the College to seek external funding through the MSCBA. Estimated construction cost from the architect is due by the end of January.
4. VP DaSilva presented the performance of the two investment portfolios the college has through Oct 31st:
 - a. Wells Fargo (Francis Investments) is \$13.8M from a \$10M initial investment.
 - b. LPL Financial (Adams Community Investments) is \$6.812M from a \$6M initial investment.

President Birge discussed the Bright Act Bill with \$3.1 billion moving forward but not confirmed yet. Senate action is anticipated next spring. We have discussed plans to utilize the funds for music lab upgrades in Church Street Center and also for a full renovation of Mark Hopkins if

approved. President Birge discussed the NACUBO consultant - NACUBO will discuss best practices for managing board reserve funds. There was discussion on the building of the new public safety and shipping facility.

Academic Affairs Committee - Trustee Spicer then presented the report from the Academic Affairs Committee:

She noted that academic program review happens regularly. Faculty incentive awards and sabbatical approvals were discussed. Faculty incentive awards are impressive and valuable to the growth opportunities of the College. Chair Spicer noted several awardees from faculty. The Business department has just completed a 5-year review process as well.

Chair Spicer noted the Committee had approved the Sabbatical Requests for Board action and requested the Board vote on the Sabbaticals as presented in the materials. There was discussion that every six years by contract faculty can take a sabbatical unless there are extenuating circumstances. The provost reviews this plan and its impacts including full year at half pay or one semester for full pay. that the scholarship research comes back and the faculty presents on it as well. There is not a single event for presenting sabbatical research but it is disseminated back. There was discussion of a voluntary board presentation. President Birge noted that we have a donor who has supported faculty development.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was:

VOTED: To approve the following Sabbatical Proposals:

- i. Dr. Carolyn Dehner Professor of Chemistry, Spring 2027
- ii. Dr. Lisa Donovan Professor of Arts Management, AY 2026-2027
- iii. Dr. David Eve, Professor of Computer Science, Spring 2027
- iv. Dr. Zachary Finch, Professor of English, Spring 2027
- v. Dr. Whitney Gecker Assistant Professor of Sociology, AY 2026-2027
- vi. Dr. Paul Nnodim, Professor of Philosophy, Fall 2026
- vii. Dr. Jenna Sciuto, Professor of English, AY 2026-2027
- viii. Dr. Clio Stearns, Associate Professor of Education, Fall 2026
- ix. Dr. Sara Steele, Associate Professor of Psychology, Fall 2026
- x. Dr. J. Antonio Templanza, Assistant Professor of English, AY 2026-2027

President's Report President Birge then provided his update.

- a. Lieutenant Governor Driscoll visited campus last month regarding Bright Bill funding. She toured mark Hopkins and met student trustee Bayer. She also posted to her social media about trustee Bayer and her visit here.
- b. NECHE accreditor – Our NECHE review was for a 10 year accreditation and we met all standards, NECHE has implemented financial monitoring for private institutions, and have also required financial information reporting that we will provide.
- c. Applications are at a three-year high, although it is early in process, Admissions is ahead year over year for deposits as well.
- d. Budget pressure – after we had awarded financial aid, the state budget changed, and MASSGrant plus funding was reduced. We determined to not have this impact students but would make this up from our own budget. The DHE has

approved our Strategic Plan and we are rolling out the initiatives. It is an active document and we are moving forward.

- e. Board Retreat Date Change – February 6, 2025, 9-3 location TBD,
 - i. Agenda will include conversation with NACUBO regarding board reserves funding and priority, a Student Affairs deep dive rescheduled from last year, a brief Search update and a Delegation panel likely with Vince from COP
- f. Bright bill – Announced at \$3.1 billion dollars, this will also assist with deferred maintenance, music studios for lab modernization and major project of Mark Hopkins renovation if we receive the funding we are requesting.
- g. Pathways campaign update
 - i. \$30 million goal seems reasonable and attainable by campaign end,
 - ii. \$425,000 for Trailblazer center
 - iii. \$50,000 student support – anonymous donor.
 - iv. \$27 million by January 1
 - v. Endowment above \$20 million

There was discussion with the Board of prioritization of projects for Bright act funds, there will be a competitive proposals including lab modernization and mark Hopkins hall is our greatest need. There will be a process for dcamm to apply for funds. We made the argument that the music labs are labs even though they aren't science. We also had assistance from Goody Clancy to develop our strategic facilities plan. Mark Hopkins and Venable are the two potential areas for upgrade. We see a favorable language in the bill regarding institutional equity between the publics as well as geographic diversity of awards.

Chairperson's Report - Chair Lord then provided the Chair's update.

Even though President Birge is retiring, he wants to have this guidance to complete his tenure. This will also help the next President.

- a) President's Performance Goals - FY2026
 - i) Implement Strategic Plan
 - ii) Sustain Enrollment Growth
 - iii) Invest in campus facilities
 - iv) Enhance Communications and Visibility
 - v) Complete Pathways Campaign

There will not likely be a presidential evaluation this year as there is no need for it for future planning.

- b) Presidential Search Process Update: The Committee is making good progress with support from our Consultant WittKieffer. Mr. Duyck has been on campus this week and has met faculty, staff and students as well as executive staff. The search website will be updated tomorrow.

The Chair noted a Holiday Reception to follow Board meeting honoring former Trustees across the hall in 218. All are welcome to join us.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, following a roll-call vote, it was voted:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 6:42p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Kozak

Clerk