



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

Thursday, February 12, 2026 | 5:30 p.m.  
Murdock Hall Room 208 and Video/Audio Conferencing

### **MINUTES**

For recording purposes only there was a board development session at 4:30 provided by Tony Napolitano of the Trombley-Westall Trailblazer Center/Career Services, and student interns.

**TRUSTEES PRESENT:** A. Bayer, T. Bernard, J. Clarke-Mitchell\* B. Downing\*, D. Halbert\*, B. Lord, Y. Moore\*, D. Rodowicz, Y. Spicer\*

**ABSENT:** B. Burdick

#### **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
Robert Ziomek	Vice President for Institutional Advancement
Jason Canales, Patrick Connelly, Anthony Napolitano, Lynn WhiteCloud	

Guests: Sean LeBlanc, Shaun Heimann

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 February 12, 2026 with Chair Buffy Lord presiding.

Chair Lord called the meeting to order at 5:32p.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, it was:

**VOTED:** To approve the consent agenda

- a. Minutes for Approval
  - i. Board of Trustees Minutes - December 11, 2025
  - ii. Academic Affairs Committee – February 3, 2026
  - iii. Student Affairs Committee - January 29, 2026
  - iv. Enrollment Management Committee - January 28, 2026
  - v. Fiscal Affairs Committee - February 4, 2026
  
- b. For Information
  - i. MCLA Foundation Report (See Advancement Report in Campus Update)
  - ii. Financial Statements

### **Investment Update**

### **LPL Financial Reps**

Shaun Heimann – First Vice President, Francis Investment Consulting Group and Sean LeBlanc – Vice President, Adams Community Investment Services presented on their respective investment portfolios they manage for the college. Twice annually, the Fiscal Affairs and full Board of Trustees receive investment strategy and policy updates (originally implemented in 2023) from both advisors.

Mr. Heimann manages \$13.9M, the College’s initial investment was \$10M. Following investment policy guidelines the funds are allocated approximately 69.8% equities, 26% fixed income/bonds, and 4% cash alternatives Year to date return is 14.69%.

Mr. LeBlanc manages \$6.8M, allocated across (1) individual U.S. Treasuries, (2) a money market, and (3) a U.S. Government Securities money market fund. He has a more conservative investment mandate from the college so smaller returns than the funds that Mr. Heimann manages. They are laddered so that a Treasury matures on the 15th of each month; coupons and maturities are reinvested. Interest over the next 12 months is projected at ~\$240k. Average return since inception (Dec. 2022) is 3.95%.

Sean LeBlanc left the meeting.

### **Fiscal Affairs Committee Meeting Update**

Trustee Rodowicz then presented the report from the Fiscal Affairs Committee.

Trustee Rodowicz noted that the Trustees will be working on investment and reserve policy review in the coming months.

At the committee meeting, VP DaSilva presented the FY26 Actual Budget through Dec 31st revealing a revenue shortfall of \$2M that is mainly from the effects of lower enrollment for fall and spring semesters,

timing and no funding formula of \$615,606 on State Revenue, TRIO Grant, reduction in Mass Grant plus of \$255K, and positive variance in Interest. Total Expenses were slightly over budget by \$83K. Q2 is currently showing a Net Revenue loss of \$2.1M. The staff continues to work diligently to ensure that by the end of the fiscal year, the budget will have a positive balance.

VP DaSilva presented the FY26 Forecast Budget projection revealing the effects of lower enrollment for both fall and spring semesters, and projected overage in expense items with a projection of \$1.1M net revenue loss at year end. The staff continues to work diligently looking at expenses. The Committee also reviewed one time vs. ongoing costs.

VP DaSilva also presented on the NECHE Financial Ratios. With the sudden shutdown of Mount Ida College in 2018, the DHE directed NECHE to conduct financial health screenings of all public institutions from 2019-2025. Data was due to NECHE on January 15. The screening emphasizes four ratios with benchmark, warning, and red-flag thresholds – Primary Reserve and Viability Ratios for Long Term, and Net Operating Revenue and Return on Net Position Ratios for Short Term. The nine State Universities (via the Council of Presidents) are submitting a joint letter to add context for public institutions, emphasizing Commonwealth backing and structural differences from privates. MCLA’s package included definitions, 2019–2025 trend charts, state appropriation mapping, and FTE versus student net revenue. If multiple red flags appear, NECHE may request a written plan for improvement. Screening will be annual. Leadership expressed cautious optimism while advocating for more appropriate public-sector ratios and noting that full financial audits already occur by law. There was discussion on the NECHE letter noting that we did send it in, however, we noted several areas that impact us in particular as a state institution that makes this an unbalanced ratio metric.

At the Committee, President Birge noted a proposal that includes new locker rooms and adding a video streaming platform at the state-owned, city-operated ice rink used by MCLA’s NCAA hockey programs. This would enhance recruitment, retention, and program quality. Although MCLA does not own the rink, similar models exist at peer State Universities.

- Total Project Cost: \$506,000 (College would advance funds to meet next-season timing).
- Funding Mix: \$150,000 from the MCLA Foundation; \$100,000 from the City via \$20,000/year rental waiver for five years; MCLA net cost: \$336,000 from reserves.

There was discussion that this is a good opportunity to partner with the city and will also assist in recruitment. The Board also noted that this is an equitable spend among the programs. The cost may be mitigated by other potential funders including the state.

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

**VOTED:** To approve an investment of \$506,000 in the ice rink renovations, funded by \$150,000 (Foundation) and \$100,000 (City rental waiver over five years), resulting in an MCLA cost of \$336,000 from reserves in year one and a final cost of \$256,000 to MCLA.

Dr. Mendel introduced Dean Connelly and Mr. Canales as well as noting the involvement of Dean Dehner and Jana Boyer of Admissions. Dr. Mendel noted the many layers and organizations that support and promote the programming. Mr. Canales updated the Board on the 600 community members who have participated in the plan and the 75 currently active implementation committee team members. From those outreached they have gathered over 1,000 data points.

Dean Connelly presented on the Strategic Planning timeline.

He noted that:

- Goal 1 involves our distinctive liberal arts mission with effective positioning for institutional decision making.
  - ADV market research
  - 15 member working group for mission, vision and values
  - Budgeting group supporting enrollment
  - Working on how to leverage financial aid
  - Optimized and updated website and increased social media
  - Developed personalized comms plan for individual students
  -
- Goal 2 is to increase access, belonging, and success for all students as well as additional support for historically underrepresented
  - DEIB council in development
  - Travel and study abroad specialist being hired
  - Spring travel courses
  - Local transportation options for high impact practices
  - 4 new student success positions including support from SUCCESS and TRiO funding
  - Textbook loan and reserve program
  - Professional Development and community engagement

Trustee Downing left the meeting.

- Goal 3 enhances the student voice and experience. We want to match our promises and their expectations building out an experiential transcript
  - Inclusive student leadership definition
  - Equitable student leadership opportunity development
  - Experiential Transcript
  - Strategic facilities plan in development
  - Additional social programming to enhance belonging
  - Refreshing commuter spaces

There was further discussion of overall inclusive planning for students, faculty and staff as well as how to be succinct to best communicate the mission vision and values. There was discussion of the website updates resonating with students as well as accessibility, search engine and AI enhancements. Trustee Bayer noted she finds it more dynamic and interactive. ERI our web consultant will be on campus this week to film more video including in the local community.

The Trustees also discussed the potential positive impacts of Goal 2 on student experience and retention. The Trustees discussed who this plan will support differentiation and value proposition of MCLA.

Mr. Canales also updated the Board on the budget process as the Board previously approved. The group is managing the funds to spend the full allocation for FY 26 in support of the program. It is also being coordinated with the SUCCESS funds from the state budget which also supports these initiatives. Leadership is beginning to work on the FY 27 budget.

## **President's Report**

President Birge

- i. President Birge thanked and noted appreciation for the work of the Strategic Planning teams.
- ii. Governor's FY27 Budget
  1. 2.8% increase in appropriation however it is the lowest of the 9 public institutions. Leadership is working on communications with our delegation in hopes of increasing this funding to the mid-tier average of the , state Us.
  2. He also spoke to our legislators about the Bright act funding for modernization and renovation.
  3. Gallery 51 at approx. \$50,000, Success Funds ~\$685,000 are also included in the Governor's budget
  4. Two areas not funded are the endowment incentive fund (\$555,000) to provide matching support. These are often returned to the budget by the legislature. There are also no internship incentive funds (~\$80,000) in the Governor's budget.
- iii. Campaign update
  1. \$27.5 million as of January 31, unaudited which is a very positive result
  2. Recent - \$240k various scholarship support
  3. On track to meet \$30million goal by June 2026
- iv. Kleefeld Project Update
  - b. Porter Street being prepared for demolition and construction
  - c. Traveling to CA next week to meet with donor reps
  - d. Anticipate fall 2027 opening
- i. THUD funding \$1.2million
  - e. Early Childhood Education Center to both support our education majors experience as well as to be responsive to community needs. This has been a two year process to move forward and the bill recently passed and MCLA was earmarked for \$1.2million to support the establishment of a center. Mark Hopkins Hall renovation is part of this plan.

There was discussion of the coordination of funding and whether one request impacts another. They are separate requests.

## **Chairperson's Report**

Chair Lord

Chair Lord then presented her Chair's update.

- i. Search Update: Over the coming weeks, the search committee's work will be ramping up as we begin the process of evaluating applicants and narrowing the pool. There has been interest from sitting presidents as well as potential first time presidents from a wide range of institutions, including COPLAC institutions, private colleges, and large public colleges. Geographically, there is also interest from around the country and at least one international candidate. The feedback received indicates that our mission is attractive in the current times.
- ii. Chair Lord thanked Trustees for taking time out of their week to attend the Board retreat at the BIC. The presentations from NACUBO on Board reserve management and the deep dive into student affairs were extremely informative. We especially appreciate that the entire Berkshire Legislative Delegation attended, allowing us to discuss the legislative landscape and budget issues openly with those that represent our region.
- iii. Board of Higher Ed Innovation proposals for sub-120 degree between Associates and Bachelors. BHE has approved the regulation at their recent meeting. We are not in support of this initiative.
- iv. Call for Board member nominations – With the resignation of Trustee Hailey we have an open seat on the Board. Please connect with Chair Lord with suggestions.
- v. Reception to follow Board meeting across the hall in Murdock 218. All are welcome to join us.

**With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:34p.m.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Kelli Kozak, Clerk**