



MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees
Friday, April 11, 2025

MINUTES

Trustees Present: M. Boodram, J. Clarke-Mitchell, D. Marshall
Trustees Absent: F. Keator
MCLA Staff present: J. Birge - President, K. Kozak – Secretary of the Board

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 via audio/video conference, the Executive Committee of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts met on April 11, 2025, with Chair Boodram presiding.

Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 8:33a.m.

Budget – President Birge presented on the budget process.

- a. FY 25 – At the last Board meeting the VP of Admin & Finance had reported a \$300k shortfall that we have made up and we should have \$200k surplus due to expense control and state Success funding.
- b. FY 26 – We are in the budgeting process right now, the draft budget is in a deficit position and we will bring it to Fiscal Affairs. We will continue to work on this. It is the preference of leadership not to do job cuts.
- c. Strategic Plan funding – The Board of Higher Ed has not yet approved our plan, it may be best to submit in the summer based on feedback from the BHE. Once it is approved President Birge plans to ask the Board to fund aspects of this plan out of the Board reserve funds. This is separate from our regular operating budget. We do not have a final request yet. There was a question from the Chair of what these expenses may include to which President Birge answered that it may include things like consulting services to advance new programs, or major equipment to meet our programming growth goals. There was further discussion of ongoing funding for strategic initiatives, it is dependent on our budget and the Board could decide to fund the strategic plan from budget surpluses as opposed to reserves. It was also discussed that staff should be prepared to answer how the projected surplus developed and what it includes. President Birge will follow up on any outstanding funding requests that the Board has approved and it will be addressed at Fiscal Affairs.

Board of Trustees Nominees – Chair Boodram asked President Birge to present on the nominees provided by the Public Education Nominating Council (PENC).

- a. John Barrett resigned as of June, replaced by former state Senator Ben Downing
- b. Chair Boodram’s term has ended and his seat will be replaced by Yina Moore, an Adams based business owner and developer
- c. Frederick Keator’s term has ended – Rachel Hailey will come on in his seat, she currently

manages DEI Outdoors, a program focusing on representation in outdoor education and participation.

- d. Frank Reynolds resigned last year – Tom Bernard will fill his seat. Bernard is the Executive Director of the United Way and former Mayor of North Adams, and also has experience in higher ed at MCLA and Smith
- e. Denise Marshall’s alumni appointment seat will be filled by alum David Halbert, active in Boston area politics
- f. Allie Bayer has been elected by the students to fill the student seat. William Garrity has decided not to continue given his personal and school responsibilities.

President Birge will plan to hold a summer retreat for onboarding purposes as well as invite all Trustees for mentoring planning. The Committee feels that this is very important since it is a significant change, and the Board will now consist of many newer members.

Foundation Commendation – Chair Boodram noted that based on practices with other college Foundations as well as our legal responsibilities as reviewed by the DHE legal affairs office, it is not in the purview or requirements of the Board of Trustees to vote on the Foundation accepting a gift. Chair Boodram is recommending that the Committee review action on a resolution that will commend the Foundation for their work in securing the Kleefeld gift. If passed, it would signal the Trustee’s support for the gift. There was discussion that the gift includes three years of operating funds for the Center. It does not obligate the College to funding the building past that commitment from the donor and Foundation. The Foundation is a fully separate entity although that may not be clear to the general public. The Chair and President have met with the Berkshire Eagle regarding this as well.

Upon motion made and duly seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: To advance a recommendation to the full Board to commend the Foundation on its valuable work in stewarding the Kleefeld gift in support of the mission of the College.

Other Business –

- a. President Birge noted that Trustee Lord had participated in an event at the College last night regarding “Know Your Rights” for those with questions and those acting as advocates.
- b. There was a discussion of ICE on campus. We have not seen or heard of ICE presence on our campus. There have been rumors locally but nothing confirmed, although UMASS, Worcester State and Bridgewater have had ICE interactions or have had student status changes. We monitor our students’ status. We also have international faculty that we are appropriately documenting and supporting. We have an immigration attorney that we work with on an ongoing basis. That attorney will be providing a program for international faculty and students. Overall, the campus seems quiet. The Committee appreciates the level of detail that President Birge is dedicating to this process. President Birge is also a member of the Presidents’ Alliance – a higher ed advocacy organization. President Birge was part of an amicus brief however he was told that the MA Attorney General asked him to remove his support. There was further discussion of nation-wide fear and anxiety over retaliation.

- c. Finally Chair Boodram noted that he has been in a holdover position as a Trustee for the last three years and his time on the Board will conclude shortly. Chair Boodram noted that he is grateful for his time on the Board. The Committee and President Birge noted that Chair Boodram should be very proud of his service to the College and that his experience, kindness, and wisdom will be missed.

Upon motion made and duly seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 9:26a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Kozak
Secretary