



My College. Right from the Start.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, October 8, 2014
President's Office Conference Room**

The following Trustees were present:

William Dudley, Chair
Mohan Boodram (via conference call)
Lisa Chamberlain
JD Chesloff

Others present:

Mary Grant, President
Cynthia Brown, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Monica Joslin, Dean of Academic Affairs
Anne Billetz, Director of Undergraduate Research and
Chair, Biology Department
Graziana Ramsden, Associate Director of Undergraduate Research, Chair of the
Languages, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Philosophy Department, and
Faculty, Modern Languages
Ginger Menard, Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 11:22 a.m. by Trustee Dudley.

Campus Safety Report

Public Safety Director Joseph Charon began with a report on the bomb threat earlier in the week and noted that the investigation into this incident is still ongoing. There will be follow up meetings to review emergency procedures.

Public Safety Director Joseph Charon updated Trustees on campus safety best practices, and provided an update on MCLA's annual security and fire safety report, also known as the Clery Report, a federally mandated annual report. Additional categories this year include domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. He expressed the belief that the report reflects a commitment to keep the MCLA campus community safe. The committee discussed the report and the data.

The Clery report is available online and Director Charon has notified the campus community that it has been posted.

Director Charon noted that the referrals for alcohol and drug violations have decreased. This positive shift is the result of a concerted effort on education, prevention, and enforcement that has been employed based on data from previous reports.

STEM Program overview

The goal of the science departments is to increase the number of students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines as well retaining current students. Ann Billetz shared that MCLA has seen an increase over the last 10 years in students in all areas of the sciences which is reflected in the recent reinstatement of the Chemistry major as well as creation of a Bio-Informatics track and the Athletic Training major. Course work in the STEM fields is intensive and not all students are prepared for the required workload. Connection to others within the department is an important factor in the retention and success of those majoring in STEM fields.

Due to a recent grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) the departments have been able to add STEM Associates, upper level STEM majors that serve as tutors and mentors. This grant also allows for the awarding of 32 scholarships over a 5 year period with recipients receiving funds up to 4 years. The program also supports a STEM writing associate program as writing for the sciences requires a different skill set.

The @Scale program, supported by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, is another component of the STEM Pathways program as well as the summer Berkshire Bank STEM Academy. Research is a critical component within most STEM fields and is critical for students planning to continue with graduate school. MCLA Faculty are committed to student success through research opportunities as well.

Undergraduate Research Program overview

Ann Billetz and Graziana Ramsden shared information on the Undergraduate Research Program (URP) which encompasses all departments and majors. This program fosters intellectual curiosity, collaboration, and the application of knowledge learned in the class room. It is also critical in building the skill of public speaking. The URP was strengthened, and a multi-year action plan developed, through a COPLAC supported initiative. The current Undergraduate Research Program now includes a board consisting of faculty and 3 students in addition to Ann Billetz, program director, and Graziana Ramsden, associate director.

The program provides small grants of \$300 to students that submit a successful proposal and budget. This past summer the inaugural Summer Research Institute was held consisting of 5 students and 4 faculty members. Students may also achieve the designation of “MCLA Scholar” by participating in 2 semesters of independent study, maintaining a 3.25 GPA, receiving a letter of support from their independent study faculty advisor, and presenting their results in some type of public venue. Additionally, the Pamela Dennis Scholarship Fund for Undergraduate Research

was established this past year and was designated for a student who has overcome a significant obstacle in life.

The annual Undergraduate Research Conference is held in April and all students must either participate or attend this event in place of classes that day. Work is presented in the form of posters, papers, poetry, music, and other forms of artistic expression. Each year an alum is invited to be the keynote speaker. Select students are also invited to attend the National Undergraduate Research Conference.

Both Professors Billetz and Ramsden expressed their gratitude to President Grant and the administration who have embraced and supported this program and worked with them to secure additional funding.

Faculty searches overview

Vice President Brown informed the committee that search process work is underway to recruit faculty in several departments. She explained that the College expects to complete five tenure track searches during the current academic year. For each position a search committee is established and candidates spend at least one full day on campus to meet with faculty, students, administration, and human resources. VP Brown also shared that academic majors are externally reviewed every seven years, the results of which aid in determining the need for new courses or faculty positions to meet the needs of the respective fields of study.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.