



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting of October 6, 2022
87 Blackinton St, North Adams
Audio/Video Conference

Members in Attendance

Mohan Boodram, Chair*
Brenda Burdick, Chair of the Board of Trustees*
Kathleen Therrien*

Others in Attendance

James Birge, President
Gina Puc, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives
Lisa Lesarbeau, Clerk
Jana Boyer, Director of Enrollment Operations
Bernadette Alden, Director of Marketing and Communications
Greta Jochem, Berkshire Eagle Reporter

*Denotes remote participation

Upon establishing a quorum of the Enrollment Management Committee Members present, Chair Boodram called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

VP Puc provided a review of the agenda of this meeting including an admissions updates, marketing and communications, some future planning in conjunction with other initiatives at MCLA.

Jana Boyer began with new student enrollment. There are 2,051 applications, 1,530 accepts, and 258 new students. This is a 5% increase in new students, and a 32% increase from transfer students. Students hale from 21 states and 33% are students of color.

The Office of Admission has undergone a realignment as a result of staff departures and transitions. Brigid Lawler has been hired as the Executive Director of Enrollment Management and will begin in January 2023. A new senior admission counselor is scheduled to start work next week. This position is being filled by a returning alum who has experience with TRiO programs that will translate well to MCLA. As well, a Freshmen Counselor has transitioned to the position of Counselor for Systems and Operations.

Ms. Boyer presented outreach and communication efforts of the Division noting that Counselors are on the road now recruiting. Efforts include variable postcards to over 75,000 high school seniors, and focused hockey recruitment. Preparation for nursing programs is in consideration, work is underway with SimpsonScarborough for messaging and headlines, and an RFP process has begun for new CRM.

VP Puc comment on the changes that the pandemic has had on the traditional model of visits on the road as there still some high schools that are not open for admissions visitors. The division is forced to rethink how we communicate to these demographics. As well, virtual visits continue to be offered.

Ms. Boyer reviewed the Fall 2022 events and tours planned including daily and Saturday tours, in-person open house, virtual open house, instant decision day, in-person and virtual athletic preview days, group tours and virtual tours. Daily tours have seen an uptick in participation as families seek smaller, more personal options to visit the College.

Recruitment strategies for the year include an early college program done in conjunction with Drury High School. There are currently 55 students enrolled in seven courses in this program that partners DHS teachers with MCLA faculty mentors on instructing MCLA curriculum. Targeted pathways for majors include health sciences, business administration, and computer science, as well as a data science minor. These majors and minor are aligned with the Governor's Blueprint for employment needs in the county. There are two coordinators for this program, one full-time on site at Drury, and one part-time on site at MCLA.

The dual enrollment program still exists with 18 students participating. This program will phase out as the early college program takes place.

In response to a questions regarding partnering with other high schools in the region, VP Puc stated that there is discussion around funding pathways to expand the program to additional high schools.

Bernadette Alden presented an update on Marketing and Communications efforts.

With a new CRM software, the media work that has been done with SimpScar would be measurable through impressions and click through rates. This option is not currently available and will be a great addition to the tools marketing uses to analyze media effectiveness.

U. S. News and World Report has once again ranked MCLA as a top public liberal arts college at #7, as well as #33 for social mobility.

Ms. Alden presented billboard locations in MA and NY, campus signage on Murdock Hall and Church Street Center, and print/digital efforts.

President Birge commented further on the USNWR social mobility ranking, which is most indicative of MCLA's mission. This ranking of #33 is among all public and private liberal arts institutions. There are only two publics with a higher ranking than MCLA. This ranking is also the highest ranking for all institutions in Massachusetts. This scale allows MCLA to say that we are doing the work for to provide an education for our students that leads to upward mobility.

VP Puc reviewed some of the changes that USNWR has made to their rankings data including the shifting of the weight of SAT scores as a result of many schools opting to go test blind or test optional. As well, changes associated with alumni giving and peer rankings are being considered.

Hockey recruitment has expanded geographical reach into parts of the US that has strong hockey programs such as Michigan. Teams will have a bench of 25-30 students once full benches are established and the program is fully operational. The program has also seen a reinvigoration with certain pockets of alum and will improve the relationships within the city as spectators attend games.

VP Puc presented information on enrollment trends and strategies for future proofing MCLA. Strategic planning efforts driving by the Board of Higher Education have begun including the New Undergraduate Experience and diversity. Several committees are engaged with this work including an enrollment management planning team that is feeding the work for a larger strategy group working on higher education trends. As well, a budget management planning team is focused on producing realistic budget goals.

VP Puc presented national trends showing that 1.3 million less students have enrolled in college since the spring of 2020. This interruption is a result of the pandemic as students were forced to return to work and provide for their families. This data from the National Student Clearing House shows that public institutions in rural areas have been hardest hit with student loss.

For 2022 fall enrollment MCLA has 938 total student headcount. While the College experience gains in new students, class sizes were smaller as a result of Southern Vermont teach-out students completing their education with MCLA.

MCLA has seen a drop in PELL eligible students which is down from 45% to 39%. This was anticipated as PELL eligible students were the most vulnerable and had highest rates of stop outs during the pandemic. The Division is conducting aggressive outreach to students who have a leave of absence or have withdrawn from the College.

Since its inception, MCLA's health sciences major has seen a 35% growth, due in part to the addition of the radiologic program and other pre-medical programs. The undeclared major is an important guide as it is one of the College's largest programs, and is a hallmark of liberal arts education as students want to explore program options. These students work closely with advising centers to connect with pathways to major declaration.

MCLA has established a goal to reach 1,500 students by 2029, and has strategies for new programs and focused efforts that align with this goal. The radiology program, for example, is strong and MCLA is the only public institution offering this program. Nursing has significant potential not just for undergraduate students, and others programs in discussion include quality assurance. As well, hockey has a distinct pathway for approximately 15 new students each year after the program is fully established and operational.

As the region anticipates a large number of retirements in the educators and administrators of schools, MCLA is working on programs to align and meet the needs of this exit.

The College, through its governance process, is looking at new ways to grant experiential and prior learning credit for students as the pandemic forced a stop-out/drop-out, and others who are taking a gap year beyond the traditional one after completing high school.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:24 a.m.