



**Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
Minutes of the Meeting of April 10, 2024  
87 Blackinton St, North Adams  
MS Teams Audio/Video**

**Committee members in attendance:**

Frederick Keator, Committee Chair\*  
Brenda Burdick, Board Chair\*  
Jean Clarke-Mitchell\*

**Absent:**

Kathleen Therrien

**Others present:**

James F. Birge, President  
Richard Glejzer, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs

\*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 Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of April 10, 2024, with Committee Chair Keator presiding was called to order at 8:31 a.m.

**Faculty Evaluations**

VP Glejzer began with review of the process for conducting faculty evaluations. Evaluation provides opportunities for faculty to improve prior to applying for tenure in year six with the College. The evaluation process begins in a faculty member's second year and happens every year until tenure is reached.

Evaluation consists of four categories: teaching, advising of students, continuing scholarship, and professional activities (service to the college). As well there is an optional fifth category: course release to serve as a department chair or other programs.

The first step in the evaluation process for faculty in years two, four and six of service, is to create a portfolio of their work. This is a narrative piece with supporting evidence. Once complete, the portfolio goes through an evaluation process consisting of:

- Peer Evaluation – This is the first review by a committee comprised of three faculty

members, two from the faculty member's home department and one that is selected by the faculty being evaluated. The Peer Evaluation Committee (PEC) conducts classroom observations, reviews the completed portfolio, and writes a letter of recommendation. There is then a 10-day response period.

- Department Chair Evaluation – The faculty member's home department chair then evaluates the faculty member using the same criteria as the PEC and writes a letter of recommendation at the completion of their evaluation.
- Dean of Academic Affairs Evaluation – The Dean reviews the faculty member's portfolio and writes their recommendation using consideration of the prior evaluators.
- The Vice President of Academic Affairs and President, respectively, then conduct their evaluations using the same process as the Dean of AA. The final step is the President's recommendation to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board, followed by the full board of trustees.

Faculty apply for tenure in their sixth year of service to the College. The Committee on tenure is comprised of two faculty members who are chosen at the union meeting in May of that academic year, and a third faculty member who is selected by the faculty being evaluated for tenure.

The Committee discussed the evaluation process as it pertains to input from students and classroom observations. Student evaluations are completed at the end of each course they participate in, and these evaluations are part of the faculty evaluation process for reappointment, tenure and promotion. For classroom observation, faculty are notified of the class that will be observed as required by the Union Contract.

Student evaluations are not narrative; they consist of a series of questions with numeric ratings. The faculty union worked to minimize bias in student evaluations and to provide a system that allows for specific data and averages. Faculty are strongly encouraged to use these evaluations to adjust their teaching and provide documentation of those adjustments.

The elected nature of the evaluation process gives broader faculty oversight as members on the committees and involved in the process are from varying departments. As well, the approval steps from the Dean of Academic Affairs to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and finally to the President, provides an opportunity for questions from differing perspectives. Recommendations made in any step of the evaluation are provided to the faculty member who has an opportunity to respond and to provide further documentation or narration.

President Birge noted that faculty members presented to this committee for reappointment, tenure and promotion must be approved through all steps. While it is a rare occurrence, there have been instances when faculty are eligible to apply for evaluation, but they have been denied at some point in the process.

### **Faculty Reappointments**

The following faculty have been recommended for reappointment by their PECs (if applicable), their department Chairs, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the President.

#### Reappointment to a Second Year of Service

- Samuel Bruun (Psychology)
- Yavuz Ceylan (Chemistry)

#### Reappointment to Third Year of Service

- Omotara Adeeko (Economics)
- Carter Carter (Psychology)
- Mariah Hepworth (History)

#### Reappointment to Fourth Year of Service

- Andrew Best (Biology)

#### Reappointment to Fifth Year of Service

- Thomas Burton (Physics)
- Whitney Gecker (Social Work)
- Antonio Templanza (English)
- Julie Walsh (Radiologic Technology)

#### Reappointment to Sixth Year of Service

- Kate Flower (Library)
- Clio Sterns (Education)

### **Faculty Tenure and Promotion**

Two Professors applied for Tenure with Promotion to Associate Professor, and seven applied for Promotion to Full Professor. All candidates have demonstrated excellence in the classroom, as advisors, in their scholarship and creative work, and in service to the MCLA community. Accordingly, each has strong, positive recommendations from their PECs, their department chairs, the Committee on Tenure (where applicable), the Committee on Promotions (where applicable), the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the President.

The committee reviewed the list of faculty for tenure and promotions. The President recommends the following faculty for:

#### *Tenure with Promotion to Associate Professor*

- Dr. Caren Beilin
- Dr. Sara Steele

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, with no further discussion, following a roll call vote, it was unanimously:

**VOTED:** to recommend reappointment with tenure and promotion to Associate Professor to Drs. Beilin and Steele, as presented.

*The following faculty are recommended for Promotion to Full Professor:*

- Dr. Mariana Bolivar
- Dr. Hannah Haynes
- Professor James Moriarty
- Dr. Kerri Nicoll
- Dr. Jerome Socolof
- Professor Laura Standley
- Professor Jeremy Winchester

Following a motion duly made and seconded, Trustees discussed concern expressed with one candidate for promotion to full professor. With no further discussion, following a roll call vote, it was unanimously:

**VOTED:** to recommend reappointment and promotion to full professor to Drs. Bolivar, Haynes, Nicoll and Socolof, and Professors Moriarty, Standley and Winchester, as presented.

### **Faculty Searches**

Academic Affairs has completed two tenure-track faculty searches this academic year and offers have been accepted by:

- Amir Mohsen Danesh Yazdi (MS, University at Buffalo; PhD, Indiana University, expected Summer 2024), Business Administration (Finance)
- Dr. Normadeane Armstrong (PhD, Molloy University), Nursing

### **Other Business**

President Birge informed the Committee of a current investigation of a faculty member who has been alleged to act egregiously and irresponsibly during the academic year. An external law firm was retained to conduct the investigation and the action at this time includes consideration of the removal of tenure. As the investigation is ongoing, the details can not be shared, but it is important that Trustees are aware of this extraordinary measure.

President Birge assured the Committee that, while the incident does involve a student, it is not of a sexual nature. The concern is with alleged intimidating behavior and disruption of an educational program. The faculty member is currently on administrative leave.

Trustee Clarke-Mitchell asked about the impact on the faculty member's employment benefits including retirement, and the difference if there is a resignation or a removal of tenure. It was stated that all employment related benefits terminate on the date of termination regardless of the type of departure from the institution. Existing state retirement benefits are preserved, and the College would not suggest encumbering these.

No action on this item is anticipated at the April 25 meeting of the Board of Trustees. Should the action progress to a recommendation of removal of tenure, that will be presented at a future meeting of this Committee and moved to the Board of Trustees for their final consideration.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting was adjourned at 9:18 a.m.