

FINDING OUR VOICE

STRATEGIC PLAN: 2025-2030

MCLA

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS



MESSAGE
FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to share with you MCLA's 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan. This document is the culmination of an inclusive process that began in March 2024. Led by a 24-person steering committee representing all segments of the college community, the process generated valuable input through outreach and engagement opportunities that included open forums; surveys of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members; a day-long, campus, open meeting including small group interviews; individual interviews with community members, and many steering committee meetings all culminating in this plan.

Guided by our distinctive public liberal arts mission, this strategic plan reflects MCLA's deep commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and belonging. The plan represents a call to action, urging us all to challenge assumptions, think creatively about our work, and act strategically in pursuit of our shared goal of making MCLA a stronger, more accessible and student-centered institution. The result of the visioning, goal setting, and planning we undertook is a document, a living plan, which will engage all members of our college community over the next five years.

As we celebrate a decade of recognition by U.S. News & World Report, ranking MCLA among the Top Ten Best Public Liberal Arts Colleges, we take pride in our reputation for delivering affordable, high-quality education.

Over the next five years, we will create new educational opportunities for our students and new professional opportunities for our faculty and staff. We will emphasize the importance of communication; we will share MCLA's story and values more widely. We will ensure that access and belonging are defining characteristics of an MCLA education and recommit to providing a holistic experience for all students.

A key component of this plan is the establishment of a framework for regular review and reflection. This process will allow us to assess our progress, make necessary adjustments, and remain aligned with the dynamic needs of our community.

I am impressed by the work of so many that created this plan that calls us to “Find our Voice” and reaffirm our distinctive mission and commitment as the public liberal arts college for the Commonwealth. The plan will keep us focused, inspired, and in pursuit of excellence.

I am confident that we will work together as a community to advance these goals and enhance the positive impact MCLA already has—on our students and their families, our 21,000 alumni, our faculty and staff, our city and the region, as well as the Commonwealth.

I am excited about MCLA's future and by the collaboration of my colleagues to achieve these goals.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Founded in 1894, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) has long been recognized as a leading public liberal arts institution in the United States. Ranked as one of U.S. News & World Report's 2025 Top Ten Public Liberal Arts Colleges in the country, MCLA currently enrolls 1,000 students annually in 70+ undergraduate and graduate programs and boasts an alumni network of over 21,000 strong.

As MCLA celebrates its 130th anniversary, the institution looks to leverage its long-standing success as a trailblazer in providing a high-quality, affordable liberal arts education while continuing to grow its impact with students from Massachusetts and nationwide. Further, MCLA is committed to continually evolving and growing its signature programming to address the unique characteristics of the 21st-century academic and career preparation landscape.

The strategic planning process began with the development of an internal 24-member Strategic Plan Steering Committee that worked closely with Luminary Evaluation to conduct an extensive SWOT analysis and community needs assessment. Almost 600 responses were collected from a broad body of stakeholders, including students, alumni, faculty & staff, and external community members. This resulted in a diverse and comprehensive perspective on the college's current function and future priorities. The SWOT analysis was bolstered by campus focus groups conducted in late spring 2024. Nearly 120 faculty, staff, and trustees participated in these focus groups. This rich pool of data was distilled and prioritized into Guiding Principles that informed the crafting of the Strategic Plan; the latter is comprised of three overarching goals, with success metrics, strategies, and actions for each goal.





GOAL 1

Refine and promote MCLA's distinctive public liberal arts mission and vision in response to the evolving role of higher education and align key institutional decisions and resources accordingly.



STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Revise MCLA's mission, vision, and value statements to reflect our commitment to the liberal arts and unique student population as well as guide priorities and key decision-making.

STRATEGY 2

Develop institutional learning outcomes that enhance the knowledge, skills, abilities, and habits of mind MCLA students should achieve by graduation.

STRATEGY 3

Ascertain enrollment and budgetary projections to establish an informed three-year strategic budget and enrollment plan that aligns with institutional priorities, mission, vision, and values.

STRATEGY 4

Develop a comprehensive recruitment and communication strategy that leverages website, social media, traditional marketing, and community outreach to celebrate and promote the refined mission, vision, and values to all constituencies engaging them in our distinctive identity.



GOAL 2

Build responsive and sustainable institutional structures and practices to increase access, belonging, and success for all members of the MCLA community, with particular focus on those traditionally excluded from higher education.

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Appoint and empower an institutionally supported Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee (DEIB) charged with overseeing explicit initiatives such as Department of Higher Education Equity Agenda, Racial Equity and Justice Institute curriculum, to document progress and promote accountability.

STRATEGY 2

Embed High Impact Practices (HIPs) across the institution while identifying and addressing barriers to full student participation in HIPs.

STRATEGY 3

Financially invest in student support roles and resources that increase access, engagement, success, and belonging.

STRATEGY 4

Optimize and fully utilize the Campus Climate Assessment and other assessment tools to improve belonging, persistence, and graduation rates for populations traditionally excluded from higher education through data informed decision making.

STRATEGY 5

Forge partnerships with community organizations, K-12 schools, community colleges and other institutions to expand connectivity for all current and future MCLA community members.



GOAL 3

Strengthen and develop innovative initiatives that enhance the holistic student experience and cultivate a campus culture responsive to student voice.



STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

Continue to implement an institutional events calendar and student activities application that is easily accessible by all community members.

STRATEGY 2

Develop student leadership opportunities and institutional activities that enhance MCLA's ability to listen to, advocate for, and represent student experiences more effectively.

STRATEGY 3

Develop and map structured milestones that every student will experience during their time at MCLA. Outline these milestones for students and the campus community to ensure shared understanding and support.

STRATEGY 4

Continue to evaluate student programming and campus facilities with a focus on increased engagement and belonging institution wide.

**“I’M EXCITED ABOUT MCLA’S FUTURE AND
THE COLLABORATION OF MY COLLEAGUES
TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS.”**

JAMES F. BIRGE, PH.D.

**ELEVATE
YOUR
THINKING.**

MCLA



STRATEGIC PLANNING CORE TEAM

Co-Chairs

Carolyn Dehner, Ph.D.	Dean of Academic Affairs
Jana Boyer	Director of Admission

Steering Committee Members

Seth Bean	Assistant Director of Network Engineering and APA President
Elizabeth Brown '26	Student Athlete
Brenda Burdick	MCLA Trustee
Jason Canales	Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
Carter Carter, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor, Psychology and MSCA Union Representative
Maggie Clark, Ph.D.	Associate Professor and Chair, Education
Patrick Connelly	Dean for Institutional Assessment and Continuing Improvement
Kellie Coody	Accountant, Administration and Finance
Jennifer Dermady	Office Manager: Academic Advising & Support, Education, Honors Program and AFSCME Steward
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André Lynch	Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Belonging
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