

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Academic Affairs

**NO:** AAC 19-16

**COMMITTEE DATE:** March 5, 2019

**BOARD DATE:** March 12, 2019

---

**APPLICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS TO AWARD  
THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATIONS**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the application of the **Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts** to award the **Bachelor of Arts in Communications**.

Upon graduating the first class for this program, the University shall submit to the Board a status report addressing its success in reaching program goals as stated in the application and in the areas of enrollment, curriculum, faculty resources, and program effectiveness.

**VOTED:** Motion approved by AAC 03/05/2019; Motion adopted by the BHE 03/12/2019

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b)

Contact: Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**March 2019**  
**Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts**

**INTENT AND MISSION**

The Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) proposes to offer a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Communications, consistent with its mission to promote excellence in learning and teaching, innovative scholarship, intellectual creativity, public service, applied knowledge, and active and responsible citizenship. MCLA is the only four-year public college in Berkshire County. It prepares its graduates to be practical problem solvers and engaged, resilient global citizens. MCLA expects that the implementation of a Communications major within the English/Communications Department will fulfill and align with the liberal arts mission of the college. The proposed major is planned to enhance and complement existing program offerings, which integrate the liberal arts with professional studies.

MCLA intends that the proposed program will prepare students for careers in various communications fields such as journalism, broadcast media, film, public relations and corporate communications, publishing or film and video editing, digital media, and professional writing, as well as graduate study in media and cultural studies and journalism. It is further intended that students will be able to gain knowledge of media production practices with a range of digital media, including audio, video, and interactive media, and will develop a strong conceptual and theoretical basis from which to understand the role digital media, and media and communications in general, play in modern life. MCLA anticipates that students will develop robust critical thinking and communications skills.

The proposed program has obtained all necessary governance approvals on campus and was approved by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Board of Trustees on May 24, 2018. The required letter of intent was circulated on August 2, 2018. The Department received no comments.

**NEED AND DEMAND**

*National and State Labor Market Outlook*

MCLA reports that media jobs cover various types of work, ranging from announcers in broadcast media, film and video editors and camera operators, photographers, editors and copy editors, reporters, technical writers, and public relations specialists, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook* within the category of Media and Communication Occupations. MCLA also found that employment nationwide is expected to grow about 6 percent between 2016-2026. MCLA conducted a regional outlook rather than a national one in alignment with data regarding where previous graduates have sought and acquired jobs (i.e. Berkshire County, southern Vermont and greater Albany NY). In addition, MCLA reports that it is not unusual for students and graduates to obtain internships and jobs in media markets such as Boston, New Hampshire and New York City. In Massachusetts, occupations in the "Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media" category are in the

top 20 for projected growth, expecting to add nearly 5,000 new jobs between 2012 and 2022. The growth of the creative economy in Berkshire County has seen an increased need for public relations professionals especially and others who know how to create well-designed and well-written communications for arts and cultural organizations and supporting businesses such as restaurants and other tourism-oriented businesses. Recent graduate hires in larger media markets such as Syracuse and New York City indicated that MCLA graduates are in demand.

### *Student Demand*

At fall open houses MCLA calculated as many as 40 families in attendance at English/Communications Department sessions, as well as additional inquiries during campus tours. Students express interest in communications areas such as broadcast media, journalism, film studies, or PR; and typical questions from parents and students indicate they are looking to develop careers in these fields. MCLA has found it can lose these recruits without offering a specific Communications degree. MCLA focus groups showed strong support for the creation of a new major from students in all concentrations, including writing and literature. Approximately 86 existing students in one or more of the communications concentrations indicated that 43 would choose to switch to the Communications major or decide to pursue a double major, if it is approved by BHE. Out of the 43 entering freshmen in Fall 2017, 53.5% (23) have chosen a communications concentration singly or in combination with another concentration, such as writing. MCLA expects that entering freshmen will also choose a Communications major when given the option. Participants in student media, either the weekly campus newspaper *The Beacon*, the weekly video news broadcast Beacon Web News, and the student radio station WJJW provide evidence of substantial interest. In addition, students in the major contribute, edit, and design the annual literary magazine *Spires*, and many students have multiple roles in consecutive or concurrent semesters between the different media entities. In the spring 2018 semester, 20% of the students on *The Beacon* were ALANA students. The Beacon Web News comprised about 43% minority students, showing a higher average of ALANA students compared to other students in the major who concentrate on literature or writing.

## **OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

MCLA has discussed developing the proposed program within the English/Communications Department for a long time. A recent confluence of factors led to the creation of the current proposal, spurred in part by an external program review in 2015 that suggested the new major be created, based on student feedback during the review process. Approximately 43% of the students in the department are taking concentrations in either journalism, broadcast TV, film studies, or PR and corporate communication, with multiple students taking more than one concentration. The proposed BA in Communications builds on existing class offerings with the addition of one new course, creating a curricular pathway that provides students with more relevant content knowledge and skills development. There is no need for hiring additional faculty beyond the current staffing, and no need for additional resources because the new degree program has been developed based on existing

concentrations. MCLA expects that not requiring extra personnel or technological resources will alleviate the typical growing pains that occur the first few years of an entirely new degree program. Furthermore, MCLA holds that because almost all the courses are existing courses, their value and fit have been well-tested, and provide a solid foundation.

### *Duplication*

UMass Amherst, SUNY-Albany, Westfield State, Southern Vermont College and Bennington College in Vermont offer a BA in Communications with a variety of concentrations and emphases. The broader proposed Communications degree at MCLA is distinctive in that it would allow students to gain experience in journalism, as well as public relations, professional writing, or creative writing, etc. MCLA plans that its' program will be the only one at a public institution in far western Massachusetts, making it accessible to Berkshire County students and for students from southern VT and greater Albany NY.

MCLA reports that the proposed major in Communications will be the only one in Berkshire County. The emphasis on digital media production across journalism, broadcast, web, and public relations differentiates it from other communications degrees being offered at public state colleges located further east. MCLA's affordability and facilities differentiate the program from private schools in the region that may seem like potential geographic competition. The continued focus on liberal arts within the college and the department is expected to provide students with the critical thinking and communications skills that are crucial for success.

## **ACADEMIC AND RELATED MATTERS**

### *Admission*

MCLA's admissions standards are selective, and decisions are made on an individual basis after careful review of all academic credentials. MCLA offers the Common Application in addition to the MCLA paper application. Meeting the minimum standard does not guarantee admission to MCLA. For first year applicants, MCLA evaluates academic performance and strength of curriculum in high school, standardized test scores and a personal essay in accordance with guidelines established by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). All students must submit an official high school transcript, including first-quarter senior grades and any transcripts for college-level courses, such as dual enrollment or early college courses. All students must have a high school diploma or its equivalent at the time of enrollment. MCLA accepts transfer applications for both fall and spring terms. A student who has earned a minimum of 12 semester hours of college credits from an accredited institution may be considered a transfer student. Transfer students must have earned a high school diploma or equivalent. Transfer applications are evaluated based on their previous college work. A minimum grade point average of a 2.5 (on a four-point scale) is recommended for admission as a transfer student, and a maximum of 75 credits may be transferred towards the bachelor's degree. A minimum of 45 credits must be completed at MCLA.

## Program Enrollment

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
New Full-Time students due to the proposed major	15	15	20	20
Continuing students: students who enrolled in English Communications, concentration and continue with the Communications major.	25	38	50	65
New Part-Time	2	2	5	5
Continuing Part Time (changing major from English to Communications)	2	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>90</b>

### *Curriculum (Attachment A)*

The curriculum is composed of four major components with a capstone Senior Seminar course that reiterates the important conceptual and critical connections between English and communications. The four components are a series of Foundation courses, a choice of a Literature Studies course, two courses in Media Practice in Context, one of which must be an advanced writing course and the other a media production course outside their concentration, and a course in Media & Culture to emphasize theory and concepts. In addition, students must take an additional 24 credits within the major, 18 of those either as a concentration or as a minor, with 6 credits as departmental electives.

## **RESOURCES AND BUDGET**

### *Budget (Attachment B)*

MCLA's Department of English/Communications currently offers an English major with concentrations in the communications fields. All the resources required for the proposed major are in place, including departmental administrative support because of the change from an existing concentration to a degree.

### *Faculty and Administration (Attachment C)*

The department recently hired a full-time tenure track position in Multimedia Journalism to replace a recent retirement. The total number of full-time faculty members for the Communications major is

planned to be five. The Communications major will be housed in the English/Communications Department, which will staff all the courses in the curriculum. All courses are currently offered at least once per year at MCLA, with foundational courses offered every semester. "Media Writing and Production" is a new course and will be offered every semester. MCLA reports that although there is sometimes overlap between English and Communications faculty in terms of courses that are taught in their respective fields, there are currently 5 Communications-focused full-time faculty in the English/Communications department and two part-time faculty who teach various specialized courses in either professional writing, journalism, or radio. There is some capacity to add students to many of the classes currently being offered.

### *Facilities, Library and Information Technologies*

MCLA's Freel Library has substantial books and streaming media for communications technology and media, and typically provides faculty members with a yearly allowance for purchase of new library materials. MCLA subscribes to many databases with social scientific content, including JSTOR and Academic Search Premier, and has access to local, regional, and national newspapers. The Center for Academic Technology at MCLA is active in promoting the use of technology in the classroom, hosting workshops and training sessions for tools such as the course management system Canvas and the eportfolio system Digication, and organizing an annual faculty TechFest to highlight the use of technological tools in undergraduate education. The office of Information Technology assists with computers and other equipment in faculty offices and classrooms. Media lab space and equipment, as well as a TV studio and AVID editing suites, are currently sufficient to meet the needs of the new program, including access to the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of software.

### *Affiliations and Partnerships*

The proposed major has been developed with MassTransfer at center, making it easy for students from community colleges in the state to enter MCLA in a 2 +2 program. MCLA also plans that once approved the proposed program will have articulation agreements with Berkshire and Holyoke community colleges, the latter of which has a strong associate of arts degree in Electronic Arts, where students learn the basics of video and digital media production. MCLA is also exploring articulation with community colleges outside of the state, such as Hudson Valley Community College.

Partly because of Berkshire County's location on the edges of bigger media markets in Albany and Springfield, MCLA finds that there is a paucity of locally produced media outlets, especially digital, video, and audio media organizations. MCLA reports that students have been starting to fill this void with independent study projects and internships, local election coverage on public access television, and expanding coverage in student media to include the towns of North Adams, Adams, Cheshire, and Williamstown. This presents a unique opportunity for students to interact with the local community in developing stories that also helps local citizens stay informed of relevant happenings. A growing creative economy in the region has pointed to a need for increased public relations expertise to

promote the many events and opportunities designed for tourists and local residents. MCLA reports that everything from website development to printed brochures, newsletters, and press releases are needed by the new organizations being created throughout the county. This need, in turn, encourages students to remain in the county after graduation, something many have said they wish to do. This could be an important factor in slowing population decline in Berkshire County.

### PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Goal	Measurable Objective	Strategy for Achievement	Timetable
1. To produce graduates that are competitive in the job market and graduate studies	Strive for well-suited and comprehensive student placement.	Connect with media organizations in Berkshire County and organizations that need communications-related work, even if they are not purely media organizations. Work with MCLA's career services office and the Alumni office. Work with UMass system for graduate studies	Ongoing from program implementation
2. To implement a system for monitoring program effectiveness	System will provide usable data on student learning, and post-graduation placements/achievement.	Assess a program outcome each semester. Administer surveys to graduating seniors/alumnae to track placements. Complete program review every 7 years.	Assessment of program outcomes implemented during first year of program. Surveys administered to seniors/alumnae with first graduating class. First program review after 7 years.
3. To increase the number of students enrolled in the major	Obtain a total of at least 90 majors (all years of study) in 5 years	Promote the program through admissions and college websites, creation of brochures and working directly with Berkshire high schools and community colleges	Five years from program implementation
4. To identify sites that might be used as shadowing/internship sites for students in the major	Develop relationships with 25 or more media organizations in 5 years.	Contact local media organizations, small publishing houses, television and radio stations, and businesses that may need skilled media professionals.	Five years from program implementation

## EXTERNAL REVIEW AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The program was externally reviewed by Oliver Boyd-Barrett, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Bowling Green State University, Ohio and John V. Pavlik, Professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University, and co-developer of the Situated Documentary, a form of location-based storytelling using the emerging mobile and wearable technology known as Augmented Reality.

The reviewers found the proposed program to be consistent with the academic mission of the campus and designed to deliver an applied major based on a theoretical foundation. The team indicated that this integration of applied and theoretical pedagogical design will likely produce a highly effective praxis for students. They also determined the institution has demonstrated commitment to needed and appropriate resources including the office of Information Technology, media lab space and equipment, a TV studio and AVID editing suites, and access to the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of software for digital production and design and for publication design of the weekly student newspaper. The reviewers noted that students will receive a substantial and coherent introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, in addition to providing in-depth study in at least one disciplinary or interdisciplinary concentration are based upon clear and articulated learning objectives. The team found an effective relationship to exist between curricular content and effective practice in the field of media production. It further noted that the proposal also provides compelling evidence of demand for this degree from among the existing student body, and among potential new students.

The review team recommended that future replacement faculty hires or new adjunct hires give more weight to the fields of media economics, international / global communication, and organized mediated communication for the purpose of giving students a better sense of business models and greater 'street savviness' in appraising media initiatives. It also underscored the importance of an advisory board in conjunction with methods of assessment of student practical experience in external and internal internships that incorporate the views and assessments of relevant employers.

MCLA agreed with the recommendations and plans to convene an advisory board with representation from external employers and internship providers. This board will also provide ongoing recommendations regarding the curriculum, and potential changes, to prepare students for employment.

## STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by the **Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts** and the external reviewers. Staff recommendation is for approval of the proposed **Bachelor of Arts in Communications**.



**ATTACHMENT A: CURRICULUM**

<b>Required (Core) Courses in the Major (ENGL designation would change to COMM designation upon approval, except for courses with *, which would stay as ENGL) (Total # courses required =8)</b>		
<b>Course Number</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
ENGL 211	Introduction to Mass Media	3
ENGL 200	Communication Research and Methods	3
COMM 200	Media Writing and Production	3
<b>Literature Studies</b>	<b><i>Students Choose ONE course from the following:</i></b>	3
*ENGL 250	Introduction to Literature	
*ENGL 221	Literary Journalism	
*ENGL 265	Literary Theme	
*ENGL 270	Literary Genre (or one 200-level or above foreign language)	
<b>Media Practice in Context</b>	<b><i>Students choose TWO courses from the following, one of which must be a writing course (each 3 cr)</i></b>	6
ENGL 205	Introduction to Photography	
ENGL 212	Radio Production	
ENGL 214	Basic TV Production and Broadcasting	
ENGL 312	Radio Practicum	
ENGL 314	Advanced TV Production	
ENGL 321	News Editing Practicum	
ENGL 323	Publication Design & Typography	
ENGL 337	Advanced Photography	
ENGL 338	Photojournalism	
ENGL 427	Senior News Practicum	
*ENGL 2xx	any 200+ ENGL or COMM writing course	
<b>Media &amp; Culture</b>	<b><i>Students choose ONE course from the following</i></b>	3
ENGL 204	Media, Self-Identity, and Society	
*ENGL 231	The Power of Words	
*ENGL 331	The Story of English	
ENGL/COMM 3xx-4xx	any upper-division literature or film analysis course	

COMM 481	From Semiotics to Signification	
ENGL/COMM 490	Senior Seminar	3
	<b>Sub Total Required Credits</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Elective Courses (Total # courses required = 2)</b>		
Departmental elective (ENGL or COMM), 200-level or above		6
	<b>Sub Total Elective Credits</b>	6
<b>Digital Media Innovation concentration (or Literature, English, or Creative Writing minor)</b>		<b>18 cr</b>
Choice of 4 courses within the major, plus two elective courses 200-level or above (2 x 3 cr) from a list of approved courses within and outside the major		
	<b>Total required for major</b>	<b>48 cr</b>
<b>Distribution of General Education Requirements</b>		# of Gen Ed Credits
Attach List of General Education Offerings (Course Numbers, Titles, and Credits)		
Tier I core: Language at the 102 level (3 cr), ENGL 150 English Composition II (3 cr); Math		9
Tier II core: Human Heritage (2 x 3 cr), Creative Arts (2 x 3 cr), Self & Society (2 x 3 cr), plus Science & Technology (1 x 3 cr, 1 x 4 cr w/lab)		25
Tier III core: Capstone (3 cr)		3
<b>Sub Total General Education Credits</b>		<b>37 cr</b>
<i>Of the total 37 credits of General Education Requirements ( CORE) , 13 credits are satisfied by the major</i>		
<b>Curriculum Summary</b>		
Total number of courses required for the degree	15	
Total credit hours required for degree	General Ed. + Major: 85 cr Graduation requirement: 120 cr	
<b>Prerequisite, Concentration or Other Requirements:</b>		
Concentrations in Communications are optional. The concentration that will be offered is Digital Media Innovation.		

### Concentration in Digital Media Innovation

Course	Credits
ENGL 214: Basic TV Production and Broadcasting OR COMM 281: Avid Editing	3
ENGL 323: Publication Design & Typography	3
COMM 481: Social Media Strategies	3
COMM 481: Data Journalism and Infographics OR COMM 481: Special Topics in Communication	3
<b><i>Students choose TWO (2 x 3 cr) course from the following (each 3 cr)</i></b>	6
BADM 110: Information Technology for Business	
ENGL 205: Introduction to Photography	
ENGL 212: Radio Production	
COMM 281: Media Theories	
ENGL 312: Radio Practicum	
ENGL 481: Special Topics in Communication	
COMM 493: Teaching Assistantship in Communications	
COMM 500: Directed Independent Study	
COMM 540: Internship in Communications	
CSCI 121: Programming in Java I	
CSCI 208: Graphics I	
CSCI 236: Web Development	
CSCI 288: Web Page Design	
ART 204: Digital Media	
<b>CREDITS REQUIRED:</b>	<b>18</b>

**ATTACHMENT B: BUDGET**

<b>One Time/ Start Up Costs</b>		<b>Annual Expenses</b>			
		<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
	<b>Cost Categories</b>				
	Full Time Faculty Salary	NA			
	Part Time/Adjunct Faculty (2) \$ 5,181	\$ 10,362	\$ 10,362	\$ 10,362	\$ 10,362
	Staff Departmental Assistant in place				
	<b>General Administrative Costs are included in the overall College Operating Budget</b>				
	Instructional Materials, Library Acquisitions	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
	Facilities/Space/Equipment: Currently in place				
	Field & Clinical Resources	NA			
	<b>Marketing costs included in MCLA's general college budget</b>				
	Other (Specify)				
	<b>TOTALS</b>	\$ 12,362	\$ 12,362	\$ 12,362	\$ 12,362

<b>One Time/Start-Up Support</b>		<b>Annual Income</b>			
		<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
	<b>Revenue Sources</b>				
	Grants				
	*Tuition	\$ 15,450	\$15,450	\$ 20,600	\$ 20,600
	*Fees	\$ 132,675	\$ 132,675	\$176,900	176,900
	Departmental				
	<b>TOTALS</b>	\$ 148,125	\$ 148,125	\$197,500	\$197,500

\*Based on instate tuition and fees for new full-time students (Y1-15, Y2-15, Y3-20, Y4-20)

**ATTACHMENT C: FACULTY**

<b>Summary of Faculty Who Will Teach in Proposed Program</b>							
<b>Name of faculty member (Name, Degree and Field, Title)</b>	<b>Check if Tenured</b>	<b>Courses Taught (C) to indicate core course. (OL) next to any course currently taught online.</b>	<b>Number of sections</b>	<b>Division of College of Employment</b>	<b>Full- or Part- time in Program</b>	<b>Full- or part-time in other department or program</b>	<b>Sites where individual will teach program courses</b>
Birch, Michael Ph.D., Politics and Communication Professor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ENGL 210 (C)</li> <li>● ENGL 214</li> <li>● ENGL 2xx</li> <li>● ENGL 215</li> <li>● ENGL 314</li> <li>● ENGL 3xx</li> <li>● ENGL 481</li> </ul>	1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Daytime	Full Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Main Campus</li> <li>● Online</li> </ul>
LeSage, Paul Ph.D., Communications Professor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ENGL 490</li> <li>● ENGL 481</li> <li>● ENGL 396</li> </ul>	1 1 2	Daytime	Full Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Main Campus</li> <li>● Online</li> </ul>

McIntosh, Shawn M.S. (Ph.D. expected 2018), Digital Journalism and Communications Assistant Professor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●ENGL 2xx</li> <li>●ENGL 231 (C)</li> <li>●ENGL 231 (OL)</li> <li>●ENGL 239</li> <li>●ENGL 323</li> <li>●ENGL 427</li> <li>●ENGL 481</li> </ul>	1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Daytime	Full Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Main Campus</li> <li>●Online</li> </ul>
Noel, Hannah Ph.D., Multi-Ethnic Studies and Digital Humanities Assistant Professor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●ENGL 211</li> <li>●ENGL 481</li> <li>●ENGL 490</li> </ul>	2 1 1	Daytime	Full Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Main Campus</li> </ul>
Wang, Qian Ph.D., Journalism Multimedia Journalism Assistant Professor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●ENGL 2xx</li> <li>●ENGL 239</li> <li>●ENGL 321</li> <li>●ENGL 400</li> <li>●ENGL 481</li> </ul>	1 1 1 1 1	Daytime	Full Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Main Campus</li> </ul>
Jones, Gillian BA, English Instructor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●ENGL 205</li> <li>●ENGL 337</li> <li>●ENGL 338</li> </ul>	1 1 1	Daytime	Part Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Main Campus</li> </ul>
Niedbalski, James M.A., Professional Writing Instructor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●ENGL 212</li> <li>●ENGL 339</li> <li>●ENGL 312</li> </ul>	1 1 1	Daytime	Part Time	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Main Campus</li> </ul>