

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

The Executive Council approved these minutes at its October 2022 meeting.

The council met virtually on 19–20 May 2022. President Christopher John Newfield presided. The other officers present were First Vice President Frieda Ekotto, Second Vice President Dana A. Williams, and Executive Director Paula M. Krebs. The Executive Council members present both days were Samer Mahdy Ali, Esther Allen, Brenda Brueggemann, Rebecca Colesworthy, Susan Stanford Friedman, Erin D. Graff Zivin, Ann Kalscheur Suarez, Lisa Karakaya, Leah S. Marcus, Ifeoma C. Kiddoe Nwankwo, Anjali Prabhu, Jahan Ramazani, Ignacio Sánchez Prado, and Julie Shoults.

The MLA staff members present were Director of Convention and Events Karin L. Bagnall, Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Outreach Anna S. A. Chang, Director of Scholarly Communication Angela L. Gibson, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Publisher of the *MLA International Bibliography* Mary Onorato, Director of Academic Program Services and Professional Development Jason Rhody, Director of Information Systems Thanh Trinh, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Leigh A. Neithardt.

On 19 May, the council first convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. On Thursday afternoon, the council received an update on the strategic planning process (see item 11 below) and updates from the Subcommittee on Advocacy and Guidelines (see item 10 below). On 20 May, the council convened in regular session and continued working through its agenda. It received an update from the Subcommittee on the Strategy for the Profession (see item 12 below). The council adjourned at 3:30 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. Administration and Finance. The council received the Finance Committee's report. Paula M. Krebs told the council that we are not expecting a deficit this year and that the committee predicts a balanced budget. She said that nine new staff members have been hired, and so the association has a full staff. She asked that the council approve the tentative budget for

the fiscal year 2022–23. It did so. The council also approved a motion designating EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the fiscal year 2021–22.

2. Appointment of a Delegate to the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). The council appointed Leah Richards to a four-year term (2023–26) as the association’s representative in the Delegate Assembly of the ACLS.

3. Approval of the February 2022 Council Minutes. The council approved the minutes of its February 2022 meeting for publication on the association’s website.

4. Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings. The council confirmed three decisions that it made in between meetings:

In March, council member Samer Mahdy Ali forwarded to the council a statement condemning the recent bomb threats against HBCUs written by the American Historical Association and asked whether the council would like to endorse the statement. The council approved adding the association’s endorsement to the statement, and it was published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Advocacy/Executive-Council-Actions/2022/Joint-Statement-on-Bomb-Threats-against-HBCUs-A-History-of-Domestic-Terrorism>).

In April, Executive Director Krebs forwarded a request from a representative of the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, who asked whether the association would issue a statement supporting the right of graduate student workers at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, to organize. The council approved a statement of support and it was published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Advocacy/Executive-Council-Actions/2022/MLA-Statement-in-Support-of-the-Indiana-Graduate-Workers-Coalition>).

Also in April, the council approved a statement endorsing the right of graduate student workers to organize unions. The statement was prepared by Nicholas Devlin, a PhD student at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, working in the MLA Office of the Executive Director. It was published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Advocacy/Executive-Council-Actions/2022/MLA-Statement-Supporting-the-Right-of-Graduate-Student-Workers-to-Organize>).

5. Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities. The council decided to postpone conferring the award this year. The council will discuss the award at its October meeting and present it at the 2024 convention.

6. Nomination of Honorary Fellows. The council received recommendations from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA) pertaining to the nomination of honorary fellows. Acting on the CHA's recommendations of individuals to be honored this year, the council nominated Ōe Kanzaburō, Oh Jung-hee, and Xiao Kaiyu for honorary fellowship. Following the provisions of article 3.D of the MLA constitution, the elections to honorary fellowship will be conducted during the 2023 Delegate Assembly meeting in San Francisco.

7. Requests for the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution. The council approved the staff's request to ask the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution to draft two amendments to Article 9.A of the MLA constitution concerning the composition of the Nominating Committee for consideration by the 2023 Delegate Assembly:

The first amendment would align the field representation requirements of the Nominating Committee with the proposed change to the field representation requirements on the Executive Council. (Such an amendment would only be forwarded to the membership for ratification if the proposed amendment changing the field representation requirements on the council were approved by the Delegate Assembly.)

The second amendment would align the representation of the three membership levels (i.e., regular, graduate student, and life) on the Nominating Committee with the current representation of the membership levels on the Executive Council, also specified in article 8.A.5 (Executive Council—Composition and Election).

8. Update from the Governance Task Force. The council accepted three (of four) sets of recommendations from the Governance Task Force concerning existing communications (reports of department directors and the annual activities report that council receives; committee reports; and policy-change and other requests by standing committees and departments); documenting and tracking council action items; and executive council communications to membership.

The council decided to wait to discuss the fourth set of recommendations, which address new communication structures. Christopher John Newfield asked the governance task force to simplify that set of recommendations for the council's review in October.

9. Update and Requests from the Subcommittee on Committees. The council approved framing language to be included in the charges of the nine professional issues committees. That language has been published on the MLA's website (<https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Committees/Committee-Listings/Professional-Issues>). The council also

approved a template for the annual professional-issues committee reports and directions to the committees' chairs and cochairs.

The subcommittee forwarded two requests from the Committee on Information Technology to the council. The council did not approve proposed changes to the committee's charge. After the meeting, the subcommittee drafted an update incorporating suggestions made by council members and approved it through the mailing list. It has been published on the committee's web page (<https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Committees/Committee-Listings/Professional-Issues/Committee-on-Information-Technology>). The council passed a motion authorizing the Committee on Information Technology to create a subcommittee to update the Guidelines for Evaluating Work in Digital Humanities and Digital Media.

10. Updates from the Subcommittee on Advocacy and Guidelines. Christopher John Newfield provided an update on this work. The next steps include getting feedback from the members of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee and then working with staff members to prepare the completed document to share with the Delegate Assembly and the membership.

11. Update on the Strategic Planning Process. Dana Williams provided an update on the work the strategic planning group has done. The next steps included a retreat to be held in the summer. The group later opted to hold several virtual meetings and to meet in the temporary MLA offices the day before the October council meeting.

12. Update from the Subcommittee on Strategy for the Profession. Christopher John Newfield shared that the subcommittee has begun to discuss areas on which to initially focus its work. The subcommittee wants to compile MLA documents that address these issues and see where overlaps exist with the work of the Subcommittee on Advocacy and Guidelines. Newfield said that the group would eventually like to prepare a survey.

13. Council Meeting Schedule. The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2025: 21–22 February, 15–16 May, and 24– 25 October.

14. Committee Appointment. The council made an appointment to a standing committee of the association. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear on the MLA website.