

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

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

The council met on 25–26 February 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, Lisa Karakaya, Leah S. Marcus, Ifeoma C. Kiddoe Nwankwo, Anjali Prabhu, Jahan Ramazani, Ignacio Sánchez Prado, and Julie Shoults. Ann Kalscheur Suarez was present on 26 February. Erin D. Graff Zivin was not present.

The meeting was held in a hybrid format through *Zoom*. Newfield, Ekotto, Krebs, Ali, Allen, Brueggemann, Friedman, Kalscheur Suarez, Karakaya, Prabhu, Sánchez Prado, and Williams convened in the MLA office in New York. Colesworthy, Marcus, Kiddoe Nwankwo, Ramazani, and Shoults attended virtually. 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 25 February, the council first convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. Later that morning, it held an executive session to review the council members' fiduciary responsibilities before convening again in regular session to continue working through its agenda. On Friday afternoon, the council welcomed Erec Koch, the chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (see item 14, below). Also on Friday afternoon the council held subcommittee meetings to develop short lists for committee appointments. The Subcommittee on Administration and Finance (Dana A. Williams, chair; Brenda Brueggemann; Rebecca Colesworthy; Lisa Karakaya; and Leah S. Marcus) considered appointments to six MLA committees; the Subcommittee on Projects (Frieda Ekotto, chair;

Esther Allen; Susan Stanford Friedman; Anjali Prabhu; and Ignacio Sánchez Prado) was assigned six MLA committees; and the Subcommittee on Publications (Christopher John Newfield, chair; Samer Mahdy Ali; Ifeoma C. Kiddoe Nwankwo; Jahan Ramazani; and Julie Shoults) worked on short lists for five MLA committees. On 26 February, the council convened in regular session and continued working through its agenda. The council adjourned at 2:12 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. Administration and Finance. The council received the independent auditor's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2021. The members of the council's Finance and Audit Committee recommended that the council accept and approve the audit report and financial statements. The council did so.

The council also received the Finance Committee's report, which reviewed the budget for the current fiscal year using four-month projections. The committee anticipated a deficit of \$174,160 in the unrestricted fund and a deficit of \$6,130 in the restricted fund, for an overall projected deficit of \$180,290.

The budget that the committee presented to the council in October 2021 projected a deficit of \$170,010. The Finance Committee's report also reviewed the schedule for the preparation of a budget for the fiscal year 2022–23. The council authorized the staff to prepare a balanced budget.

Paula Krebs said that, at the request of the Executive Council's Audit and Finance Committee, the staff had been investigating the possibility of subletting the association's current office space. Before the association rents its new headquarters space, staff will work in short-term office space. The council approved motions regarding a sublease of the association's current office space and a lease for new headquarters space. It authorized the executive director to negotiate and sign a sublease of the MLA space at 85 Broad Street as long as said sublease does not depart significantly from the parameters discussed in the request. It also authorized the executive director to negotiate and sign a lease for new MLA headquarters space as long as said lease does not depart significantly from the parameters discussed in the request.

The council approved the establishment of four annual prizes at \$1,000 each: the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for African Studies, the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for East

Asian Studies, the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for South Asian Studies.

The council adopted the following resolution relating to financial management.

WHEREAS, Article IV, Section F, of the constitution of the Modern Language Association provides as follows: “The permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds shall be administered by a board of trustees composed of the association president and four other trustees appointed by the Executive Council. One of the appointed trustees shall be a current member of the Executive Council, and another of the appointed trustees shall be designated the managing trustee.”

WHEREAS, the above-described board of trustees for 2022 is composed of Christopher John Newfield (association president), Ignacio Sánchez-Prado (Executive Council member), William Janeway, Domna C. Stanton, and Catharine R. Stimpson, and William Janeway has been designated the managing trustee;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that, upon the direction to Paula M. Krebs as executive director and Terrence Callaghan as director of administration and finance of any member of the board of trustees to effect the purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition of any security or securities held in the permanent fund or any other endowment funds, the executive director and director of administration and finance be and hereby are authorized and directed to take all such steps and to execute and deliver all such documents as they shall deem necessary or appropriate to effect such purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the president of the MLA be and hereby is authorized and directed to certify this resolution to any third party requiring delivery of same in order to substantiate the proper authority for the disposition of the securities of the permanent fund or any other endowment funds.

Finally, the council reappointed Samer Mahdy Ali and Rebecca Colesworthy to the association’s Finance and Audit Committee for 2022.

2. Revision of the MLA Dues Schedule. The Executive Council confirmed the action taken by the 2022 Delegate Assembly to revise the dues schedule of the association. The following table shows the new dues schedule, which will go into effect in September 2022.

Current Dues Schedule		Dues Schedule Subject to Confirmation	
Dues Class	Amount	Dues Class	Amount
B Employed Less Than Full-Time	\$29	B Employed Less Than Full-Time	\$30
1 Up to \$30,000	\$56	1 Up to \$30,000	\$57
2 \$30,000–\$50,000	\$88	2 \$30,000–\$50,000	\$91
3 \$50,000–\$70,000	\$132	3 \$50,000–\$70,000	\$136
4 \$70,000–\$100,000	\$177	4 \$70,000–\$100,000	\$181
5 \$100,000–\$140,000	\$221	5 \$100,000–\$140,000	\$226
6 \$140,000–\$180,000	\$277	6 \$140,000–\$180,000	\$284
7 \$180,000–\$220,000	\$332	7 \$180,000–\$220,000	\$340
8 Over \$220,000	\$387	8 Over \$220,000	\$396
L Joint Secondary	\$56	L Joint Secondary	\$57
E Student	\$29	E Student	\$30

3. Report of the MLA Trustees. The council received the trustees' annual report, which showed that at the end of the calendar year 2021 the total value of the MLA endowment increased by 11.3%. Council members had no questions about the report.

4. Approval of the October 2021 Council Minutes. The council corrected the draft minutes of its October 2021 meeting and approved the revised draft for publication at the MLA website.

5. Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings. The council confirmed six decisions that it made between its October 2021 and February 2022 meetings:

In November, the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities asked the council to review its proposed revision of the “Suggestions for Faculty Members Writing Letters of Recommendation” section of the *MLA Guidelines on Letters of Recommendation*, which it made after soliciting input from the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Humanities, at the suggestion of the council. The council approved the revisions and the updated guidelines were published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/Resources/Career/Career-Resources/MLA-Guidelines-on-Letters-of-Recommendation>).

Also in November, CAFPRR asked the council to review its proposed statement, Statement on Campus Reopenings and Challenges to Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Shared Governance. The committee drafted the statement as a follow-up to the Statement on Administrative Overreach, Shared Governance, and Faculty Rights in the Time of COVID-19, which the committee drafted and the council approved as an MLA statement in March 2021. The council approved the statement, and it was published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2021/Statement-on-Campus-Reopenings-and-Challenges-to-Academic-Freedom-Tenure-and-Shared-Governance>)

Also in November, Executive Director Paula M. Krebs asked the council to approve the submission of a \$100,000 grant application to the Social Science Research Council's Sustaining Humanities Infrastructure Program. The grant would allow the association to extend the impact of the MLA's Mellon-funded Reading-Writing Pedagogy at Access-Oriented Institutions (AOIs) program. The council authorized Krebs to submit the application.

In February, Paula M. Krebs shared with the Executive Council a request from members in Australia that the council consider signing a statement expressing concern about Australia's acting Federal Minister for Education Stuart Robert's veto of literary studies grants recommended to him by the Australian Research Council. The statement had been signed by concerned members of the public, including writers, researchers, teachers, and students. The council authorized Krebs to sign the statement on behalf of the association. The text of the statement was published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/About->

Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2022/Statement-Regarding-the-Veto-of-Literary-Studies-Australia-Research-Council-Grants).

Also in February, the Executive Council approved the Statement on the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act, which urged the United States Senate to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. The statement was published on the MLA website (<https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2022/Statement-on-the-John-Lewis-Voting-Rights-Advancement-Act-and-the-Freedom-to-Vote-Act>)

Finally, in February, the council also made an interim appointment to a standing committee.

7. Departmental Reports. The council received annual reports submitted by the MLA department heads. One council member asked whether future annual conventions will be held in a hybrid format. Karin Bagnall said that conventions will have virtual sessions. A council member asked whether the Working Group on Convention Sites has continued its discussion about the issues surrounding negotiating with cities that have particular policies around police violence. Bagnall said that the group had a conversation before the convention and will continue to discuss the cities where future conventions are scheduled and the challenges they face around policing. A council member asked Mary Onorato whether there were trends that could impact the *MLA International Bibliography* and libraries more generally of which the council should be aware. Onorato said that the staff members in the Office of Bibliographic Information Services has looked at the possibility of indexing materials that are not in print, but that more staff members would be needed to undertake that work. She noted that when library staff members are faced with tighter budgets, they look at what products they subscribe to. If usage of a product is low, they use niche products instead.

8. Election of a Council Member to the DAOC. The council elected Leah S. Marcus to the DAOC for a two-year term (2022–Jan. 2024).

9. Committee Renewal and Revision of Committee Charge. Anticipating the expiration of its current charge in June 2022, the Committee on K–16 Alliances requested that the council renew the committee for an additional five-year term but with a revised charge. The committee’s Executive Council adviser, Julie Shoults, explained that the committee's charge was expansive, and the proposed revision streamlined it, mindful of the multiple constituencies that the

committee represents. She said that as the committee continues its work, the members will decide, based on their areas of expertise, interest, and work, what projects to pursue. The council renewed the committee for five years, through June 2027, and approved the new charge that the committee proposed. The revised charge appears below.

The Committee on K–16 Alliances will build support in the educational community and beyond for teaching modern languages, writing, and literature at all levels; contribute to the development of the MLA’s advocacy policies, procedures, and professional development resources on K–16 issues; and collaborate with other MLA constituencies to strengthen pathways to careers in education for graduate student members of the MLA.

10. Appointments to MLA Committees. The council made fifty-one appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed twelve committee chairs or cochairs and three council advisers. The names of all new and continuing committee members, chairs, cochairs, and council advisers will appear on the MLA website at the start of their terms.

11. Report on the MLA Website and Social Media. The council received a report from council members Rebecca Colesworthy, Ann Kalscheur Suarez, and Lisa Karakaya and former council member Elizabeth Mathews Losh with suggestions about how to present the MLA’s work through the association’s website and social media accounts. Anna Chang will take the suggestions to her colleagues in the Office of Outreach.

12. Updates from the Governance Task Force. The council reviewed four sets of recommendations from the governance task force. It accepted the first set of recommendations, which suggested changes to the presentation of candidates’ information in the fall election ballot: bringing to the forefront their platforms and goals with their professional biographies effectively backing up and supporting their statements on matters of professional concern. The candidate information form that second vice president and executive council candidates fill out will be foregrounded with a reminder about those roles to assist the candidates as they complete the form and write their statements.

The council accepted the second set of recommendations, which suggested changes to the onboarding that new officers and council members receive prior to the February council meeting. An afternoon orientation meeting is held the day before the council meeting; this will be preceded by an online meeting to assist the new members in assuming their roles.

The council also decided to adopt one of the recommendations included in the fourth set, the creation of a running agenda to help council members track projects between meetings. The governance task force will meet with Christopher John Newfield and Paula Krebs to revisit the other recommendations, which the council will discuss at its May meeting.

13. Updates from the Subcommittee on Advocacy and Guidelines. Christopher John Newfield provided an update on this work. The next steps include further refinement of the “tool kit” and the organization of included documents and the regularization of annotations.

14. Consideration of an Annual State of the Profession Report. The council had invited Erec Koch, chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, to speak with the council about what he believes are some of the pressing challenges facing colleagues. Koch attended through *Zoom* and highlighted two of his concerns: continuing challenges to academic freedom; and faculty members’ intellectual property. He noted that faculty members have always been concerned about how learning management systems might affect intellectual property. This issue became more prominent at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when faculty members had to teach through *Zoom* and make more use of these tools. During discussion, Christopher John Newfield suggested that the council could explore the drafting of an annual “state of the profession” report, and that he would be in touch after the council meeting with Koch.

15. Creation of a New Subcommittee of the Council. The council created on Saturday at Christopher John Newfield’s suggestion a Strategy Committee for the Profession. The subcommittee will examine strategic planning for the profession. Newfield said that he would like the committee to eventually prepare public-facing work to explain the crises that the humanities are facing. Samer Mahdy Ali, Esther Allen, Frieda Ekotto, and Ifeoma Nwankwo Kiddoe will join Newfield on the committee.