

# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

*[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its October 2016 meeting.]*

The council met on 19–20 May 2016 at the MLA office in New York. President Kwame Anthony Appiah presided. The officers present were First Vice President Diana Taylor, Second Vice President Anne Ruggles Gere, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Emily Apter, Angelika Bammer, Brian Croxall, Gaurav G. Desai, Lenora Hanson, Margaret R. Higonnet, Paula M. Krebs, David Palumbo-Liu, David Tse-chien Pan, Elizabeth Schwartz Crane, and Vicky Unruh. Donald E. Hall, Rafael A. Ramirez Mendoza, and Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting were absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Associate Executive Director and Director of Scholarly Communication Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director of Information Systems Micki Kaufman, Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, Director of Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, Director of Outreach Siovahn Walker, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses. Controller Arlene Barnard was present for discussions of the MLA budget (see item 1, below).

In the morning on 19 May, the council convened in regular session to begin working through the reports and action items on its agenda. After lunch, a regular session for the full council was followed by separate meetings of four groups of council members. As had been planned in February (see *PMLA*, vol. 131, no. 5, Oct. 2016, p. 1564), these groups discussed specific initiatives in the strategic plan that require council involvement and developed projects to support the initiatives. At the end of the afternoon, the full council reconvened to hear reports from the four groups' chairs and to continue working on agenda items. On 20 May, after a meeting of the council's Audit Committee, the council first convened in executive session to conduct the annual review of the policy documents that pertain to the MLA staff and to the working environment at the MLA headquarters office. Following the executive session, the council convened in regular session to work through the remaining items on its agenda. The council adjourned at 12:10 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The Finance Committee presented a midyear report on finances with a summary of association income and expenses in the fiscal year 2015–16 after seven months. The committee reviewed changes in the projections for the major revenue and expense categories and noted that the projected deficit had decreased since the start of the fiscal year.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year 2016–17 that projected a deficit of \$676,630 in the association's unrestricted fund. The committee explained that overall revenue was projected to be steady but that expenses would be higher, due in part to the investments that are being made in the objectives of the strategic plan. After reviewing the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2016–17, the council voted to approve it.

Finally, the council designated EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the association's fiscal year 2015–16 accounts.

2. *Approval of the February 2016 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its February 2016 meeting for publication in the October 2016 issue of *PMLA*.

3. *Discussion of Convention Registration Fees.* The council received the staff report it had requested in February on the feasibility of and costs related to the proposal to offer free convention registration for graduate students and different groups of contingent faculty members (see *PMLA*, vol. 131, no. 5, Oct. 2016, p. 1566). The report gave detailed information on the income earned from the 2016 convention registration fees paid by the types of members covered by the February proposal. The report also made clear that the registration categories are based on membership (i.e., regular member, student member, nonmember) or employment status (i.e., retired, unemployed, employed part-time), not on income. During their discussion of the report, council members agreed that travel costs were more of an impediment to convention attendance than the registration fee and raised questions about the equitability of providing a benefit to members in a particular employment category, regardless of income, but not to regular members whose incomes may be comparable. It was also noted that paying the registration fee signals a commitment to the community that the association represents and that eliminating the fee could have the undesirable effect of devaluing the convention as a gathering of peers and as a venue for engagement with the profession and for professional development. The council concluded that all convention attendees should pay for registration but that the fees might be lowered for members in the three lowest dues categories, regardless of employment status. The staff will present a revised proposal to the council in October.

4. *Adoption of Rolling Membership Year.* Acting on a staff proposal that grew out of the council's strategic planning, the council replaced the association's calendar-year membership cycle with a rolling or anniversary membership cycle. The change will be implemented at the end of the current membership cycle. The council also established or confirmed membership deadlines associated with such matters as participation in the convention, eligibility for elective office, submission of motions and resolutions for consideration by the Delegate Assembly, and access to election and other ballots. The change in

membership cycle and the various membership deadlines will be widely publicized to the membership.

5. *PMLA Editor Search Procedures.* Vicky Unruh presented to the council the final draft of the *PMLA* editor search procedures that the council had requested in February (see *PMLA*, vol. 131, no. 5, Oct. 2016, p. 1566). Because this draft included a new guideline that was prompted by a council member's comment on the previous draft, Unruh sought the council's approval of the final version of the document. The added guideline stipulated the ineligibility of sitting council members for consideration for editor, a stipulation that can be modified only by a vote of the council. The council approved the inclusion of the new guideline; the final version of the document will be made available to future council subcommittees charged with overseeing *PMLA* editor searches.

6. *Policy on Access to MLA Archive.* The staff reported that the development of an MLA archive had progressed to the point where a formal access policy was needed and so presented a draft policy for the council's consideration. The proposed policy provides for both off-site reference requests and on-site visits and includes information for researchers on the submission of requests for access, the handling of archival materials, and access restrictions. The council approved the draft policy.

7. *Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities.* The council selected Anna Deavere Smith as the recipient of the 2016 Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities. Smith is an actress and playwright and the founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Discourse, now housed at New York University, where Smith is also university professor and professor of art and public policy in the Tisch School of the Arts. The award ceremony will be held during the 2017 MLA convention in Philadelphia.

8. *Literary Translation Prizes.* The association's two prizes for literary translations, the Lois Roth Award and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for a Translation of a Literary Work, are now conferred biennially, in alternating years. At its March 2016 meeting, the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA) discussed a request from the board of directors of the Lois Roth Endowment to confer the Lois Roth Award annually; the added costs, including administrative expenses, are to be covered by the endowment. Since the joint prize selection committee that evaluates submissions for both the Roth Award and the Scaglione Prize would be able to select the recipients of both prizes each year and since the costs of an annual Scaglione Prize would be covered by the Scaglione endowment, the CHA recommended that both the Lois Roth Award and the Scaglione Prize for a Translation of a Literary Work be conferred annually. The council approved the recommendation, which will be implemented for the 2017 prize competitions.

9. *Moratorium on the Nomination of Honorary Fellows.* The council received a report from the Committee on Honors and Awards on the committee's consideration

of an honorary fellow nomination received from the membership. Despite receiving fuller nomination information in keeping with the new submission requirements that the council established in 2015 (see *PMLA*, vol. 131, no. 3, May 2016, p. 850), the committee found that its evaluation of the nomination was impeded by two factors: a lack of clarity as to the purpose of the honorary fellow category and the arbitrariness of the process of identifying potential honorees. The committee proposed to postpone its consideration of the nomination for a year and requested the council's guidance on the category's purpose and on ways to enhance the coherence of the nomination process. The council discussed the committee's request and appointed a subcommittee to draft a response. In addition to clarifying the purpose of the category, the subcommittee will consider whether to recommend the establishment of a committee that would both vet and generate honorary fellow nominations. The council imposed a moratorium on the nomination of honorary fellows until the subcommittee and the council complete their work on the committee's request.

10. *Establishment of Committee on K–16 Alliances.* Pursuant to a request from the second vice president, the council decided to replace the ad hoc Working Group on K–16 Alliances with a standing committee. The original sunset date for the working group was changed from February 2018 to June 2017, and the Committee on K–16 Alliances will begin an initial five-year term on 1 July 2017. The council approved the following charge for the committee:

The Committee on K–16 Alliances is charged with building support in the educational community and beyond for teaching modern languages, writing, and literature at all levels; contributing to the development of the MLA's advocacy policies and procedures on K–16 issues; identifying ways to integrate the ADE and the ADFL into the MLA's advocacy for teaching English and other languages at all levels, with particular attention to the indigenous American languages; identifying secondary school audiences for MLA publications; advising on the development of public-facing publications; organizing convention sessions addressing K–16 issues; and working with other MLA committees (e.g., the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession, the Committee on Community Colleges) to strengthen pathways to careers in education for graduate student members of the MLA.

The committee will have seven members drawn from English and foreign languages, two of whom will be high school teachers. The council will make initial appointments at the February 2017 council meeting.

11. *Appointment of Council Advisers to Professional-Issues Committees.* Acting on a request from a council member, the council agreed to appoint a council adviser to each of the association's professional-issues committees. The adviser's role is to provide information to the committee on council initiatives, clarify council requests and directives, and relay the committee's questions and concerns back to the council. To carry out this role, the adviser will receive committee communications and be included in the committee's *MLA Commons* group; the adviser may also participate in some portion of the committee's meetings by telephone or videoconference. Since the adviser is not a member of the committee, he or she does not vote or otherwise participate in the committee's decision-making processes. The names of the appointed advisers appear on the committee listings pages at the MLA Web site. Paula Krebs, the council's liaison to the Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession, suggested continuing the liaison arrangement for this committee, since it provides for closer collaboration between the council and the committee.

12. *Review of Standing Committees.* The council's committee-related discussions at the present meeting prompted a decision to hold an overall review of standing committees at a future council meeting.

13. *Council Meeting Schedule.* The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2019: 22–23 February, 16–17 May, and 25–26 October.

14. *Committee Appointment.* The council made one committee appointment. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear on the MLA Web site.

15. *Statement on Discrimination against Transgender Individuals.* A member requested that the council issue a statement condemning North Carolina House Bill 2, which was seen as promoting discrimination against transgender individuals. A small group of council members drafted a statement during the meeting and circulated the draft to the full council just after the meeting using the council's electronic discussion list. The council approved the draft statement, which was copyedited and posted on the Executive Council Actions page of the MLA Web site on 1 June.