

# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

*[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its October 2018 meeting.]*

THE COUNCIL MET ON 17–18 MAY 2018 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Anne Ruggles Gere presided. The officers present were First Vice President Simon E. Gikandi, Second Vice President Judith Butler, and Executive Director Paula M. Krebs. The Executive Council members present were Emily Apter (17 May only), Angelika Bammer, Eric Hayot, Jean Elizabeth Howard, Amanda Licastro, Elizabeth Mathews Losh (17 May only), David Tse-chien Pan, Leah Richards, Evie Shockley (17 May only), Vicky Unruh, and Dana A. Williams. Rafael Ramirez Mendoza and Ramon Saldívar 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, Director of Scholarly Communication Angela Gibson, Director of Research David Laurence, Director of Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, Director of Outreach Siovah 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).

On 17 May, over the course of four regular sessions, the council worked through several of the reports and action items on its agenda. In the morning on 18 May, 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. During the regular session that followed, the council took up the remaining items on its agenda. The council adjourned at 12:30 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 2017–18 after six months. The committee reviewed changes in the projections for the major revenue and expense categories and noted that the projected deficit had increased since the start of the fiscal year. Paula Krebs said that revenue from membership dues and from the convention did not meet projections and that members of the staff were trying to close the gap by reducing spending where possible.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year 2018–19 that projected a deficit of \$112,440 in the association's unrestricted fund. This low deficit was projected because of two factors: a projected increase in overall revenue and a proposal to reduce expenses for committee meetings by instructing eleven standing committees to hold regular teleconference or online meetings

throughout the year and to hold their annual in-person meetings at the annual convention instead of at the MLA office. The committee explained that travel to New York had proved difficult or impossible for many committee members in recent years, that appropriate technology for online meetings was widely available, and that several committees already held virtual meetings through the year and were able to keep projects on track. Space could be made available for three- or four-hour in-person committee meetings on the first day of the convention, during time slots that would not conflict with convention sessions. The council discussed this proposal at length and decided to implement it for ten of the eleven standing committees on a trial basis in 2018–19 and on the understanding that the committees affected would be given guidelines on the conduct of successful online meetings and would be asked to monitor, assess, and report to the council on the effects of the change in meeting venue. The council then voted to approve the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2018–19.

The council adopted the following resolution relating to financial management. [Note: The president certified the council's action by signing the original document containing the resolution. The document was then stamped with the association's corporate seal.]

WHEREAS, article 4, section E, 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 three trustees, each appointed by the Executive Council for a three-year term, the three terms to be staggered by one year. One of the trustees shall be designated the managing trustee"; and

WHEREAS, William Janeway, Domna Stanton, and Catharine Stimpson have been appointed by the Executive Council as the three trustees with authority to administer the permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds, and William Janeway has been designated the managing trustee of this committee (the "Permanent Fund Committee");

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 Permanent Fund Committee 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 dis-

position of the securities of the permanent fund or any other endowment funds.

Finally, the council designated EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the association's fiscal year 2017–18 accounts.

2. *Approval of the February 2018 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its February 2018 meeting for publication in the October 2018 issue of *PMLA*.

3. *Confirmation of an Action Taken between Council Meetings.* In March, Paula Krebs asked the council to approve signing on to a statement dealing with the elimination of humanities and social sciences majors at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, which the American Council of Learned Societies wanted to issue as a joint statement on behalf of member organizations. The council's procedure for making decisions between its meetings was implemented (see *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 4, Oct. 2010, p. 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the matter on its electronic discussion list. Since the council was unanimous in its approval of signing on to the statement, the council's advisory committee did not have to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed this decision.

4. *Handling of Advocacy Issues.* The council discussed its own role and the role of the executive director in identifying issues to address and formulating responses of various kinds. Council members thought that it would be helpful to develop advocacy tool kits on campus issues (e.g., staffing decisions, program reductions and consolidations) for use by faculty members and department chairs in their interactions with campus administrators. The council decided to establish a working group made up of MLA staff members, council members, and department chairs that would be charged with developing advocacy tool kits.

5. *Revised Report and Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures (CAPP).* The ad hoc committee had met in April to work on revising its report and recommendations in response to the 2018 Delegate Assembly's feedback on the committee's initial report (see *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 3, May 2018, pp. 762–64). In its revised report, the committee maintained several recommendations: that the Executive Council conduct its fiduciary review of resolutions, as specified in article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, in October to determine which resolutions can be forwarded to the Delegate Assembly; that the submission deadline for resolutions and motions be changed from 1 October to 1 September; that the word limit on resolutions be increased from one hundred to two hundred words; and that amendments to resolutions not be allowed on the floor of the Delegate Assembly. The committee changed other recommendations: the membership vote on resolutions would not be used to determine which resolutions the Delegate Assembly would consider but would be used,

as it is now, for the purpose of ratifying the assembly's approval of resolutions; supporting signatures would be collected in two stages, ten signatures by 1 September and one hundred by 1 October, instead of requiring all one hundred signatures by 1 September, and signers would be assured that their names would not become public; and emergency resolutions would not be eliminated but would be replaced by the new category of emergency motions, thereby allowing the assembly to address matters that arise after 1 September. The committee also drafted the constitutional amendments that will be needed if the committee's recommendations for changes in the resolution process are to be implemented. In terms of implementation, CAPP noted that the process going forward was as follows: presentation of CAPP's final report to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee in October and then to the Delegate Assembly in January 2019. If the assembly approves the revised recommendations, it will be asked to vote on the constitutional amendments.

The council discussed the ad hoc committee's report at length and decided to return the report to the committee with suggestions for revisions. One of these suggestions was to eliminate the new category of emergency motions, since the category blurred the distinction between motions and resolutions and seemed to be unnecessary, since members could address requests to the council at any time.

6. *Proposal of Constitutional Amendments.* In accordance with article 13.A of the MLA constitution, the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures asked the council formally to propose the constitutional amendments necessary to implement the changes to the resolution process that the committee recommended (see previous item). The council agreed to propose all but three of the amendments that the committee had drafted. It declined to propose the amendment creating the category of emergency motions, and it modified two amendments that aimed to clarify the effect that motions and resolutions can have on members acting as individuals.

The council also proposed an amendment to article 9.C.10 that grew out of its February 2018 statement reaffirming "the principle that the MLA has the right and the obligation to engage in full and open debate on issues of shared public concern" (see *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 5, Oct. 2018, p. 1278). The amendment consisted of the addition of the phrase "or issues of shared concern to the members" at the end of the article's second sentence.

Following the provisions of article 13.A of the MLA constitution, the council's proposals for amendments will be forwarded to the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution for action.

7. *PMLA Editor's Term.* The council exercised its option to extend Wai Chee Dimock's term as editor of *PMLA* by two years. Dimock was therefore invited to continue serving as editor through June 2021. [Note: Dimock accepted the term extension.]

8. *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 César Aira; Tahar ben Jelloun; Samuel R. Delany, Jr.; Gish Jen; Elias Khoury; Claudia Rankine; and J. K. Rowling for honorary fellowship. Following the provisions of article 3.D of the MLA constitution, the elections to honorary fellowship will be conducted during the 2019 Delegate Assembly meeting in Chicago.

9. *Recommendations from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA).* The council received the information it had requested from the CHA on the recommendations for new prizes that the committee had submitted in February (see *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 5, Oct. 2018, p. 1280). The council decided to implement the CHA's recommendation on a prize for edited collections by establishing the prize and instructing that it be conferred in alternation with the existing MLA Prize for a Bibliography, Archive, or Digital Project, which the council renamed the MLA Prize for Collaborative, Bibliographical, or Archival Scholarship. The council also decided to implement the CHA's revised recommendation on prizes to recognize work in South Asian studies, East Asian studies, and African studies by establishing in principle these three prizes and a prize in Middle Eastern studies. The African studies prize will alternate with the Middle Eastern studies prize, and the East Asian studies prize will alternate with the South Asian studies prize; competitions will not be held until sufficient funds are in place.

The council also received the CHA's recommendation on the simultaneous submissions policy, which the council adopted in May 2015 (see *PMLA*, vol. 131, no. 1, Jan. 2016, p. 214) for a two-year trial period that had come to an end with the 2017 award year. The council accepted the recommendation, which was to continue the simultaneous submissions policy as it is currently defined: a book can compete simultaneously for one of the association's major prizes—the James Russell Lowell Prize or the MLA Prize for a First Book—and one of the more specialized prizes but cannot win two prizes.

10. *Revision to the Charge of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP).* The CSWP requested that the council approve a revised version of the committee's charge that emerged from discussions of the committee's goals in the context of the current challenges facing academia and the humanities. The council approved the revised charge. The copyedited version of the charge reads as follows:

The Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP) was founded to act as an advocate for women's interests and as a catalyst for promoting the status of women in the profession. In its ongoing work, the committee strives to promote gender equity and inclusivity.

The committee will

- gather and review information and sponsor publications about the status of women in the profession, giving special attention to conditions of employment throughout the academic labor system and emphasizing gender inequities and inclusivity, part-time employment, differential salary levels, and patterns of professional advancement, as well as intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, and disability;
- gather and review information regarding the professional status of women and promote advocacy efforts for gender equity and inclusivity at all levels in the fields of languages and literatures;

- build coalitions with MLA committees and allied organizations that share the CSWP's interests;
- make available to the profession the results of the CSWP's studies; and
- organize programs for the MLA Annual Convention.

11. *Council Meeting Schedule.* The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2021: 26–27 February, 20–21 May, and 29–30 October.

12. *Committee Appointments.* The council made seven appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed one committee chair. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear on the MLA Web site.

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