

# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

*[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its February 2019 meeting.]*

THE COUNCIL MET ON 26–27 OCTOBER 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 Angelika Bammer, Eric Hayot, Jean Elizabeth Howard, Amanda Licastro, Elizabeth Mathews Losh, Rafael A. Ramirez Mendoza, Leah Richards, Ramon Saldivar, Evie Shockley, Vicky Unruh, and Dana A. Williams. Emily Apter and David Tse-chien Pan 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 Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, Director of Outreach Siovañ 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 26 October, the council began by meeting with the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), which had convened on 24–25 October to review assembly and other association business. Cheryl Narumi Naruse, the chair of the DAOC, summarized for the council the DAOC's discussion of the final report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures (see item 6, below). She noted that the DAOC endorsed the ad hoc committee's recommendations for changes to the resolution process, including the replacement of emergency resolutions by emergency motions. The DAOC thought that the latter would be useful and provide an additional mechanism for assembly participation in association governance. Naruse also reported that the DAOC had chosen the topic Power Differentials in Graduate Education for the open discussion during the Delegate Assembly meeting. To prepare for the open discussion, the DAOC planned to solicit information from members on their experiences with power dynamics during the month before the assembly meeting. The president noted that the council was thinking about the same issues and so was interested in incorporating the DAOC's work into a larger project that would eventually include some of the MLA's standing committees. Council members offered suggestions on framing the topic to show the many connections to graduate education that exist in all kinds of institutions.

Naruse concluded the committee's report by announcing that Michelle J. Brazier had been elected chair of the DAOC for the term 7 January 2019 through 12 January 2020. The president thanked the members of the DAOC for their work and closed the joint meeting. In addition to the DAOC chair, the members of the committee who

participated in the joint meeting were Brazier, Maryse Jayasuriya, and Svetlana Tyutina. Also present was MLA Parliamentarian Daniel E. Seabold.

After the meeting with the DAOC, the council convened in executive session to discuss a petition asking that Judith Butler resign as second vice president. After making a statement, Butler left the session. The council discussed the petition at length and decided not to ask Butler to resign. After lunch, the council convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. After a midafternoon break, the council met in executive session for the review of the executive director. This executive session was followed by a brief regular session and then by meetings of three council breakout groups on development that were established for this meeting. In the morning on 27 October, the council began by holding a teleconference with Michael Bérubé, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures. After the teleconference, the council convened in regular session for further discussion of and action on agenda items. The day concluded with two more executive sessions, one before and one after lunch. The council adjourned at 2:05 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received a report from the staff Finance Committee on the fiscal year just ended (2017–18) and on the final budget for the current fiscal year (2018–19). The committee projected that the association would conclude the 2017–18 fiscal year with a deficit of \$780,240 in the association's unrestricted and restricted funds, a deficit that was higher than the one projected at the start of the fiscal year. The higher deficit was due in large part to shortfalls in revenue from the bibliography, book publications, and the 2018 convention in New York.

The council reviewed the final budget for the fiscal year 2018–19, which projected a deficit of \$305,590 in the unrestricted and restricted funds, a figure that is higher than the deficit projected in the tentative budget that the council approved in May (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 203–04). The committee explained that the deficit was due to the continuation of a number of development projects that are part of the association's strategic plan, the costs of which would not fully be offset by the projected increase in revenue. After the staff responded to council members' questions, the council voted to approve the final budget for the fiscal year 2018–19.

The council also received the independent auditor's report on the MLA's 403(b) retirement plan at TIAA for the 2017 plan year and the auditor's letters to management. The report noted that the association had satisfactorily addressed the issue of the timely remittance of employee contributions and was in compliance with the relevant Department of Labor requirements.

The council authorized the following staff members to sign nonpayroll checks: Terrence Callaghan, Barbara Chen, Angela Gibson, Paula Krebs, Dennis Looney, and

Siovaahn Walker. Two signatures are required on checks in amounts over two thousand dollars. The council also authorized Terrence Callaghan and Paula Krebs to sign payroll checks.

2. *Trustee Appointments.* Given the new constitutional requirement for a trustee who is a current member of the Executive Council (see art. 4.F), the council appointed Eric Hayot as a trustee of the association's invested funds for the term 2019–20. The council reappointed Domna C. Stanton, distinguished professor of French at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a past president of the MLA, as a trustee of the association's invested funds for the term 2019–21. With regard to the new constitutional limitation on trustee service to no more than three consecutive terms (see art. 4.F), this term will count as Stanton's first.

3. *Appointment of a Delegate to the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).* The council appointed Gaurav G. Desai to a four-year term (2019–22) as the association's representative in the Delegate Assembly of the ACLS.

4. *Approval of the May 2018 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its May 2018 meeting for publication in the January 2019 issue of *PMLA*.

5. *Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings.* The council took four actions between its May and October meetings. (1) It agreed to send a letter to the president of the University of Montana urging reconsideration of a restructuring strategy that would "devastate humanities education and research, and especially language and literature education and research." (2) It approved a corporate resolution from Chase Bank that named Paula Krebs as executive director, thereby enabling her to conduct the association's business with Chase. (3) It added the MLA's name to a list of organizations opposed to an amendment proposed in the House of Representatives by Glenn Grothman (R-WI) to reduce the funding of the National Endowment for the Humanities by fifteen percent. (4) Pursuant to a request from a member regarding Lara Alqasem, a graduate student from the United States, the council agreed to issue a brief statement defending the freedom of students to travel across national borders to pursue education. When these actions were proposed, the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings was implemented (see *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 4, Oct. 2010, p. 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the actions on its electronic discussion list. Since the council was unanimous in its approval of the proposed actions, its advisory committee did not have to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed these decisions.

6. *Final Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Advocacy Policies and Procedures.* The ad hoc committee's final report took account of all but one of the council's suggestions for revision that had been forwarded to the committee after the May 2018 meeting (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 204–06). During the council's teleconference with Michael Bérubé, the ad hoc committee's chair, he explained that the ad hoc committee had maintained

its recommendation on establishing a new category of emergency motions because of the Delegate Assembly's stated opposition to the ad hoc committee's recommendation to eliminate emergency resolutions. He further noted that emergency motions, being motions, would be treated as communications to the council and so would preserve, not blur, the distinction between motions and resolutions. Paula Krebs added that the ad hoc committee's inclusion of a provision allowing a vote on emergency motions was a new element, since the current rules allow only for the discussion of motions received after the 1 October submission deadline.

The council voted to accept the ad hoc committee's final report and recommendations, which are as follows: 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; that the required number of supporting signatures for resolutions be increased from ten to one hundred and that the supporting signatures be collected in two stages, ten signatures by 1 September and one hundred by 1 October; 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 emergency resolutions be replaced by emergency motions; that amendments to resolutions not be allowed on the floor of the Delegate Assembly; and that the membership vote on resolutions, which would be conducted as soon as possible after the assembly meeting, continue to serve as a vote to ratify the assembly's approval of resolutions. The 2019 Delegate Assembly will consider these recommendations but will vote on the corresponding constitutional amendments, which the council initiated at its May 2018 meeting (see *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 1, Jan. 2019, p. 206). Since the council did not initiate an amendment to provide for emergency motions, the 2019 assembly will be asked to do so.

7. *Progress Report from the Working Group on the Future of the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare.* The council received a progress report from the working group charged in May 2017 with investigating possible partnerships, collaborations, funding sources, new uses of data, and editorial environments so as to ensure the future of the variorum project (see *PMLA*, vol. 133, no. 1, Jan. 2018, p. 228). The report detailed the research the working group had undertaken to establish the principles that would guide its investigations into the digitization of the project; the relocation of the project to a new, networked environment; and possible funding streams. The working group asked the council for guidance on next steps and the MLA's future role in the project; the council responded to the working group's questions.

8. *Annual Reports from Standing Committees.* The council received annual reports from the editor of *PMLA* and from the following standing committees: Publications Committee, Committee on Scholarly Editions, Advisory

Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, Committee on Honors and Awards, Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Committee on Information Technology, Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, Committee on Community Colleges, Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession, and Committee on K–16 Alliances. The council accepted these reports with thanks.

9. *Directive to the Publications Committee.* To streamline the association's book publications process and bring it in line with operational procedures at similar presses, the council encouraged the Publications Committee to work with its chair and staff members in the Office of Scholarly Communication to identify ways to revise the committee-review stage of the book publications process so as to decrease time to publication, allow the publication of more titles with current resources, and optimize the fiscal health of the publication program so that the program garners goodwill on the part of contributors and thus incentivizes submission from potential authors.

10. *Recommendations from the Program Committee.* The council received and acted on the Program Committee's recommendations regarding allied organizations. The council renewed for seven years the allied organization status of seventeen societies: Association for Business Communication, Conseil International d'Études Francophones, Council of Writing Program Administrators, Edith Wharton Society, Eugene O'Neill Society, International Society for the Study of Narrative, John Donne Society, Society for Critical Exchange, Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship, Society for the Study of Southern Literature, South Asian Literary Association, Thoreau Society, T. S. Eliot Society, Wallace Stevens Society, Women in German, Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages, and Wordsworth-Coleridge Association. The Romanian Studies Association of America, whose allied status had been renewed in 2015 for three years, was renewed for an additional four years. The council renewed for three years the allied organization status of the Société Rencensvals, American Canadian Branch, and authorized the Program Committee to transmit concerns about the society's declining membership and to suggest ways to broaden members' participation. The council approved the committee's recommendation on requesting additional information from the Paul Claudel Society and on allowing the society to submit proposals for nonguaranteed sessions but not to arrange any guaranteed sessions until its current review is completed. The council postponed the reviews of the Radical Caucus in English and the Modern Languages and the Society for German Renaissance and Baroque Literature until May 2019 and approved a request for a one-year postponement of its review from the International Dostoevsky Society, because of a leadership transition. The council approved a petition for allied organization status from the Electronic Literature Organization; it did not approve a petition for allied organization status submitted by the North American Catalan Society.

The council also received and approved the Program Committee's recommendations regarding forums, fifteen of which were reviewed for the first time. The following forums were renewed for five years with no change in their allocation of guaranteed sessions: CLCS 18th-Century, CLCS Romantic and 19th-Century, GS Children's and Young Adult Literature, LLC 19th-Century American, LLC Dutch, LLC 17th-Century English, LLC Francophone, LLC 20th- and 21st-Century Latin American, LLC Scottish, LLC Medieval Iberian, TM Literary Criticism, and TC Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Literature. Two forums, LLC East Asian and TC Philosophy and Literature, were renewed for five years but will arrange one fewer guaranteed session (three instead of four and one instead of two, respectively) going forward. The forum LSL Germanic Philology and Linguistics was discontinued because the executive committee did not submit the required review materials.

11. *Committee Appointments.* The council made six committee appointments. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear on the MLA Web site.

12. *Statement on Restrictions Affecting Foreign Nationals Serving Palestinian Universities.* Pursuant to a request from a member, the council approved a statement on restrictions that foreign nationals serving Palestinian universities face. The statement was copyedited and posted on the MLA Web site. The statement appears below.

The MLA condemns Israeli restrictions on the entry and presence of foreign nationals serving Palestinian universities. Such restrictions disrupt academic programs, undermine the teaching of foreign languages, and limit the internationalizing of the curriculum.

As a scholarly association, we are committed to the principles of academic freedom, opportunities for international academic travel and exchange, and the development of global academic perspectives. Restrictions on the entry and presence of foreign nationals serving Palestinian universities represent an assault on these principles. For example, on 8 June 2018, seven international faculty members at Birzeit University (BZU), one-third of the university's international staff, were refused visa extensions. A number of these faculty members had taught at BZU for a decade or more and played key roles in many areas of the curriculum.

In response to this and similar restrictions imposed on other Palestinian universities, the MLA calls for freedom of entry and presence of international faculty members at all Palestinian universities. We call on Israeli education authorities to ensure that professors at Palestinian universities can renew their visas. We ask that Israel discontinue random denials of entry to foreign nationals traveling to the West Bank and Gaza and ensure that academics who have been unjustly denied entry will be allowed to reenter the West Bank and Gaza.

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**Applications due October 8, 2019**  
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