

Minutes of the MLA Delegate Assembly

The Delegate Assembly approved these minutes at its 2023 meeting.

The Delegate Assembly met on 8 January 2022 at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, DC. Second Vice President Frieda Ekotto presided. The assembly was called to order at 12:30 p.m. The chair made preliminary announcements about the conduct of the meeting. The chair also explained that, because the meeting was open to all MLA members and to credentialed members of the press, speakers should have no expectation of confidentiality. She added that tweeting was allowed but that no photography or voice or video recording was permitted. The chair announced the quorum for the meeting, which was 8 delegates, because 17 delegates had signed in for the meeting at the beginning. [Note: Of the 280 delegates, 18 (6.43%) attended all or part of the meeting (see the list that follows for the names of the delegates in attendance).]

1. On behalf of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), Leah Richards moved the adoption of the agenda that was previously distributed to delegates. The chair asked if there was debate on the agenda. Since there was none, the chair asked if there were objections to adopting the agenda as distributed. There were no objections, so the chair declared the agenda adopted by unanimous consent.

Richards then offered a motion on behalf of the DAOC that the rules presented to the assembly be adopted as distributed. This motion occasioned no discussion and no objections. The chair therefore declared the rules adopted by unanimous consent.

Again on behalf of the DAOC, Richards moved that the assembly approve the minutes of the January 2021 meeting. The chair asked if there were corrections. Since no corrections were offered, the chair declared the minutes approved as published.

2. The chair described the requirements for the election of delegates to the DAOC and Executive Council and members to the Nominating Committee and Elections Committee. She again recognized Leah Richards of the DAOC, who explained that unprecedented conditions had prevented many delegates who planned to attend this meeting in person from traveling to Washington and voting. On behalf of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, Richards moved that all votes on elections scheduled for this meeting—including elections to fill seats on the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, the Executive Council, the Nominating

Committee, and the Elections Committee—be conducted by electronic ballot, with the following provisions:

- that each electronic ballot be made available to all delegates for twenty-four hours before the polls are closed and
- that for the elections to fill seats on the Delegate Organizing Committee and the Executive Council, delegates be instructed to rank the candidates, so that if no candidate receives a majority, the ranking can be used to determine the winner of a runoff between the top two candidates without reballoting.

The chair asked if there was any debate. Because there was none, she asked for those in favor of the motion to say “aye” and those opposed to say “no.” There were no objections, so the chair declared the motion passed by unanimous consent. The results of the votes, conducted on 8 and 9 January 2022 are provided below:

3. The assembly elected two of its members, Pamela Lothspeich (Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) and Asha Sen (Univ. of Wisconsin, Eau Claire) to the DAOC for three-year terms (from 10 Jan. 2022 through the close of the Jan. 2025 convention). The assembly elected one of its members, Brenda Brueggemann (Univ. of Connecticut, Storrs) to the Executive Council for a four-year term (from 10 January 2022 through the close of the January 2026 convention). Voting from a slate of nominees selected by the current officers of the association, the assembly elected Petrus Liu (Boston Univ.), Su Fang Ng (Virginia Tech), James Parente (Univ. of Minnesota, Twin Cities), and Jeff Rider (Wesleyan Univ.) to the Nominating Committee for two-year terms (2022–23). Voting from a slate of nominees selected by the DAOC, the assembly elected the following persons to the Elections Committee for two-year terms (2022–23): Jane Hwang Degenhardt (Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst) for Region 1, New England and Eastern Canada; Maria Sol Echarren (Florida International Univ.) for Region 5, South; Doaa Omran (Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque) for Region 6, Central and Rocky Mountain; and Danielle Spratt (California State University, Northridge) for Region 7, Western United States and Western Canada.

4. The assembly was asked to confirm the automatic annual increase of 2.5% in the dues amount for every membership category, rounded to the next dollar, that the 2017 assembly had approved (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 3, May 2017, p. 762). The chair recognized Samer Mahdy Ali

of the DAOC, who presented the chart below, showing the effect of the automatic increase on current dues amounts. She said that the increased dues amounts would become effective in September 2022 if the assembly confirmed the automatic increase.

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

On behalf of the DAOC, Samer Mahdy Ali moved that the assembly confirm the scheduled dues increase. The chair called for discussion of the motion. The chair asked the assembly to vote on the motion confirming the scheduled dues increase, for those who approved to say “aye” and those opposed to say “no.” The motion to pass the dues schedule passed.

5. The chair again recognized Leah Richards to present the report of the DAOC on behalf of the committee’s chair, María Chouza-Calo. Richards shared that the committee met in October 2021 to plan the 2022 Delegate Assembly’s agenda. It scheduled a December meeting to discuss the results of the advocacy network survey that it sent to delegates the first week of November and the Open Discussion portion of the 2022 Delegate Assembly agenda, which

would be held online on 21 January 2022, and was open to all delegates who were serving at the time of the 2022 Delegate Assembly. The DAOC decided that the topic of the open discussion would be Advocacy for the 2020s.

The chair asked if there were any questions about the report. There were none.

6. The assembly received the report of the executive director, the Finance Committee report, and annual reports from the following association committees: *PMLA* Editorial Board; the Committee on Scholarly Editions; the Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*; the Committee on Honors and Awards; the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities; the Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada; the Committee on Women, Gender, and Sexuality in the Profession; the Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession; the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Humanities; and the Committee on K–16 Alliances. The chair recognized Paula Krebs to present the executive director's report and the Finance Committee report.

Krebs said that the ninth edition of the *MLA Handbook* was released in spring 2021. In September, *MLA Handbook Plus*, the MLA's first online platform for institutional subscribers, was launched. She explained that when libraries subscribe to *Handbook Plus*, all students at those institutions get free access to the handbook. She said that we are very proud of this new way of distributing the handbook and hope that college and university libraries will take advantage of it.

The Office of Bibliographic Information Services has continued to expand our free online course as well as our library of tutorial videos to help faculty members integrate the *MLA International Bibliography* into their courses. The bibliography is hosted by EBSCO, and 2021 marked the launch of a new annual award recognizing collaboration between librarians and faculty members, funded by a contribution from EBSCO.

Krebs highlighted the virtual programs organized by staff members in the Office of Programs during the past year, including gatherings for chairs to network; a series of conversations on planning, teaching, and conducting research in the pandemic for department leaders; the summer institute for department leaders, and the MLA Institutes in Reading-Writing Pedagogy for Access-Oriented Institutions (AOIs), funded by the Mellon Foundation.

Continuing to discuss the association's virtual offerings, she said that the association's staff has continued to work to provide virtual resources for members, sponsoring webinars on how graduate education has been changed by the pandemic, on the new edition of the *MLA Handbook*, on graduate student advocacy, and on remote teaching. The remote teaching webinar was launched in conjunction with the founding of a remote teaching group on *MLA Commons*. Webinars about MLA style continue to be our most popular virtual programming. The chair asked if there were any questions or comments. Because there were none, the chair recognized Leah Richards of the DAOC to present the reports from the association's standing committees. Richards noted that delegates received a summary sheet of the available reports and that the reports are available online. She encouraged everyone to read the reports and contact the MLA with any questions. The chair asked if there were questions about any of the reports. There were none.

7. The association received no motions or resolutions by the 1 September deadline. In addition, the DAOC did not receive any emergency motions by the 12:30 p.m. deadline on Friday, 7 January.

8. The chair called for announcements. No one came forward.

9. The chair declared the 2022 meeting of the Delegate Assembly adjourned sine die at 1:49 p.m.

10. On 21 January 2022, interested delegates were invited to attend an online virtual discussion, chaired by Christopher John Newfield, the new president of the MLA; ordinarily, the first vice president chairs the Delegate Assembly; since Newfield was unable to be in attendance, he offered to host the open discussion.

After Paula Krebs reviewed housekeeping information, Maria Chouza Calo, who had been the 2020–21 DAOC chair, introduced the open discussion's topic, Advocacy for the 2020s.

Chouza Calo said that first Christopher Newfield would share the report from the advocacy group. Afterward, the delegates would be moving into ten breakout rooms to discuss for thirty minutes three of the questions from the survey that delegates had received the previous November:

- What is your administration doing in relation to COVID-specific teaching support that impacts full-time/tenure-track faculty; contingent faculty; graduate students; language

and literature faculty of any rank; BIPOC faculty of any rank; female, queer, or gender non-conforming faculty of any rank; other marginalized faculty?

- What is your administration doing in relation to shared governance and community decision-making or to the role of the humanities in your institution that impacts those seven groups named above?
- In view that part of the MLA’s mission is “to support the intellectual and professional lives of its members” in the humanities, what can it do to help its members?

Chouza Calo asked Leah Richards of the DAOC to explain the format of the breakout room discussions. Richards explained that the groups would be invited to record notes in the Google Docs that members of the DAOC would share with each group, and then after thirty minutes the delegates would return to the main chat room of the *Zoom* call for a whole-group discussion during which group members would report discussion highlights.

Chouza Calo introduced Newfield and asked him to share the advocacy report. Newfield reminded delegates of the changes to the Delegate Assembly bylaws that the Delegate Assembly approved in 2021: “As representatives of the organization, delegates will also serve as MLA advocates on their campuses, to their constituencies, within their various professional communities, and throughout the profession.” Delegates would undertake this work by “circulat[ing] information about MLA policies and statements to faculty colleagues, graduate students, and administrators on their campuses, in their regions, and throughout the profession; they will also be a means by which constituents’ concerns, questions, and successes can be shared with the organization.”

Newfield said that the Delegate Assembly’s makeup of forum, professional-issues, and regional delegates is an effort to represent the full range of the MLA’s geographic and intellectual diversity. Newfield said that he believes the Delegate Assembly is an essential and remarkable institution and could continue to evolve and perhaps even fix the problems weighing on the profession. He explained that this is the context in which efforts of the advocacy group, made up of DAOC and Executive Council members, began in earnest during the previous year. The advocacy group’s most immediate goal has been to increase the visibility and authority of MLA standards on campuses. To that end, it has been compiling MLA policy statements into a compendium of guidelines that will be published on the website and that delegates and members

will be able to use them when working with department and university administrations. Finally, Newfield said, a long-term project is to collect information from delegates about what they are experiencing on their campuses so as to keep other delegates informed and to draft relevant MLA policies.

After thirty minutes in small groups, Newfield asked members from each group to report what issues delegates had raised. To ensure that all groups had time to speak, the delegates approved extending the discussion time an additional fifteen minutes.

Several groups discussed the uneven availability of technical support when faculty members had to move classes online; some institutions attempted to enact a “one-size-fits-all” approach, which was not helpful to everyone who needed assistance.

Delegates also cited a lack of autonomy as some institutions did not enforce masking or vaccination requirements, and institutions expected faculty members to take on heavier workloads. Shared governance was affected when administrators made decisions without consulting faculty members, entire programs were shuttered when courses had declining enrollments, and funding for research and travel were cut, which made it more difficult for faculty members to complete research.

Institutions also had uneven policies about teaching remotely or in person, and some that were initially flexible at the beginning of the pandemic became inflexible as the pandemic continued. Some of the delegates noted that faculty members with disabilities were not always given accommodations that they requested, even when providing documentation.

Many delegates said they welcomed receiving information about MLA policies that they could share with colleagues and with department administrators. Both Christopher Newfield and Paula Krebs thanked the delegates and said that the DAOC and the Executive Council would consider the information shared by the delegates as the advocacy group planned the next steps in the process of collaboration among the DAOC, Executive Council, and Delegate Assembly.

Delegates in attendance on 8 January:

Forum Delegates: Remy Attig, Charlene M. Eska, Douglass Eyman, Sandra Marie Grayson, Ato Quayson, Anita Savo, Donny Vigil.

Professional Issues Delegates: Raquel Patricia Chiquillo, Pamela Lothspeich, Reva Sias.

Regional Delegates: AnnMarie DeMichel, Alexander R. Dickow, Cólín Parsons.

Officers and Members of the Executive Council: Samer Mahdy Ali, Frieda Ekotto, Lisa Karakaya, Leah Richards.

Parliamentarian: Daniel E. Seabold.

Clerk: Paula M. Krebs.