Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its February 2010 meeting.]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 30–31 OCTOBER 2009 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Catherine Porter presided. The officers present were First Vice President Sidonie Smith, Second Vice President Russell A. Berman, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Carlos J. Alonso, Charles Altieri, Sara Scott Armengot, Dorian F. Bell, Jennifer Crewe, Anne Ruggles Gere (30 Oct. only), Jane Harper, George Levine, Paula Rabinowitz, Lynne Tatlock, Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, and Kathleen Woodward. Executive Council member Francis Abiola Irele was absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Operations Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Programs and ADFL Nelly Furman, Managing Editor of MLA Publications and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden (30 Oct. only), Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, Director of Book Publications David G. Nicholls, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses.

The council began by meeting with the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), which had convened on 28–29 October to review assembly and association business. Bonnie Kime Scott, the chair of the committee, reported that it had discussed the six proposals submitted for consideration by the Delegate Assembly and had placed two of them on the assembly's agenda. After explaining why four of the proposals could not be forwarded to the assembly, Scott called on two committee members to review with the council the proposals that the assembly would consider. Scott then told the council that the committee had chosen one broad topic, the academy and the economy, for the hour of open discussion on the assembly's agenda. The committee planned to focus the discussion on two subtopics: contingent labor, to follow up on the previous year's discussion, and the effects of the recession on programs in languages other than English. The DAOC also reviewed with the council a number of possible changes to the association's resolutions process, which the committee had formulated in response to an assembly motion charging the DAOC with developing a proposal to strengthen the process. The committee planned to solicit assembly members' comments on these changes at the 2009 assembly meeting. Scott also reported that the DAOC had discussed the staff proposal to restructure the association's dues categories and had endorsed one of the restructuring options after modifying it (see item 1, below). Scott concluded her report with the announcement that Gaurav Desai

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had been elected chair of the DAOC for the term 1 January 2010 through 9 January 2011.

The president concluded the joint meeting of the council and the DAOC by thanking the members of the committee for their report. In addition to the DAOC chair, the members of the committee who participated in the joint meeting were Gaurav Desai (Tulane Univ.), Brian Kennelly (California Polytechnic State Univ., San Luis Obispo), Teresa Mangum (Univ. of Iowa), and Cynthia Skenazi (Univ. of California, Santa Barbara). Also present was MLA Parliamentarian Jeanette N. Williams.

After the meeting with the DAOC, the council began to review the items on its agenda. It held two executive sessions to discuss the MLA budget (see item 1, below) and continued its work until late afternoon. Council member Karin Ryding presented to the council a set of follow-up recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, which had met in September to review responses to its report, "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World," and to identify activities that the MLA might undertake on its own or with grant support. Among the items discussed on 31 October was an oral report from Catherine Porter. She explained her work with the Translation Summit Advisory Committee (see item 3, below), presented the brochure that had been prepared to promote the presidential theme for the 2009 MLA convention, and shared with the council a letter from the executive director of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages indicating its interest in collaborating with the MLA on implementing the recommendations set forth in the report "Foreign Languages and Higher Education." The council completed work on its agenda and adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance*. The Finance Committee presented a report on the fiscal year just ended (2008–09) and on the final budget for the current fiscal year (2009–10). The committee projected that the association would conclude the 2008–09 fiscal year with a deficit of $797,620 in the association's unrestricted fund. The committee attributed the deficit to a decline in revenue that could not be offset by savings on the expense side of the budget. Rosemary Feal explained that the new edition of the *MLA Handbook* had not brought in as much revenue as expected and that returns of the sixth edition were higher than expected. Two factors contributed to the disappointing performance of the new edition of the *Handbook*: the economic recession and the availability of information about MLA style from other sources. Feal said that the staff had identified a number of initiatives aimed at bolstering *Handbook* revenue.

The council reviewed the final budget for the fiscal year 2009–10, which projected a deficit of $438,710 in the unrestricted fund. Feal explained that revenue was projected to decrease overall by ten percent and that expenses had been reduced accordingly. She drew the council's attention to the committee's plan to replace the child-care center at the MLA convention with a direct subsidy of $150 to members who need child-care services and who use the services that the convention hotels recommend. In response to council members' questions about the advisability of this change, Feal explained that the association had already seen a decline in the number of families using the child-care center and that a further decline in number was likely to occur when the MLA convention moves to January. The proposed plan would provide flexibility and convenience for members, who could arrange for care at the times dictated by their schedules and would no longer need to go to the child-care center to drop off and pick up their children. To reduce the impact of the change, the council decided to amend the budget by increasing the proposed child-care subsidy to $200. After completing its review of the final budget for the fiscal year 2009–10, the council voted to approve the budget as amended.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a proposal for restructuring the MLA's dues categories. This proposal was prompted by two factors: the decline in the share of association income represented by membership dues, from 15.5% in 1992–93 to 10.0% in 2007–08, and the increase in the cost of providing basic membership benefits, from $30.12 per member in 1992–93 to $66.35 in 2008–09. The committee noted that the only change to the dues structure since 1993 was the addition in 2002 of three new higher-income dues categories for members whose income placed them in the highest dues category (income over $80,000). The committee also noted that MLA dues were lower than those of several other large professional associations. The committee developed three restructuring options for consideration by the council and by the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), since the Delegate Assembly is charged by the MLA constitution (art. 9.C.5) with determining the association's dues structure. All three options proposed to replace the two lowest dues categories (Under $15,000 and $15,000–$20,000) with a single category (Under $20,000); to replace the highest dues category (Over $140,000) with four higher-income dues categories ($140,000–$160,000, $160,000–$180,000, $180,000–$200,000, and Over $200,000); and to eliminate use of the New Regular Member dues category, except for promotional purposes (e.g., for encouraging new memberships at the MLA convention). Option 1 applied an increase of $20 to the current dues amount in each dues category, and option 2 applied a twenty percent increase to the current amount in each category. Option 3 addressed inconsistencies in the current dues schedule by recalibrating the increases from category to category and incorporating dues increases that grow slightly larger as one progresses up the income scale. The committee's three options were supplemented by a fourth, a variation on option 3 developed by the DAOC. The fourth option maintained the two lowest dues categories, to minimize the dues increase at the lower end of the income scale; lowered the proposed

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increase in student dues by $5; and increased the proposed dues amounts for three of the four new higher-income categories at the top of the scale. After considering these four options and projections of the likely effect of each on income from membership dues, the council voted to join the DAOC in recommending the fourth option to the 2009 Delegate Assembly for its consideration. The council agreed that the Delegate Assembly should be asked to review the association's dues structure every year. The following table summarizes the changes to be presented to the Delegate Assembly. If approved by the assembly, the changes would go into effect for the 2011 membership year.

Finally, the Finance Committee presented to the council a proposal to reconsider the radio program *What's the Word?* as the association's primary public-outreach activity. In recent years, the program's exposure has been limited to broadcasts on public radio stations because the music-licensing agreement that covers those broadcasts does not extend to the streaming and downloading of individual radio shows through the MLA Web site or the distribution of CDs of the shows to individuals. The committee noted that the staff had begun to use other means to publicize association reports, activities, and initiatives to members and nonmembers (e.g., social media, webcasts). Given these newer outreach options and the cost involved in the production of *What's the Word?*, the committee recommended that the council consider phasing out the radio program and using a smaller pool of funds to support outreach through alternative media. After discussing the committee's recommendation, the council approved it.

2. *Authorization to Submit a Grant Proposal to the Teagle Foundation.* Rosemary Feal reported to the council on a meeting that she had had with representatives of the Teagle Foundation to review the activities the association had undertaken to encourage wide discussion of the MLA's report to the foundation on the undergraduate major in language and literature. The foundation was pleased with the association's efforts and encouraged the MLA to submit a grant proposal that would allow the association to engage in follow-up activities. Feal identified several initiatives that grant funding might support (e.g., training workshops for program reviewers, development of materials to guide faculty members in their reform efforts). After brief discussion, the council authorized the staff to submit to the Teagle Foundation a proposal for a follow-up grant.

3. *Translation Summit Advisory Committee.* In her oral report to the council, Catherine Porter explained that she had represented the association's interests on the Translation Summit Advisory Committee during her three years as an MLA officer. She said that she would continue to represent the association for two more years if the council authorized her to do so. The council gave its authorization.

4. *Trustee Appointment.* The council reappointed Herbert Lindenberger, professor emeritus of comparative literature and English at Stanford University and a past president of the association, as a trustee of the association's invested funds for the term 2010–12.

5. *Review of Trustees' Responsibilities.* In response to a question from the trustees of the association's invested funds about their relation to the Executive Council, the council reviewed and confirmed its understanding of the trustees' primary responsibilities. The council also designated the president as its representative at meetings of the MLA's trustees.

Current Dues Schedule

Dues Class	Amount
1 Under $15,000	$ 25
2 $15,000–$20,000	$ 40
3 $20,000–$30,000	$ 50
4 $30,000–$40,000	$ 65
5 $40,000–$50,000	$ 75
6 $50,000–$60,000	$ 85
7 $60,000–$70,000	$ 95
8 $70,000–$80,000	$105
9 $80,000–$100,000	$125
R $100,000–$120,000	$145
T $120,000–$140,000	$165
V Over $140,000	$175
E Student	$ 20
F New Regular	$ 35
L Joint Secondary	$ 20

Proposed Dues Schedule

Dues Class	Amount
1 Under $15,000	$ 40
2 $15,000–$20,000	$ 50
3 $20,000–$30,000	$ 60
4 $30,000–$40,000	$ 70
5 $40,000–$50,000	$ 85
6 $50,000–$60,000	$100
7 $60,000–$70,000	$115
8 $70,000–$80,000	$130
9 $80,000–$100,000	$145
R $100,000–$120,000	$165
T $120,000–$140,000	$185
V $140,000–$160,000	$205
W $160,000–$180,000	$230
X $180,000–$200,000	$255
Z Over $200,000	$280
E Student	$ 35
—	—
L Joint Secondary	$ 40

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6. *Approval of the May 2009 Council Minutes.* After revising one item, the council approved the minutes of its May 2009 meeting for publication in the January 2010 issue of *PMLA*.

7. *Confirmation of an Action Taken between Council Meetings.* In June the officers drafted a statement deploring reported attacks on Iranian universities in the wake of the Iranian presidential election. They asked the council to approve the statement and to authorize its wide dissemination. The council's procedure for making decisions between council meetings (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278) was implemented, and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the matter on the council's electronic discussion list. Since all council members approved both actions, it was not necessary to ask the council's advisory committee to make the decision. At the present meeting, the council confirmed the decision it had made using its electronic discussion list.

8. *Modifications of Application Requirements for Convention Travel Grants.* The staff requested that the council impose a limitation on the number of travel grants non-tenure-track faculty members and unemployed members can receive that is similar to the limitations in place for the association's two other travel grant programs. The council agreed to limit receipt of the convention travel grants by non-tenure-track faculty members and unemployed members to one every three years. The staff also requested and received the council's authorization to eliminate the requirement that applicants for the graduate student travel grants provide a letter from their department chair or adviser confirming their ABD status.

9. *Revision of the MLA's Recommendation on Minimum Per-Course Compensation for Part-Time Faculty Members.* At its May meeting, the council decided to seek advice from the Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession (CLIP) regarding the concerns raised by members of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR) about the basis for the calculation that CAFPRR had been using to carry out its annual update of the association's recommendation on minimum per-course compensation for part-time faculty members (see Jan. 2010 *PMLA* 222). At the current meeting, the council received the advice it had requested from CLIP as well as a revised recommendation on minimum per-course compensation for part-time faculty members from CAFPRR, which had also reviewed CLIP's advice when it met in October. After revising the recommendation drafted by CAFPRR, the council adopted it. The new recommendation approved by the council appears at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/mla_recommendation_course).

10. *Issue Brief on the Academic Workforce from the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW).* Rosemary Feal presented to the council CAW's issue brief on the academic workforce, which was modeled after the MLA's issue brief on the same subject. CAW had developed the issue brief so that its member associations would have a common document they could use to promote the coalition's efforts to reduce higher education's reliance on contingent faculty members and to secure better working conditions for those working off the tenure track. Feal asked the council to endorse the CAW issue brief. After reviewing the major differences between CAW's issue brief and the MLA's, the council voted to endorse the CAW document.

11. *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts.* At the request of the American Council on Education (ACE), the MLA and the National Council of Teachers of English had convened a committee to review a set of common core standards for English language arts that the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers were developing so that states could comply with a Department of Education funding program that required the states to adopt the standards. Council member Anne Gere chaired the committee. She outlined the standards project for the council and reported that the committee had identified several areas of concern, especially regarding student performance standards that will be tied to assessment mechanisms. Gere said that the committee had sent its comments to the ACE and had requested a written response. She wanted the council to be aware of the issues the review committee had raised, since the MLA might be asked to endorse the standards. Though her council term was coming to an end, she offered to continue to advise the council on this matter.

12. *Request from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).* Cary Nelson, the president of the AAUP, requested that the council endorse the AAUP's statement of principle, "Free Expression at Risk, at Yale and Elsewhere," which addresses the curtailment of free speech in the face of threats of violence. After lengthy discussion, the council voted to endorse the statement. The council also authorized Catherine Porter to ask Nelson to make one change in the statement. [Note: Nelson agreed to make the requested change.]

13. *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 fifteen societies: American Association of Australian Literary Studies, Emily Dickinson International Society, William Faulkner Society, International Association of Galdós Scholars, International Vladimir Nabokov Society, Keats-Shelley Association of America, D. H. Lawrence Society of North America, G. E. Lessing Society, Lyrica Society for Word-Music Relations, Marlowe Society of America, Medieval and Renaissance Drama Society, Milton Society of America, Modern Greek Studies Association, William Morris Society, and Harold Pinter Society. The Société Rencesvals, American-Canadian Branch, which responded immediately to the concerns that the Program Committee raised during the organization's 2008 review (see Jan. 2009 *PMLA* 303–04), was retroactively granted a full seven-year renewal. The society's next review by the Program

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Committee is scheduled for 2015. Three allied organizations—the National Council of Teachers of English, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the Poe Studies Association—requested that their reviews be deferred for one year. The council granted these requests. The Popular Culture Association was suspended, since it did not submit the necessary review materials to the Program Committee. Five organizations applied for allied organization status. The American Association of University Professors and the Western Literature Association were granted allied status; the American Association of University Supervisors and Coordinators, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, and the American Psychoanalytic Association will become allied organizations once they have submitted proof of having held two sessions at different MLA conventions.

The council also received the Program Committee's recommendation on a petition for a new discussion group on libraries and research in languages and literatures. The council approved the petition and authorized the Program Committee to request additional information from the group at the time of its review for permanent status. The new discussion group will hold an organizational meeting at the January 2011 convention.

14. *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, Committee on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, Committee on Honors and Awards, Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada, Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Committee on Information Technology, Radio Committee, Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, Committee on Community Colleges, Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession, and Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession. The council accepted these reports with thanks. Council members commented on some of the committees' activities and asked a number of questions, to which staff members responded.

15. *Committee Appointments.* The council made two additional appointments to MLA committees and appointed cochairs for the Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession. The names of all new committee members appear in the listings of MLA committee members at the MLA Web site.

The PHI BETA KAPPA *Society*

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The 2010 Walter J. Jensen Fellow in French Studies



Pamela Diaz

PAMELA DIAZ, the 2010 Walter J. Jensen Fellow, is a graduate student at the University of California-Berkeley working in the field of French medieval studies. With a stipend this year of $14,200, the fellowship will help her to spend a research year in Paris.

Established by a bequest to the Society from Walter J. Jensen (ΦBK, UCLA, 1941), the award is for an American educator and scholar in French language and literature who will study in France.

The award seeks to improve education in standard French language, literature, and culture. Candidates must be U.S. citizens under the age of 40 whose careers will involve active use of the French language.

Applications for the 2011 fellowship are due **October 1, 2010**. Apply online at *www.pbk.org* under "Fellowships." For more information, write to *awards@pbk.org*.

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