

MLA Nominating Committee Task Force Report

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Background

In the spring of 2012, the Nominating Committee was asked to consider codifying more firmly the practices of the committee and of the organization in relation to elections. Following the completion of the ballot in the fall of 2012, the committee was given an explicit charge for these activities from President Jerry McBride.

Charge: Examine the current nomination procedures and criteria for all MLA offices and for the MLA Citation and produce a Nominating Committee handbook. The committee will consider rules in the constitution, the Administrative Handbook, and also traditional practices of the committee. Using its experience of the nomination process, the committee should also formulate new guidelines and/or practices to insure fairness and inclusiveness in the process. The committee will present a report and a draft handbook to the Board for its meeting in San Jose. With the approval of the Board, the report and draft handbook will be made available to the general membership for comments. Following the comment period, the Planning Committee will draft the final version of the handbook for approval by the Board at its Spring meeting.

MLA Nominating Committee Handbook

Beginning with the Committee Handbook Template, members of the committee customized the document to reflect practices particular to the Nominating Committee. This included deleting some sections that do not apply to the Nominating Committee because of its brief timeline while adding details about the committee's particular processes. This was also an opportunity to gather the extensive existing working documents used by the committee. These fall into the appendices and include:

- Appendix 1: MLA Nominating Committee Calendar
- Appendix 2: External Reporting
- Appendix 3: Past Slates, 1978-
- Appendix 4: Sample Call for Nominations Text
- Appendix 5: Information for Phone Calls to Potential Nominees
- Appendix 6: Consent-to-Run Form
- Appendix 7: Template for Summary of Activities
- Appendix 8: Past Citation Texts
- Appendix 9: Common Questions in the Nominating Process [see below]

The Handbook is now nearly complete and only lacks updates to reflect the adoption of any of the below recommendations.

Common Questions in the Nominating Process

At the same time, we wanted to answer some common questions that people have about MLA's nominating process that are not explicitly covered in the Administrative Handbook or the Constitution, taking into account the perspective of members wanting to run for office *and* those of the Nominating Committee grappling with the same issues each year. In order to address these common issues, the committee noted difficulties and confusions that it encountered in the process of its work, discussed other problems members had heard of from past committees, and brainstormed about potential confusing nominating issues that weren't clear from the Administrative Handbook and Constitution. After identifying a list of issues to address, the group proposed answers to help guide future committees and members wishing to run for MLA office. The Constitution, the Administrative Handbook, *Robert's Rules of Order*, and precedent within the organization informed these answers. We also looked to other professional organizations and, on occasion, informally gathered information from people who had been in particular situations to integrate their first-hand experience into answers.

The result of this inquiry is the document, "Common Questions in the Nominating Process." Once finalized, this document will be added as an appendix to the Committee Handbook and, if possible, added as a standalone document on the MLA site to keep the information from being buried in handbook procedures. Like the Handbook, this document is complete save for updates that might result from the adoption of recommendations.

Nomination and Election Recommendations

Finally, in the course of its work, the committee felt that there were several changes that should be made to MLA's documentation and to the nominating and election process itself to help nominations and elections run more smoothly. These recommendations, if accepted, will have ramifications in each of the two documents noted above and, in some cases, in the Administrative Handbook as well.

1. Limit consecutive Board service to 4 years, regardless of whether service is elected or appointed.

Currently, "elected officers of the Board of Directors serve for up to six consecutive years. Appointed officers serve up to four consecutive years..." (Administrative Handbook, II.A.3). Someone serving one term as an appointed officer (Administrative Officer) could run for President Elect or Secretary in the last year of an appointment and end up serving a total of eight years. While this does provide some pretty intense continuity, it also limits involvement for others and distributes power narrowly.

Change: Administrative Handbook II.A.3.; Common Nominating Questions, Eligibility 5.

Proposed Administrative Handbook change (following existing language):

Board service – whether through election or appointment – should be limited to four years. After four years of continuous Board service, an individual must take at least one year off before beginning a new Board term in any capacity.

- 2. Strongly encourage potential candidates not to run for offices in two professional organizations (including MLA chapters) simultaneously, or, at the very least, ask them to bow out of the later of the two elections if elected in the first.**

While it's common for people to want to hedge their bets and not miss an opportunity to run for office, *erving* as an officer in two professional organizations simultaneously is taxing on the individual and likely leads to less effective work for both organizations.

Change: Committee Handbook, Appendix 5, no.5.; Common Nominating Questions, Eligibility, 6.

- 3. Change membership categories in the Administrative Handbook so that Honorary members are included within the Personal category.**

Currently, Honorary members are excluded from running for office (as well as serving on committees, as special officers, and as editors). Since the Honorary membership is granted to the recipients of our Citation, we are essentially thanking our members who have made the greatest contributions by excluding them from most MLA service.

Change: Administrative Handbook II.A.5.i.; Common Nominating Questions, Eligibility, 2.

- 4. Select one member of the Nominating Committee to continue each year.**

Typically, one outgoing Board member is appointed to chair the Nominating Committee, but this role is not codified in the Administrative Handbook and only offers continuity from Board discussions one year, not from the nominating process itself. While it is certainly desirable to change most of the Nominating Committee membership each year to avoid too much cronyism, having one single member continue could help the next year's committee get started more easily without having to retrace activities from the previous year with notes and minutes. This person would be the chair in the second year of his or her service. This approach allows the chair to meet with potential new members at Get Involved at the national meeting.

Change: Committee Handbook I.A.-C.; IV.A.; Administrative Handbook VI.H.5.b.
Proposed Administrative Handbook Change (replacing existing language):

“The President will appoint one non-Board member to serve as chair-elect in his or her first year on the committee; that person will continue to serve on the committee for a second year as chair. The Nominating Committee includes five members only one of whom may be a member of the Board of Directors. Only the chair may serve a consecutive term, and that person may only serve two consecutive years. All members of this committee must be personal members.”

- 5. Request and publish in the ballot a philosophical statement from each candidate, not just candidates for President.**

A list of previous MLA activities can help to show a person's history in the organization, but the addition of a philosophical statement can help those who don't

know candidates personally better judge their fitness for office. These should be limited to 250 words (the President's philosophy is granted 500 words).

Change: Committee Handbook X.A.11; Committee Handbook, Appendix 1, July

6. **Require that candidates for President be IAML members.**

As the head of the IAML-U.S. chapter, the President has specific duties to fulfill within IAML and must be a member of that organization.

Change: Administrative Handbook VI.H.5.a.a.

Proposed Administrative Handbook change (following existing language):

following the sentence, "Candidates for office must be personal members of the Association,..." add "Candidates for Vice-President/President-Elect must be members of IAML prior to standing for election."

7. **Add the "Common Nominating Questions" document to the MLA site to help make the election process more transparent to members. It is also part of the committee's handbook.**

Since this document is designed to help those who would eventually like to run for office to understand better how they might prepare themselves professionally, we believe it would be useful as a standalone document.

Change: No change to existing documents necessary