Candidate Information

2016 MLA Elections

Contents

Background Information

- Notes on Association Governance 1
- Elections for Second Vice President, Executive Council, Delegate Assembly 1
- Elections for Forum Executive Committees 1
- Making Suggestions for the 2017 Executive Committee Elections 2
- Abbreviations Used in Biographical Summaries 2

Candidate Information

- Voting for Second Vice President 3
- Voting for At-Large Members of the Executive Council 7
- Voting for Special-Interest Delegates 14
- Voting for Regional Delegates 33
  - Region 1: New England and Eastern Canada 33
  - Region 2: New York State 38
  - Region 3: Middle Atlantic 43
  - Region 4: Great Lakes 49
  - Region 5: South 55
  - Region 6: Central and Rocky Mountain 61
  - Region 7: Western United States and Western Canada 66
Note: To be counted, online ballots must be submitted by midnight EST on 10 December 2016 and paper ballots must be received at the MLA office no later than 10 December 2016.

Notes on Association Governance

- Two elected bodies play a role in association governance. The Executive Council is a fiduciary body and has responsibility for managing the business of the association. It has seventeen voting members (the three officers and fourteen members) and one nonvoting member (the executive director). The Delegate Assembly, which has nearly three hundred voting members, recommends actions to the council regarding the conduct of association business and the association’s directions, goals, and structure.

- The MLA constitution (see www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/MLA-Constitution) outlines the specific duties of the officers, the council, and the assembly in articles 5, 7, and 9, respectively.

Elections for Second Vice President, Executive Council, Delegate Assembly

- MLA elections are held annually in the fall to elect a second vice president of the association and to fill vacancies on the Executive Council and in the Delegate Assembly. Nominations have been made by the Nominating and Elections Committees, whose members are elected by the Delegate Assembly.

- Nominees to elected positions in the association are asked to submit biographical summaries and are invited to submit statements on matters of professional concern. This document contains summaries and statements submitted by this year’s nominees, and it is intended for use by those members who request paper ballots for the 2016 elections. Candidate information appears in the same order as the nominees’ names appear on the paper ballot, and, for the Delegate Assembly elections, the number preceding each nominee’s name corresponds to the number assigned to the nominee on the ballot. Specific details about each of the election categories precede the candidate information for that category.

- The candidate information in this document is also included in the online ballot system that all 2016 MLA members have been invited to use to cast their votes in the 2016 elections. In the online system, the names of the candidates for second vice president, the Executive Council, and the Delegate Assembly are links. Clicking on a candidate’s name will open a window containing the candidate’s biographical summary and election statement.

Elections for Forum Executive Committees

- Elections are held each fall to replace outgoing members of the executive committees. Nominations are made by the membership and by the executive committees.

- Instructions for voting appear on the paper ballot sheet. The names of the candidates appear on the accompanying sheet. The online ballot system includes all forum executive committee contests.
Making Suggestions for the 2017 Executive Committee Elections

- At the bottom of the paper ballot is a space that members can use to suggest nominees for the 2017 executive committee elections. Names written in on the ballot will be forwarded to the appropriate executive committees, which must select at least one nominee each year from the names suggested by the membership.
- It is also possible to suggest nominees through the MLA Web site. When exiting the online ballot system, members will be given the opportunity to use the online suggestion form. The form can also be accessed directly from the Committees page.

Abbreviations Used in Biographical Summaries

- AAAS Association for Asian American Studies
- AATF American Association of Teachers of French
- AATG American Association of Teachers of German
- AATI American Association of Teachers of Italian
- AATSEEL American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages
- AATSP American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese
- AAUP American Association of University Professors
- AAUW American Association of University Women
- ACLA American Comparative Literature Association
- ACLS American Council of Learned Societies
- ACTFL American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
- ADE Association of Departments of English
- ADFL Association of Departments of Foreign Languages
- ASA American Studies Association
- ASECS American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
- AWP Association of Writers and Writing Programs
- CCCC Conference on College Composition and Communication
- CEAL College English Association
- CIES Council for International Exchange of Scholars
- CLA College Language Association
- DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
- ETS Educational Testing Service
- FIPSE Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education
- FLAS Foreign Language and Area Studies (fellowship prog. in the US Dept. of Educ.)
- HASTAC Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory
- ICLA International Comparative Literature Association
- IREX International Research and Exchanges Board
- LASA Latin American Studies Association
- MELUS Society for the Study of the Multiethnic Literature of the United States
- MMLA Midwest Modern Language Association
- NACCS National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies
- NCTE National Council of Teachers of English
- NDEA National Defense Education Act
Part I: Voting for Second Vice President

The person elected second vice president will serve in that office from 9 January 2017 through the close of the January 2018 convention and will automatically become first vice president in 2018, serving in that office through the close of the January 2019 convention, and president of the MLA in 2019, serving in that office through the close of the January 2020 convention. This year all nominees are from fields other than English or American language and literature; the MLA constitution (article 6.D) stipulates that the second vice president shall be elected from the field of English or American only in alternate years. (From 9 Jan. 2017 through 7 Jan. 2018, the first vice president will be Anne Ruggles Gere, English, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the president will be Diana Taylor, Spanish, New York Univ.)

The Hare voting method will be used in the election of second vice president. (Using this voting method will, except in the case of a tie, eliminate the need for a separate runoff election in the spring.) Members are asked to rank the candidates listed below in order of preference. On the ballot sheet, members should write “1” next to the name of their first choice, “2” next to the name of their second choice, and “3” next to the name of their third choice. Please note that voting for only one candidate means casting no vote in the subsequent rounds of balloting that the Hare voting method incorporates.

Rank these candidates in order of preference.


**Statement**

As a long-standing member of the MLA, I have been involved in the organization’s activities on many levels and in different capacities. I have chaired the Publications Committee and the James Russell Lowell Prize Selection Committee, and I recently completed five years as editor of *PMLA*. I have a good sense of the work of the MLA as the most important and influential professional forum for the study of language and literature and a key defender of the humanities. I’m also keenly aware of the challenges the MLA faces: how to be more effective in making a literary education central to our democratic culture, provide more opportunities for young scholars, and improve working conditions for teachers of literatures and languages.

I believe that the MLA should be a conduit for continuous and vigorous debates on the major issues of our time, especially where these issues intersect with our expertise in languages and literatures. To do so, the organization must welcome innovations in its structures and expand its areas of focus. My ambition is to develop partnerships between the MLA and other national organizations and to make it a leader in the reshaping of the North American public sphere and the emerging global commons. If elected, I would bring
to the organization some of the qualities that I have brought to PMLA: I would push for an expansion of fields and constituencies, listen carefully to the voices that are not always heard, and push continuously for intellectual diversity.

**Ato Quayson.** Prof. English, Univ. of Toronto.


**Statement**

The most important thing that a long career in teaching, research, and administration has taught me is that there is a paucity of opportunities for career mentoring both within and across institutions. Mentoring applies to all levels of the university and must be conceived in terms of opportunities for sharing experiences in envisioning, planning, and systematically dealing with various issues and problems throughout one’s career. I think for example of workshops in which early-career faculty members are paired with more
experienced members in a public forum to discuss work in progress. Another idea would be to share insights about pedagogy in nonevaluative contexts (i.e., not only when people are coming up for tenure and have to endure the interminable and torturous class visits from senior colleagues). I dream of the possibility of creating regional consortia of institutions where opportunities for sharing mentoring expertise across universities might be created.

The strength inherent in face-to-face interactions within the academy remains somewhat undervalued. I see the university as a place for the orchestration of a public commons where people learn from one another not only by reading what other scholars write but also by watching and bearing witness to how they adjudicate other people’s work, share their passion for teaching, and generally facilitate the augmentation of knowledge within the public commons of the university. If given the opportunity, I intend to work assiduously with others to devise ways in which this can be made a central part of the MLA’s mandate.

Naoki Sakai. Goldwin Smith Prof. of Asian Studies, Cornell Univ.


Statement
The historical conditions surrounding universities are shifting throughout the world. In many institutions, New Public Management (NPM), characterized by free-market rhetoric and intensive managerial practices, administers humanistic disciplines, while public support for the humanities appears to be receding. Our student bodies include more and more international students, while fewer and fewer American-born students focus on languages and literatures.

My background in two disciplines with different genealogies and audiences, comparative literature and East Asian area studies, provides me with a broad perspective for thinking about possible futures for the humanities. The comparative study of literature(s), originally limited to the European canon, is no longer confined to the so-called West. Similarly, area studies, introduced in the political climate of the Cold War with a view to studying specific peoples and countries outside the West, must now address topics and theories that span the boundary between the West and the non-West. In all the disciplines represented in the MLA, we need to move beyond the presumption that the West is unambiguously distinguishable from the rest and respond to growing student interest in theoretical and boundary-crossing approaches; we must continue the MLA’s mission as an advocate of in-depth language study beyond English in an increasingly connected world. We also need to find effective ways to convince administrators, legislators, and the broader public about the value of our work beyond the logistics of NPM. I would like to contribute to the MLA by seeking ways to respond to these challenges, along with many others.

Part II: Voting for At-Large Members of the Executive Council

Three persons will be elected for four-year terms that will begin 9 January 2017 and run through the close of the January 2021 convention. The MLA constitution (article 8.A.5) stipulates that the at-large membership of the council must include at least one and no more than six representatives from each of the following fields: English or American, French, German, Spanish, and other (e.g., other languages and literatures, comparative literature, folklore, linguistics). Since all these fields will continue to be represented on the council in 2017, candidates from any field may be elected this year. In addition, because no designated field is represented by more than three council members, all three persons elected this year may be from the same field. The fields represented by the nominees are English (Potkay, Schilb, Shockley, Williams), Spanish (Compitello), and other (Hayot, Noda).

The MLA constitution (art. 8) also states that the at-large membership of the council “shall also include at least one representative, but no more than eight, from each of the eligible membership levels (i.e., regular, graduate student, and life), except that the number of regular members on the council shall always be in proportion to the regular membership of the association.” Because regular members compose 62.9% of the membership, they are constitutionally entitled to eight of the twelve at-large council seats. Since only five of the nine at-large members of the council with continuing terms in 2017 are regular members (see the listing below, in which student members are marked with an * and life members with a §), all three persons elected this year must be regular members.

*Lenora Hanson, English, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison (2016–12 Jan. 2020)
David Tse-chien Pan, German, Univ. of California, Irvine (2016–12 Jan. 2020)
*Rafael A. Ramirez Mendoza, Spanish, Univ. of California, Los Angeles (2016–12 Jan. 2020)

Vote for any three nominees.

Malcolm Alan Compitello. Prof. Spanish, Univ. of Arizona.


Statement

I embrace the MLA’s mission, which today is more crucial than ever. The value of what our membership teaches and studies has come under increasing criticism. The nature of the workforce in our disciplines has been substantially altered, with deleterious consequences for teachers and learners. I support the MLA’s efforts to drive home how important the study of languages, literatures, and cultures is to producing an enlightened citizenry with the ability to think critically about the myriad of complex issues that confront us. The organization must continue to advocate forcefully for its membership in its struggle to find
fair and equitable working conditions inside and outside of traditional channels of academic employment. It must expand its efforts to champion innovative new approaches to our scholarship and teaching. Attracting new constituencies is also vital to the MLA’s long-term health, as is connecting with other professional organizations in sustained efforts to separate fact from fiction about the “crisis” of the humanities.

I bring to my candidacy for the Executive Council many years of academic leadership, program building, and service to the profession that augment my contributions as a teacher-scholar. Over the course of my career I have helped the MLA set its agenda through my work with the ADFL and as a member of the Program Committee, both at particularly important moments of institutional reorganization. I am humbled to have been the 2015 recipient of the ADFL Award for Distinguished Service to the Profession in recognition of my contributions.

Eric Hayot. Distinguished prof. comparative lit. and Asian studies, Penn State Univ., University Park.


Statement

I do not know how to solve all the problems the humanities face. But there are things we can do to make things better for the faculty members and the students the MLA represents and serves. I am especially interested in working on two linked problems: the current state of graduate education and the rise in precarious contingent employment across the university. While advocating strongly against the national, state, and local policies that have enabled the corporatization of the university (often as a means of destroying it), we can also focus more locally on the ways in which departments and colleges can respond to the current situation—first, by changing how we prepare graduate students and, second, by proposing models for the decent and fair treatment of both our students and our colleagues. For me this begins with graduate reform. I see the current situation (I reject the term crisis) as, naturally, a threat but also as an opportunity to
produce a renewed vision of the role the humanities (and the graduate and undergraduate teaching done under its aegis) can play in contemporary society.

Mari Noda. Prof. Japanese, Ohio State Univ., Columbus.


Statement

The MLA is uniquely positioned to serve the profession by identifying and addressing challenges while also cherishing the passion of the members. There are two areas that I would like to see the MLA address in the coming decade, if I were to be given the opportunity to serve on the Executive Council: labor issues and issues related to the advanced levels. The labor issues involve the increasing reliance on non-tenure-track and temporary faculty members and the reduction in the number of tenure-track positions. In some instances, the stability of programs is in jeopardy, and the stability of positions is an issue for those individuals who are devoted to and passionate about teaching. The lack of stability can also affect the depth of programs. In some languages, Chinese for example, due to the investment in secondary school programs by supporting governments, higher education can expect to see a surge in the nonbeginning population in the near future. The MLA can work to advocate advanced-level instruction in languages that previously did not have levels beyond intermediate and also advanced-level learning opportunities in the study-abroad environment. I have worked closely with the issues surrounding contingent appointments as a former chair of my home department for eight years and as former president of the Association of Teachers of Japanese (currently American Association of Teachers of Japanese). I have worked toward advanced levels in East Asian languages as an active faculty member at the National East Asian Languages Resource Center at Ohio State University.

Adam Potkay. William R. Kenan, Jr., Prof. of Humanities, Coll. of William and Mary.


Statement

As a thirty-year member of the MLA, a three-time PMLA author, a former PMLA Editorial Board member, and a frequent participant at our annual conventions, I am concerned about how to engage and retain MLA members as they mature. My perception is that too many of my contemporaries have dropped out of our organization after attaining some degree of workplace security. What can be done, through MLA outreach and possible re-visioning of PMLA and other MLA publications and forums, to maintain a larger percentage of teachers and scholars in the MLA? The more members who actively participate in the MLA, the more comprehensive and persuasive our organization’s voice will be within higher education, government, and the media. A related area of urgent concern is furthering MLA advocacy for contingent faculty members, working toward the goals of job security, fair pay, and benefits. (In my three-year term as chair of a large English department at my mid-size state university, I converted several contingent positions into renewable five-year-contract senior lectureships with benefits.) Finally, the MLA needs ceaselessly to stress the vital importance of the humanities, and especially language training and multilingualism, for both liberal arts education and interculturally competent global citizenship.
John L. Schilb. Prof. English and Culbertson Ch. of Writing, Indiana Univ., Bloomington.


Statement

A long-time member of the MLA, I’ve served in the Delegate Assembly, on the Program Committee, on two division executive committees, and on the PMLA Advisory Committee. These experiences have made me keenly aware that the MLA is a key advocate for the humanities. It’s a role that I’ll seek to maintain, even strengthen, if I’m elected to the Executive Council. Today’s storytellers include agenda-driven politicians, entrepreneurs, administrators, and pundits. They view studies of language and literature as incidental to history; for them, STEM and business curricula are its protagonists. Often these narrators ridicule tenure and faculty governance, dreaming of schools run by machines. Though not all public accounts of our work are so apocalyptic, many of them depict our concerns as trivial or extinct. The MLA resists such tales, striving to ensure that our profession not only endures but flourishes. I’d like to help.

Having taught writing, literature, and film, I think fields benefit from cross-conversation. I’d like the council to offer us more chances to learn from one another. Let’s establish a vast archive of sample strategies and policies that could improve our working conditions and boost our public status. Let’s create more venues for trading ideas about teaching, including ways to incorporate global contexts and digital tools. Let’s share advice for building careers in the humanities, whether they’re academic posts or vocations elsewhere. Let’s make certain that the MLA’s governance is multivoiced, democratic, and collaborative. Together let’s rewrite stories that diminish what we are and can be.


Statement

Our professional organization should empower individual members by facilitating collective action that creates better employment conditions, furthers our work, and amplifies our voices in the public discourse. If elected, I will work toward seeing the MLA exercise its power to the benefit of all the various constituencies of our profession. I have been educated and have taught at private and public institutions, at large research-intensive universities and smaller ones that place greater emphasis on teaching. My fields of research, editorial work, and recent service to the MLA have contributed importantly to my analysis of race, gender, sexuality, nationalism, and religion—issues we confront with increasing visibility and frequency in our classrooms, the professoriat, and higher education generally. Publishing and teaching literary criticism and creative writing alongside a number of contingent faculty members, I am conscious of how the interests of contingent and permanent faculty members can (seem to) diverge and of our need to build on existing points of convergence. Relatedly, my work with graduate student placement has familiarized me with many issues confronting new PhDs as they seek employment. Operating in these different arenas, I often lament the compartmentalized nature of our conversations about the profession. As a member of the Executive Council, I would be positioned to think holistically, yet with specificity, about the challenges we face and to help the MLA promote the policies and positions that will support the full spectrum of our work as teachers, researchers, and writers in a heterogeneous world.

Dana A. Williams. Prof. English, Howard Univ.


**Statement**

As a member of the Executive Council, I would support the MLA’s ongoing commitment to promoting excellence in teaching and learning languages and literatures. One could argue convincingly that the academy exists in a perpetual state of crisis. This seems all the more true now, however, as funding challenges, ideological differences, and calls for more diversity in faculty and student populations and curricula provide an opportunity to reimagine the way the university functions and to what end. I would like to help the MLA highlight the ways fuller awareness of and engagement with humanities themes across time and cultures might help us solve problems of the human condition in the contemporary moment. The pressing issues related to faculty labor (from job security for contingent faculty members to workload for tenured faculty members), to the corporatization of the university, and to the challenge of increasing the number of faculty members of color in the professoriat remain. And we must take seriously the MLA’s role in generating a response to these issues and in advocating on behalf of those least empowered. All the while, we must imagine new models of intellectual pursuit that challenge the models that fail student and faculty populations and that injure the things we value most.

**Part III: Voting for Special-Interest Delegates**

Sixteen persons will be elected to replace delegates whose terms expire on 8 January 2017. The term of office will be from 9 January 2017 through the close of the January 2020 convention. The numbers preceding the nominees’ names correspond to the numbers assigned to the nominees on the paper ballot sheet.

The names of the special-interest delegates with continuing terms in 2017 appear at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/del_assembly_members).

*Vote for one nominee in any or all of the seventeen special-interest contests.*
I. Composition, Rhetoric, and Writing (1 contest)


   PhD, Columbia Univ. James Davis Scholarship, Rare Book School, 2008; Whiting Foundation Fellowship in the Humanities, Columbia Univ., 2010–11; research fellow, Harry Ransom Center, Univ. of Texas, Austin, 2014–15.


   Statement

   Having taught composition, writing, and rhetoric in classrooms and writing centers located in a variety of institutions—secondary schools, a community college, and private and public universities—I have seen how scholars and instructors at all levels and ranks have expanded their practice and the field to encompass multimodal composition, second-language writing, and writing across the curriculum, even as their resources have diminished. As large public universities like my own continue to be pressured by state governments to shift toward tuition-based budgetary models, a surge in student enrollments (including international students learning English) has resulted in the increased hiring of non-tenure-track faculty members to teach first-year writing and English-language courses.

   In my first years as an assistant professor, I worked to ensure that my non-tenure-track colleagues gained representation in faculty governing bodies as well as somewhat improved job security. While there is much work still to be done at my institution, as a special-interest delegate I would seek to contribute to the MLA’s ongoing efforts to secure fair labor practices and supportive working conditions for full- and part-time writing and language instructors, including graduate students and adjunct faculty members.

   Many of us incorporate digital and multimodal composition and rhetorics into our scholarship and our pedagogy; increasing numbers of us are also teaching online or hybrid writing, rhetoric, and literature courses. As a delegate I would urge the MLA to draft new, research-based recommendations or statements on teaching composition, writing, rhetoric, and literature courses online.


   PhD, Univ. of Kentucky. Outstanding Instructor Award, Dept. of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies, Univ. of Kentucky, 2015; Teachers Who Made a Difference Award, Coll. of Educ., Univ. of Kentucky, 2016. Rhetoric Soc. of America, NCTE, CEA. Features and assoc. ed., North of Center (community newspaper), 2009–13; managing ed., Whole Horse Project, 2014–.

   Publications include articles in Whole Horse Project, North of Center; review in Novel: A Forum on Fiction.

   Statement

   My biggest concern at the moment is the way English, as a humanities discipline, conceptualizes itself as public-facing, so that we may best address the political attacks on higher education. As an academic whose training is literary and who now teaches composition and rhetoric, I have experience in the breadth of our field, which I believe is our strength in the current historical and political moment. We must further develop a robust, ethical understanding of academic labor in order to better argue for its value in our society.

II. Continuing and Distance Education (1 contest)


Statement

After completing my doctorate I began working in CUNY Start, a continuing education transition program that helps underprepared students develop the skills they need to successfully meet college-level expectations and coursework. I teach developmental reading and writing to students from predominantly low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds. Many are also from first- or second-generation immigrant families. Their ages range from seventeen to sixty. While a few enter with a deep love of learning, most are driven primarily by the practical needs of contributing to their households and improving their futures.

Continuing and distance education programs are charged with the admirable task of providing a vast array of coursework and training to a widely disparate population in a way that is equitable, accessible, and affordable. One challenge facing these programs, which I deal with daily in my work, is the question of how best to serve and educate adults who may not be prepared for the demands of postsecondary education. We need curricula that are practical and engaging and that make the classroom (traditional and online) a more hospitable and relevant place for our diverse student body. A second challenge is financial. When states’ funding is inadequate—or worse, cut—the burden of cost falls increasingly on students, a situation that threatens to further exacerbate our society’s ever-widening economic gaps. We must work to ensure that public funding keeps tuition for continuing and distance education low, while simultaneously demanding that teachers in these programs can earn a living wage.

13. **John A. Whatley.** Academic program dir., Centre for Online and Distance Educ., Simon Fraser Univ.


Statement

Distance and online pedagogy: All aspects of distance and online postsecondary program development and design; comparative modes of course delivery, uses of online technologies in university education, as well as distributed learning models and their theory. Research interest in the media and pedagogy of computer-assisted online education. Specific interest in the synchronous online classroom and active teaching online.

   English literature: Crime and literature, the essay, Romantic and gothic literature, world literature. I am currently developing a strong research interest in the relation between crime and gothic literature. Crime and the gothic modes often overlap; many of my papers apply social science and literary theory to the contexts of the gothic novel. I am interested in the relations among fictional character, self and other fashioning, outcome, and fictional theories of criminality.

**III. Creative Writing (1 contest)**

14. **Joseph Campana.** Alan Dugald McKillop Ch. in English and assoc. prof. English, Rice Univ.

   PhD, Cornell Univ. NEA creative writing fellowship, 2007; individual artist’s grant, Houston Arts Alliance, 2009, 2014; Theodore Morrison Fellow in Poetry, Bread Load Writers’ Conference, 2014. Isabel MacCaffrey Award (for best essay in Spenser studies), Intl. Spenser Soc., 2006; Glenna Luschei *Prairie Schooner* Award (for published poems), 2007; Crompton-Noll Award (for best essay in lesbian, gay, queer studies), GL/Q Caucus for the Modern Langs., 2009; Iowa Poetry Prize (for *Natural Selections*), Univ. of Iowa Press, 2011; SCMLA Book Award (for *The Pain of Reformation*), 2013; Elizabeth Matchett Stover


**Statement**

It’s hard to think of a time in my own professional life when it has seemed more the case that the passionate advocates for the singularity of the literary arts need allies, an ever greater sense of common ground, and an ever greater sense of shared urgencies. Those ideals can seem elusive in spite of many valiant efforts to bring closer the practitioners of literary studies and of creative writing. Even when they share homes, these practices are as often neighbors as they are strangers. I’ve lived through these tensions in my own writing life as a poet and a scholar. I have experienced the incredible synergy that arises when distinct communities of writers enrich one another in conversation. I have also experienced the disconnection and tension that come when a sense of commonality remains elusive. As universities struggle not only to defend the humanities and the arts but to present an ever more prominent public profile, the literary arts can be central to such efforts. It would be a pleasure to help continue the work others at the MLA have done to ensure synergy and a sense of shared pursuit among writers and scholars.

15. **Kimberly Johnson.** Prof. English, Brigham Young Univ., UT.


**Statement**

Some years ago, I attended a session at an MLA conference cosponsored by the MLA and the AWP. In his panel remarks, the AWP president lamented the divisions between the constituencies of our English departments, the perceived gulf that separates creative writers from literary scholars. As a professor whose appointment straddles literary and creative fields, I have a career-long investment in articulating commonalities between disciplines. An increasing number of institutions have in recent years developed graduate or undergraduate programs in creative writing. Particularly at this historical moment, the MLA can help shape the various conversations surrounding market pressures on both literature and creative writing graduate students, the urgent need for our institutions to encourage and support diverse voices of all kinds, issues of professionalization, and expectations for creative writing faculty members within literature departments. I would be honored to participate in this developing conversation by representing Creative Writing in the Delegate Assembly.
**IV. Disability Issues (1 contest)**

16. **Colleen Glenney Boggs.** Prof. English, Dartmouth Coll.  
   PhD, Univ. of Chicago. Codir., Futures of Amer. Studies (summer inst.), Dartmouth Coll., 2010– .  
   **Statement**  
   My recent scholarly interests lie at the intersection of disability studies with warfare and with animal studies. In my current work on the American Civil War, I examine how the military draft made disability normative for civilian life. Growing out of this historical research, I have become interested in addressing how our academic profession does or does not engage with the current wars, the physical and psychological injuries of service(wo)men, and the often hidden role of disability in the life of a nation engaged in the “war on terror.” As a professional organization, the MLA is uniquely positioned to examine how we address wartime disability as an area of scholarly interest, pedagogical challenge, and community engagement. I am interested in thinking about military disability in relation to the scholarship, pedagogy, and professionalism that lie at the core of the MLA’s mission. Second, disability has been important to my work in animal studies. In my class on women and animals, students examine Temple Grandin’s work on disability in relation to gender and species. From a pedagogical perspective, I aim to implement the ways in which disability studies ties in with best practices of universal access course design. I am interested in transferring a best-practices approach to the MLA convention itself, providing better access to peripheral events such as receptions, improving the navigation of spatial distances between and within conference hotels, broadening the use of technology to facilitate different kinds of access, and accommodating therapy animals in conference spaces.

17. **Julie Passanante Elman.** Asst. prof. women’s and gender studies, Univ. of Missouri, Columbia.  
   Publications include *Chronic Youth: Disability, Sexuality, and U.S. Media Cultures of Rehabilitation* (2014); articles in *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry, Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies, Television and New Media, Somatosphere: Science, Medicine, and Anthropology*.  
   **Statement**  
   My interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching, and service combine disability, queer, feminist, literary, and media studies. As a delegate representing Disability Issues, I would bring my experience serving on the editorial board of *Disability Studies Quarterly* and in disability studies caucuses within the ASA and the NWSA. I would be dedicated to improving disabled people’s work conditions in the academy as well as
supporting the ongoing development of accessible pedagogy, mentorship, and transdisciplinary research in critical disability studies. Disabled people face ongoing discrimination in hiring and retention, whether or not their disabilities are visible, and of course ableism intersects with and intensifies race-, class-, gender-, and sexuality-based discrimination. To support a new call for slow scholarship to collectively resist the corporate university’s inexhaustible demand for productivity and efficiency, we need to draw from disability critiques of productivity to consider the many ways in which disabled scholars remain alienated from full access to all forms of academic labor. As disability studies expands, we must critique the uncompensated emotional and physical labor of university “diversity service” that disproportionately affects people of color and disabled, female, or LGBTQ people, and we must work toward ameliorating inaccessibility at all levels of the profession as we critique academia’s oppressive pace. I would work alongside the Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession and the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession to provide mentoring opportunities for grad students and junior scholars and expand discussions and resources for creating truly accessible pedagogy and scholarship.

V. Ethnic Studies (2 contests)

   Statement
   I am deeply honored to be nominated for the Delegate Assembly. My MLA responsibilities include current membership on the executive committee of the forum LLC African to 1990 and previous membership on the executive committee of the Division on Postcolonial Literature and Culture. I am a comparatist, and I teach African, South Asian, Caribbean, and United States literature. I have long had a commitment to feminist scholarship and pedagogy. An immigrant, I came to the United States from Tanzania in 1969 under the then recently enacted Hart-Celler bill, which removed national origin as a factor in determining who was allowed to enter. It forever changed the complexion of the United States. As an assistant professor decades later, I found the MLA intimidating, but I have come to realize that it consciously makes space for the voices of junior faculty members, adjuncts, lecturers, and grad students. If elected I would work to make these democratic structures more visible to permit greater intellectual self-expression within. I also admire that the Delegate Assembly takes political positions on important current events, including the mistreatment of major authors, and I hope to help make the organization’s voice heard in the world. Increasing involvement goes hand in glove for me with making sure that we as an organization continue our efforts to illustrate the intercultural complexity of many canonical and peripheral literary texts.


Statement

My research and teaching have explored comparative approaches to ethnic studies. This includes bringing the insights of United States–based ethnic studies into dialogue with interethnic and transregional histories in non-Western, East-West, colonial, and premodern contexts. Detractors of ethnic studies pay insufficient attention to the debt of scholars across area studies to United States–based work on modern race and ethnicity. My interest is to help promote greater recognition of—and institutional support for—the interdisciplinary reach and future flourishing of the field.

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Statement

I am honored to be nominated as an ethnic studies representative: I welcome the opportunities and responsibilities that Delegate Assembly membership would entail.

Over my sixteen-year academic career, my scholarship and teaching have revolved around multiculturalism and social justice issues with special attention to Latina/o political art; Chicana/o cultural expression; and intersections of gender, sexual, and racial/ethnic identity. As a cinema and media studies specialist, I not only focus on multimedia primary texts and the multiple literacies engaging them but also extend these ideas to interrogate the discursive roles interdisciplinarity and emerging technologies currently play throughout our profession. My recent grassroots service record includes four years as graduate director of professional development in my department, volunteer work as a career counselor at last year’s MLA convention, and fellowship-supported participation this summer in Graduate Career Consortium activities. Over the last twelve years, I have been elected to leadership positions on executive committees in professional organizations, negotiating area-specific issues (especially for Latina/o studies) as well as larger professional debates.

The issues I would address in the assembly include professional development and standards of career advancement; alt-academics, especially the MLA’s Connected Academics initiative and advocacy programs; academic job markets, especially for non-tenure-track positions; hiring practices, especially equitable application processes and interview modes; support for progressive digital humanities; trends in online publishing; and shifts toward multimodal/distance education and commensurate instructional support, especially given current accessibility mechanisms.

These issues certainly have future bearing on ethnicity studies and the MLA’s larger charge over our profession.


Statement

I teach undergraduate and graduate courses on ethnic literatures and cultures with the intent of bringing to the fore understudied authors, artistic productions, and marginalized/minoritized histories. Through my research and teaching, I hope to foster critical conversations on difficult pasts or difficult inheritances to shape an engaged public that can strive not just for redress but also for justice and accountability for past injustices. As evident from the recent free, public conference (May 2016) on the Air India tragedy that I organized at McMaster University, which brought together for the first time creative artists, family members of those who died in the bombing of Air India flight 182, scholars, students, and the wider public to engage in a dialogue about the Air India tragedy and its aftermath, I continually strive through my research, public talks, and teaching to engage both students and the community at large in conversations about national history and public memory to encourage responsibility for our shared present and future.

I am excited by the prospect of serving as a member of the Delegate Assembly. I hope to solicit feedback from, and represent, members working in the field of ethnic studies and contribute to the MLA’s ongoing efforts to highlight the importance of the humanities in cultivating politically informed citizens.

VI. Foreign Language Teaching (1 contest)


Contemporary Italian Film (2016); articles in Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies, Studies in Documentary Film, Research in African Literatures, Italian Culture, Annali d’italianistica, Forum Italicum.

Statement

As associate professor and director of a language program, I am familiar with the professional challenges that foreign language teachers face as scholars and researchers and with the challenges we face as academic administrators. While teaching is the most rewarding aspect of our profession and is considered in our reviews, our academic publications in areas preferably not related to pedagogy are what really count for our promotion and professional clout. Meanwhile, service, especially in small language programs and departments, is extremely demanding but not highly esteemed. In short, foreign language teaching as a whole is often considered service for other units and departments and not as a vital component of our students’ education and an indispensable aspect of global citizenship. There can be no internationalization without learning at least one other language and culture, preferably more, yet foreign languages are often disposable on our campuses and waived in study-abroad programs, which have now become a global English affair no matter the country visited. To counter these trends, which privilege quantity over quality and homogenization and standardization over individualized educational interests, we must pursue a politics and strategy that reclaim the value of any and all foreign languages and cultures studied—and studied not in isolation but in conjunction with other disciplines in the humanities and the sciences, making use of all available tools, from more traditional but still valid approaches to the newest digital technologies.


PhD, Univ. of British Columbia. Title VI course development grant, Montana State Univ., 2011.


Statement

As a scholar of Chinese literature and a teacher of Mandarin Chinese, I am particularly interested in crossing the boundaries between teachers of language and teachers of literature and culture as well as blurring the line between foreign literature and foreign language teaching. If I am elected to the MLA Delegate Assembly to represent Foreign Language Teaching, I would advocate and engage in discussion of pedagogical methods of embedding literary studies in language learning and vice versa. Foreign literature classes should not be taught solely as upper-division content courses or translation courses. It would be beneficial for language students to learn a foreign language within a genuine literary and cultural context. Many literature and language professors and instructors on United States campuses have explored various approaches to achieving this goal. One is the bilingual model, which involves reading, class discussion, and expository writing in both English and a second language such as Chinese. Another is the model of including class discussion in a second language within a content course taught mostly in English. A third approach is the model of combining translation with the study of advanced grammar. A fourth is the model of combining an advanced conversation course in a second language with literary studies. I believe these sorts of efforts will also tend to increase enrollments in language classes.

VII. Gays and Lesbians in the Profession (1 contest)

24. Lawrence M. La Fountain-Stokes. Assoc. prof. Amer. culture, Romance langs., and women’s studies, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor.


Statement

While great strides have been made, academia can still be an inhospitable work environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Requests for the disclosure of personal information, prejudice, health coverage, and challenges for partner hiring are some of the issues faced by persons who are or are perceived to be LGBT. These can be compounded by other factors such as racism, misogyny, and ableism. At the same time, great opportunities and particular challenges arise, such as the possibilities for student and fellow faculty member mentorship and campus and workplace activism. I am committed to representing the needs of LGBT faculty members, staff members, students, and nontraditional or independent scholars and to advocating for broader awareness in the MLA both of our professional challenges and of the centrality of LGBT and queer studies.

25. **Ben Sifuentes-Jauregui.** Prof. Amer. studies and comparative lit., Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick.


Statement

LGBTQ issues are at the center of my scholarly endeavors, particularly as these relate to questions of Latino American cultural difference, Latino studies, and race and ethnicity. My contribution and participation within the MLA will bring these perspectives to a series of professional and disciplinary
discussions. It is important to continue bringing LGBTQ and race matters into our intellectual conversation and to consider how these matters shape literature, theory, and cultures. Also, it is necessary to advocate for an LGBTQ presence in our profession that can define new methodologies for our teaching and offer our students new contexts to reimagine their work and selves.

VIII. Independent Scholars and Alternative Careers (2 contests)

26. **Anna Beskin.** Intl. fellowships coordinator, Fordham Univ.


Publications include contrib., *The Literary Encyclopedia* (online, 2013); article in *Explicator.*

**Statement**

As a recent PhD in English in a nonacademic career, I am personally and professionally invested in ensuring that graduate students, individuals working in nonacademic careers, and independent scholars have a greater presence and deeper sense of community within the MLA as well as the humanities in general. The MLA recognizes the need for greater support and has designed valuable undertakings with its Connected Academics initiative. Furthermore, many PhD-granting departments have initiated programs to better prepare their graduate students for alternative careers outside academia, but more remains to be done. In my current role as international fellowships adviser at Fordham University, I meet with humanities graduate students who want to make themselves more competitive for both the academic and nonacademic career tracks by applying for highly prestigious international fellowships such as the Fulbright, Rhodes, or Marshall. While they are familiar with these large awards, they are not sure of how to navigate the unfamiliar landscape of careers outside the traditional academy. This unfamiliarity is not unique to my institution, as many students only begin to consider these career tracks late in their academic studies. Should I be elected, I will advocate for partnering with humanities graduate directors and graduate student organizations to establish networks that help graduate students and PhDs benefit from learning about nonacademic careers earlier in their studies as well as how best to translate their teaching and research experience into skills attractive to nonacademic employers.

27. **Celestine Woo.** Lead faculty member and prof. English, Bard Early Coll., Harlem Children’s Zone Promise Acad.


Candidate Information

Review, American Notes and Queries, Lion and the Unicorn, Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies, Profession, Midwest Quarterly, Explicator.

Statement

I am currently a full-time faculty member in an early-college program, a partnership between Bard College and a pair of charter high schools run by the Harlem Children’s Zone. Early-college programs, in which high school students enroll in college credit-bearing courses, are growing in popularity and, perhaps concomitantly, in mixed assessment. They constitute one of the multiplying nontraditional career paths for academics in our increasingly technologized, corporatized, overadministered, and underfunded academy. I am very interested in working to disseminate information about and respect for such hybrid, unusual job options as well as in analyzing their benefits and drawbacks for both individual academics and academia as a whole.

I am honored to be nominated for the Delegate Assembly. As a midcareer academic, who has adjuncted and has held tenure-track positions at a community college, a small public liberal arts college, and a larger college (Empire State College, SUNY, where I received tenure and promotion), I bring a depth and breadth of experience and understanding to my perception of contemporary challenges within academe. The creation of myriad hybrid academic/administrative positions holds promise vis-à-vis the growing dearth of tenure-track jobs but poses questions and problems in turn about academic freedom and much else. My hope is that my perspective and experiences will enrich MLA discussions along these lines.

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Publications include Under Clouds of Poesy: Poetry and Truth in French and English Reworkings of the Aeneid, 1160–1513 (1986); coauthor, Mythen der Liebe (2010), Myths of Love: Echoes of Ancient Mythology in the Modern Romantic Imagination (2014); article in Magazine Antiques.

Statement

I completed my PhD in comparative literature in 1981 and, after several years of teaching in temporary positions, made the move into scholarly publishing, first at Johns Hopkins and then, since 1989, at the University of Pennsylvania Press, where I oversee the lists in a broad range of humanities fields. If elected, I would come to the Delegate Assembly not just as someone who has explored and thrived in an alternative career—if by alternative we mean to designate a nonfaculty position—but also as someone with the strong conviction that we lessen the perceived value of advanced degrees in the humanities both within our own universities and in society at large when we use language that implicitly privileges the one path over the other.

I would come, too, as someone who has devoted the greater part of his working life to a publishing culture undergoing historic changes and who is strongly committed to a balanced discussion of the issues we face. The scholarly monograph and the academic journal are evolving rapidly rather than face imminent extinction, and authors no less than publishers inhabit an increasingly complex ecosystem. There are hugely important decisions to be made about the structure and financing of scholarly publishing. What we put in place will determine for years to come not only how published materials are accessed but also who is afforded access to the publication process and who, if we are not sufficiently mindful, is at risk of being shut out of the system.

29. David Weimer. Librarian for Cartographic Collections and Learning, Harvard Univ.


Statement

I have been lucky enough to find a job that combines the aspects of research and teaching I learned and loved in getting my PhD in English. Many university libraries are increasingly emphasizing teaching among their librarians as they continue to adapt to the needs of changing student populations and growing universities. These adaptations mean that librarian positions will be more and more desirable for literature and language scholars, not as alternative careers but as professions that undertake the work they sought in entering PhD programs. As a delegate, I would offer guidance to jobseekers interested in librarianship and also, as scholars find careers outside of the professoriat, advocate for ways that the MLA can facilitate scholarship coming from a diverse set of professional positions. Even as I hope that I could bring these positions in libraries and special collections to the attention of jobseekers, I would hope more broadly to facilitate within the MLA ways that junior and senior scholars alike can integrate their work into the institutions that surround them, including but not limited to libraries and special collections.

IX. Less-Taught Languages (1 contest)

30. Rebecca Johnson. Crown Junior Ch. in Middle East Studies and asst. prof. English, Northwestern Univ.


Statement

It is a well-known irony that some less-taught languages are among the most commonly spoken. This irony shows how academic organizations have retained Eurocentric intellectual structures that reflect the political capital associated with a language rather than its relevance to literary studies. My scholarly agenda aims at recovering the ways that European and non-European literatures have been historically interdependent and how Middle Eastern literatures have played central roles in the formation of what we think of as European forms and tendencies. To fully understand these issues, more professional resources need to be devoted to creating cooperation between scholars and teachers of less-taught languages and those of major European ones. We must rethink the position of foreign languages within the MLA and engage in a large-scale conversation about institutional structures—including geographic and period designations—that reinforce the marginalization of less-taught languages.

I am also interested in creating avenues for increased cooperation between foreign language teachers and literature scholars. Because of the two-tier hiring system and the extensive time commitment necessary to attain competency in a less-taught language, students often encounter literary texts in these languages only as linguistic exercises or as literary objects in translation. Distributing language learning across the curriculum and promoting collaborative teaching are ways to address this issue, as is creating more tenure-line positions that integrate language teaching and literary scholarship. We can no longer tolerate a system where scholarship in less-taught languages moves to the center while the teachers of those languages continue to be marginalized.

31. Anna M. Klobucka. Prof. Portuguese and women’s and gender studies, Univ. of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.


Statement

At a time of declining foreign language enrollments in United States colleges and universities, the standing of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) has been fraught with both peril and promise (some LCTLs are, after all, the world’s most commonly spoken languages). In a political and cultural context of globalization coexisting with the rise of xenophobic and nativist perspectives, and in the working environment of the managerial university, we need to be more attentive than ever to opportunities for strategic invention and realignment in shaping our curricula and institutional structures. Such opportunities will always be situationally specific—affected not only by the college setting one works in (public or private, small or large, urban, regional, etc.) but also, and especially, by the language(s) in question: about the only characteristic Mandarin Chinese and, say, Catalan have in common as academic subjects is their shared status as LCTLs.

As a literary scholar whose experience includes teaching language in diverse institutional contexts and authoring a Portuguese language textbook, I am keenly aware of damaging divisions and hierarchies between language and content courses and between faculty members in many departmental and university settings. I believe the LCTL community needs to work to bridge such gaps. As a native speaker of Polish whose academic career has been primarily in Portuguese, I understand the variety of empirical conditions and political concerns affecting LCTLs. It would be an honor and a responsibility I would take very seriously to represent our interests in the Delegate Assembly.

X. Politics and the Profession (1 contest)

32. Bishnupriya Ghosh. Prof. English, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara.


Statement

As a faculty member and former department chair, I have been concerned with the general upper administrative reach into faculty governance in the areas of job security (including tenure and promotion), academic freedom, and resource allocation. I would like to see the MLA continue to develop best practices in these areas. A second, and related, issue concerns changing evaluative criteria for emerging modes of scholarship. Of these, I am especially interested in the nature and scope of humanistic collaborative enterprises. When considering raises or matters of tenure, collaborations are often quantified using models based in the sciences; but such quantification misses the mark on the very different kinds of humanistic collaborative work under way at our universities. MLA guidelines in this area would protect practitioners (especially untenured faculty members) and thereby enhance such work. Last, collaborations point us to research foci that transversally articulate across literary-historical periods—for example, environmental or cognitive humanities that bring together students and faculty members working in fields from medieval studies to the early twenty-first century. The restructuring of MLA rubrics reflects this conceptual change. It would be intellectually stimulating to continue the conversation in a series of events or panels on the relation between coverage-based and focus-based models of field organization.


PhD, Graduate Center, City Univ. of New York. Junior faculty research grant (Amer. Univ. of Beirut), Hewlett Foundation, 2005; McConnell Family Research Fellowship, Huntington Library, 2007.


Statement

My interest in election to the Delegate Assembly is grounded in the following issues:

1. Contingent labor: I believe we must push back against the conversion of tenure-track positions into lectureships and ensure that existing lectureships offer meaningful compensation and benefits, job security, and a path to promotion.

2. Age: Like many members, I am over forty with an extensive and successful record of teaching and scholarship. Yet, as many of us know, our experience and accomplishment are not valued when we apply for jobs or grants. Age discrimination is real and a concern for the MLA, especially since the pool of applicants for good jobs includes many long-time part-timers or older recent graduates. We must address this problem through discussion, education, and, possibly, legislation.
3. Global job market: More than ever United States–trained faculty members are pursuing jobs in universities around the world, and they take with them liberal values in matters of professionalization and academic culture. Serious problems might arise when a United States–trained professor at a foreign university teaches a text about gender or insists on transparency at a department meeting. These situations occur here in the United States as well, but abroad a faculty member might be fired, arrested, and deported. We must do our best to support the civil and human rights of faculty members teaching abroad and continue to question whether United States universities should engage with foreign universities and university systems that support discriminatory and repressive regimes.

X. Two-Year Colleges (2 contests)

34. Douglas L. Howard. Prof. English, Suffolk County Community Coll., Ammerman Campus, State Univ. of New York.

PhD, New York Univ. Board of directors, New York CEA, 2015–.


Statement

I am honored to be considered for a position in the Delegate Assembly and would welcome the opportunity to serve the discipline in this capacity. I am particularly concerned about the current state of the humanities as it affects students and faculty members at the two-year level. While there are important conversations going on about workforce development and career opportunities for students in science and technology fields, we do not want our colleges, universities, communities, and, most important, our students to lose sight of what the humanities have to offer. The humanities do more than help students, whether they major in them or not, to acquire and develop skill sets that can ably serve them and complement their work in other disciplines. For when students go on to advanced study at the four-year level or go out into the job market, the experience of the humanities, as part of any curriculum, will have helped to prepare them for what lies ahead. The humanities enrich students’ lives in immeasurable ways and provide them with perspective for an increasingly demanding and complex world. Now, more than ever, we need to promote the humanities in our institutions to keep them from being marginalized in the service of degree specializations or in the name of curricular compliance. In my role as a member of the assembly and in collaboration with my colleagues from other institutions, I would enthusiastically take up this charge.

35. David R. Leight. Prof. humanities, Reading Area Community Coll., PA.

MA (rhetoric), Temple Univ., Philadelphia; MA (English), Lehigh Univ. Coordinator, Coll.-Level Writing Program, Reading Area Community Coll., PA, 2005–.


Statement

Two-year-college faculty members are in a difficult position with respect to the MLA. Those of us who are long-time members, since 1989 in my case, know that the institution offers a wonderful conference, an excellent journal, and a variety of affiliate organizations. But we also know that the conference, journal,
and affiliates rarely speak to us directly. Even though many of us teach literature and would be greatly helped by opportunities to share our ideas and to renew our study and research, we have only rare access to them.

Faculty members at two-year colleges are spread thin, and our institutional responsibilities and teaching loads often preclude our research into and writing about the subjects we teach. Adjunct faculty members, who often come to my campus straight from graduate programs, have even less support. One need only browse *PMLA* or the convention program to see how few two-year-college faculty members are represented compared to faculty members and graduate students in four-year colleges and universities.

The MLA needs to develop ways for two-year-college faculty members to help one another and to make connections with their four-year-college peers. Specifically, the MLA should advocate for two-year colleges to financially support full-time and adjunct faculty members’ professional development; provide support for new two-year-college faculty members and adjuncts, who teach a wide variety of students at our colleges; and connect two-year-college faculty members to their colleagues working on similar projects or to colleagues who might be interested in similar research and writing opportunities.

36. **Loknath Persaud.** Prof. Spanish, Pasadena City Coll., CA.


**Statement**

It is an honor to be nominated for a Delegate Assembly seat representing community colleges. I have taught for thirty years in the community-college system, and I have had to deal with many issues as coordinator of foreign languages and departmental representative in the Academic Senate of Pasadena City College for over ten years. I would gladly participate in the assembly’s discussions and help find solutions to questions that beset us all, namely, the increasing skepticism within academia and society about the benefits of the humanities and the study of languages and the mounting reliance of language programs on the work of underpaid part-time faculty members.

It is not difficult to see the effects of this loss of emphasis on the humanities. Just a cursory look, for example, at information in our mass media would point to the need to highlight the societal benefits of the study of the humanities and foreign languages. Learning to write clearly, think critically, and synthesize opinions and gaining a greater understanding of our fractious world are necessary parts of the education of our citizens, so training in the humanities and foreign languages is not an inconsequential frill or an insignificant segment of a student’s education. We must address the public and the powers that be about the necessary education of citizens and also devise strategies to halt the steady erosion of working conditions and unwarranted indignity meted out to many who would like to gain or maintain a foothold in our profession.

37. **Peter Elias Sotiriou.** Prof. English, Los Angeles City Coll., CA.


Statement

In my teaching and scholarly career, I have been particularly interested in the intersection of teaching and scholarship. I was a member of a committee for the NCTE that drafted a position paper on the teacher-scholar in the two-year college in 2005. If I am elected to represent the two-year college in the Delegate Assembly, I intend to further this discussion of the teacher-scholar in our profession and hope to continue a dialogue with college and university English teachers regarding the English classroom as a site for scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, I hope to establish an ongoing dialogue between the two-year-college teacher-scholars of the MLA and the MLA membership’s fertile theorizing and literary research strength. Finally, I want to encourage the members of the assembly and the MLA membership to be active in re-visioning the humanities in the twenty-first century—a discipline that has been besieged and marginalized by corporate neoliberal practices and one whose plight I investigated in my most recent work, *Teaching and Learning in the Humanities*.

**XI. Women in the Profession (2 contests)**

38. **María del Pilar Melgarejo.** Lecturer Spanish, Southern Methodist Univ.

PhD, Univ. of Pittsburgh. Fellow, Center for 21st Century Studies, Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2011–12.


Statement

I am committed to addressing the ways in which gender and equality are crucial in the policies and practices of the profession. As a member of the Delegate Assembly I will promote a critical debate that can have real outcomes regarding issues like faculty salary inequities, mentoring, service commitments, hiring, family leave, and promotion. There should be a common agreement about institutional practices in the academic workplace. I look forward to promoting awareness that can result in concrete proposals to address and improve the place of women in the profession today.

39. **Gillian Price.** Spanish teacher, Hilton Head Preparatory School.


Publications include interviews in *Hispamérica*.

Statement

Historically, the MLA has played a leadership role in making recommendations that promote equal opportunities for men and women in academia, but considerable work remains to be done. Fostering a healthy and safe working environment free of gender and sex discrimination and sexual harassment must be a priority. The MLA must continue its long-standing dedication to the eradication of discriminatory recruitment and hiring practices. The MLA should also develop a model for evaluating research, teaching, and service impartially—not blindly, but accounting for gender differences in how such work is assigned and acknowledged by students, faculty members, and administrators. As a member of the Delegate Assembly, I will also advocate for policies that promote healthier work-life balance for graduate students and faculty members, including family leave and support for adjunct professors’ careers.

I am deeply concerned with the erosion of humanities education, evident in the slashing of tenure-track jobs that support research and in the exploitation of contingent faculty members. In my experience in
both college and high school settings, this pattern places pressure on humanities departments to justify their existence not only to administrators but also to the students themselves, who increasingly opt for more practical majors that are, at some public institutions, available to students at lower tuition rates. High schools, community colleges, and traditional four-year institutions must collaborate on supporting humanities education. As a member of the Delegate Assembly I will foster a dialogue on our shared concerns.


Statement
If elected to this position, I will work to make the MLA a stronger voice for structural change on the following issues, which continue to negatively impact women in our profession: salary inequity, gender bias in promotion and tenure evaluations, unequal distribution of service obligations, gender bias in student evaluations, underrepresentation in recruitment and retention, inadequate family policies that result in a “baby penalty” for women faculty members and graduate students, sexual harassment and bullying, marginalization in male-dominated professional circles, and disproportionate representation of women in the ranks of teachers holding non-tenure-track and part-time positions. I also plan to advocate for the creation of more MLA events dedicated to networking opportunities for women at all ranks and for more discussion and advocacy around the unique service burdens placed on women of color in our profession. I look forward to the opportunity to work with colleagues in the Delegate Assembly to strengthen the MLA’s support of women in the profession.

Publications include articles in Journal of Lusophone Studies, Letras (Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru), Teatro: Revista de estudios culturales.

Statement
If elected to the Delegate Assembly as a representative for Women in the Profession, I would emphasize two main issues. First, I believe it is crucial to remain attentive to hiring practices, pay equity, and promotions that help ensure faculty diversity based on gender. In addition to advocating an increase in the number of women in academic and administrative positions, we should consider the range of factors that can influence their retention and success, including parental leave, equal recognition for women participating in collaborative projects, and mentoring. Second, I think that recognizing diversity among women is fundamental to being a responsible representative who can speak to the interests of a wide range of individuals. The obstacles that women of color face may not always be the same as those confronted by the LGBT community; as a representative it is my commitment to ensure that all issues are addressed attentively and prioritized equally. The current political climate in this country has made possible important developments in areas such as marriage equality, but it has also led to troubling reversals on issues such as reproductive rights. It is important to continue to strengthen the type of political associations that, like Women in the Profession, are attentive to gender-based politics both within academia and beyond.
Part IV: Voting for Regional Delegates

Thirty-four persons will be elected to replace delegates whose terms expire on 8 January 2017. The term of office will be from 9 January 2017 through the close of the January 2020 convention. The numbers preceding the nominees’ names correspond to the numbers assigned to the nominees on the paper ballot sheet.

The names of the regional delegates with continuing terms in 2017 appear at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/del_assembly_members).

Vote in only one region but in any or all of the contests within that one region.

I. New England and Eastern Canada (5 contests)

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont; New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Québec


Statement

As a member of the MLA since 1994 and a scholar who has studied Canadian and American literature comparatively from that time onward, I will champion the inclusion of Canadian perspectives within the MLA, an organization that often feels overly nationalistic. Region 1, New England and Eastern Canada, historically was shaped by the fluidity of borders (particularly through its Indigenous communities). It makes sense to be more attentive to and proactive in recognizing and engaging with the region using a cross-border lens, which might include thinking through differences and similarities with respect to funding opportunities, job prospects, the teaching of composition, and the community-college system. I am also deeply committed to two issues that are critical to the MLA membership as a whole: alt-academic careers and mentoring of women. Having supervised multiple PhDs who successfully transitioned into other career paths, I would urge the MLA to recognize more explicitly the valuable contributions these members of our community make and to figure out how to make the MLA relevant to those who do not remain in academia yet possess an immense amount of useful knowledge. Finally, speaking as someone who has juggled research, administrative posts, and children and who had excellent mentors, I believe we need to ensure that academia is more welcoming to everyone who might wish to have some work-life balance (whatever that might look like), despite the tendency in academia to be myopically focused on career success.

Publications include guest coed., University of Toronto Quarterly (2015); contrib., Transnationalism, Activism, Art (2013).

Statement
In almost every aspect of my professional life, I encounter and embrace the interrelationship of diversity, difference, and dialogue. My research is focused on two very different areas: Anglophone postcolonial South Asian literature and Afro-futuristic DJ culture. My day-to-day work as a professor and program coordinator is centered on developing curricula and pedagogies for teaching critical thinking, reading, and writing skills to students from every program in my polytechnical institution, a set of tasks that demands a creative engagement with liberal arts education and skill-based training paradigms. On a larger scale, my professional community is built from a network of two-year colleges and research-based universities primarily on the Canadian side of the border, though with a watchful eye on the American scene. As a member of the Delegate Assembly, I would contribute by drawing on this set of experiences at all levels. In the past, I have observed and admired how our association has been receptive to creating a space for diverse theoretical frameworks, scholarly practices, languages, and identities. As a member of the Delegate Assembly, I would be committed to the ongoing work of expanding and enriching that space. I also support the initiative to facilitate graduate students’ professional pathways in a marketplace where employment is becoming increasingly precarious, and I wish to support faculty members in a global culture where the humanities should be valued as essential to student success, regardless of the discipline.

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Statement
An active MLA member since the early 1990s—as a presenter, organizer of panels, and member of the executive committee of the Division on Literature and Other Arts—I am a strong advocate for the
humanities in general and for the public humanities, digital humanities, and extensive scholarly communication in particular. With a plethora of media at our disposal, humanities scholars and teachers today have a multitude of opportunities to explore and communicate what is indispensable about literatures, languages, and human creativity in a national and international context preoccupied with STEM and quantitative data. Were I to be elected to the Delegate Assembly, advocacy for the humanities—especially literatures, languages, and human creativity in the digital and public realms—will be a priority, accompanied by a strong focus on bringing graduate education into the twenty-first century (following former MLA president Sidonie Smith) and on moving beyond a persistent “two cultures” (C. P. Snow) divide for undergraduate students, who often remain mired in STEM vs. humanities culture clashes. At the University of Connecticut I have been able to advocate for all three areas as the program director of Media Studies and Digital Humanities at the Humanities Institute (in addition to serving as a board member twice), as a PhD adviser and graduate program director who is currently designing a new graduate certificate for Media Studies and Digital Humanities, and as section chair of a very large German studies program offering dual degrees in engineering and German studies (EuroTech).


Statement

I have been a member of the MLA since my graduate school days (1990). The best description of how I experience this membership came from one of my dissertation committee members, who, upon entering a hotel lounge full of attendees at an MLA annual meeting, joyfully exclaimed, “My tribe!” If elected as a representative for New England and Eastern Canada, I hope to nurture this sense of community connection and belonging for all MLA members.

I have devoted my career as a faculty member in English to helping build a subfield in human rights and literature with a particular emphasis on race and gender. As a regional representative to the Delegate Assembly, I hope to bring this sensibility to my role, including encouraging the MLA to use its considerable power to advance human rights–related concerns. I will support efforts of the MLA to strengthen commitment to and funding for the humanities in secondary and higher education more broadly, and I will support efforts and organizing toward economic justice and inclusivity for all faculty members, especially those in the segment of the professoriat euphemistically called “contingent labor.”

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PhD, Purdue Univ., West Lafayette.


**Statement**

In comparison to the category *university*, the designation *college* continues to connote for many an institution where research is not a priority or even an activity. Even though the volume of scholarship produced by liberal arts college faculty members in the last two decades suggests otherwise, as a collective we are often overlooked or bypassed for appointments to leadership roles in national organizations, promotion reviews, scholarship committees, and editorial boards because we lack a university affiliation. Thus, as a professor at a liberal arts college, if elected I would like to raise the visibility of faculty members from this kind of institution, where active research and publication are integral parts of the pursuit of excellent teaching.

105. Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi. Asst. prof. English, Univ. of Western Ontario.


106. Stuart J. Murray. Canada Research Ch. in Rhetoric and Ethics, Carleton Univ.


and Rhetoric, Social Science and Medicine, Critical Public Health, Journal of Medical Humanities, Bioethics, Body and Society, Law, Culture and the Humanities, Human Studies, Canadian Review of American Studies, Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine, English Studies in Canada.

Statement

I am honored to be nominated as a regional delegate. My professional concerns involve the rising precarity of academic labor coupled with the systematic erosion of the principles and mechanisms of collective academic governance. Given the increasingly entrepreneurial focus of our institutions, language departments and programs have been particularly vulnerable to cuts, restructuring schemes, and constructive obsolescence. I look forward to thinking together about creative ways to address the ongoing economic crisis and imposed austerity measures in our colleges and universities—such as the defunding of higher education, inequitable labor practices, mounting student debt, and the un- and underemployment of our graduates. I am particularly concerned for the future of the humanities PhD and would foster international dialogue. And I would encourage the MLA to develop its digital media platforms, its outreach to graduate students and non-tenure-track faculty members, and its role as a vocal advocate for the study of languages, literatures, and cultures.

As a rhetoric scholar whose research considers ethical theory and practice, my work is multidisciplinary and often collaborative. It leverages humanities and social science theories and methodologies to intervene across professional and public domains, e.g., mental health, prison populations, the effects of emergent biomedical technologies, biopolitics, and digital cultures. For me, humanities disciplines are clearly relevant to our socioeconomic and political issues—but they must be demonstrated as crucial if we hope to find socially just ways of living together. I would bring this professional commitment to the MLA as a delegate for our region.


108. Nicole Burgoyne. Grad. student German, Harvard Univ.


Statement

My experience teaching at Harvard University as a graduate student since 2011 and as an instructor at Wheaton College in Massachusetts (2016–17) has given me a sense of the varying situations of schools of different sizes in our region and profession. I look forward to learning about and representing the interests of my colleagues from the area and beyond. Having just completed seven years in Harvard’s German PhD program, I can speak to all stages of graduate study and know that the experience varies from institution to institution. Furthermore, as a graduate student on the job market who adjuncts at a nearby college, I will represent the interests of individuals at this career stage. Finally, my research finds its home in the German
and Slavic literature departments as well as the history department. I will act on behalf of both literary critics and historians and attempt to increase interaction between these two groups of members of the MLA.


Statement

The reports of the death of the humanities are greatly exaggerated. True, this is a difficult time for our profession, but I don’t feel overwhelmed by the challenges. Rather, my experience as a student and as a nontraditional faculty member at a number of colleges and universities has actually made me hopeful.

In the ten years between when I completed my master’s degree and entered a PhD program, I held many nontraditional academic positions including adjunct professor, writing tutor, writing center coordinator, visiting professor, student newspaper adviser, and online instructor. That is to say, I am very much aware of the challenges facing young scholars in the current academic job market. And yet, though it hasn’t always been easy, I have managed to carve out a life in academia through a mix of tenacity, hard work, flexibility, and a little bit of good fortune.

If elected to the position of regional delegate, I will do my best to represent my colleagues in a way that draws on my experience—that is, by being realistic about the times we are living in as well as optimistic for the future of our profession. I believe in the MLA and its ability to promote positive change, and I’m eager to play my part in that effort. The next few years promise to bring both opportunities and challenges to our field, and I’m committed to working as an advocate, encourager, ally, and colleague for our collective betterment.

II. New York State (5 contests)


PhD, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor.


Statement

As an interdisciplinary scholar at a large public university that increasingly confronts the defunding of the humanities, I’ve witnessed how emerging scholars try to deal with a rapid professionalization that contrasts with the scarcity of academic jobs available. I’ve experienced how scholars in the humanities who
are marked by race, class, gender, and sexuality are especially vulnerable. I’m preoccupied with the issues of precarity in the profession and wish to address them at the institutional level. Serving in the Delegate Assembly would provide a strong launchpad for this advocacy. I’m committed to building webs of support for my cohort (including part-time faculty members) and those following us, who are currently graduate students, especially in the fields of Latin American and Caribbean studies. I find it imperative to work toward increasing access to full-time positions with fair workloads, to ensure our emerging scholars will be able to pursue their research and writing in equitable conditions.


Statement

As a New York State delegate, I would advocate for MLA initiatives on matters of diversity and inclusion throughout the profession, for combining the strengths of old paradigms of philological study with the innovations of new models and new theories of literary and cultural study, for securing better working conditions for contingent faculty members while resisting attacks on the tenure system, and for establishing a just and equitable distribution of academic work (teaching, research, and shared governance) both in the immediate and in the long-term future. I have no magic solutions for the problems our profession faces, but I have served as English department chair (2001–04; spring 2016), as program director for comparative literature (1997–2000; 2011–14), as a member of the board of directors for Fordham University Press (2005–14), and as a member of my university’s Faculty Senate (since 2005, for a variety of terms). I have many years of experience enduring and seeking not to succumb to administrative nihilism. It would be an honor to serve the MLA as a New York State delegate.


Statement

As a member of the Delegate Assembly, I would draw on my six years as chair of the Barnard College English department, where, among other things, I was able to shape and revise the curriculum in accordance with changing needs and trends in our discipline. Working closely with the Columbia University
chair, I also became familiar with the similarities and differences between departments at research universities and smaller colleges.

In addition, as a three-term university senator, I have worked on tenure and promotion grievance committees, trying to make sure that faculty members were treated fairly and to redress the problems if the committee believed that they were not. Recently, I have been involved in the attempt to reconcile student and faculty desires for openness to debate in the classroom, seeking to avoid reducing free-speech issues in class to an us-versus-them problem.

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Statement

As a regional representative from New York State in the Delegate Assembly, I will emphasize issues related to public higher education that center on access, affordability, and student debt. These issues are directly related to the crisis in undergraduate enrollment in humanities courses, especially at public colleges and universities, where students are pressured to view college as vocational training.

The liberal arts are increasingly seen as a luxury that only the affluent can afford. This mindset makes a lot of sense given that the average debt for a SUNY undergraduate is $25,000. Although SUNY prides itself on keeping in-state tuition relatively low compared to other state university systems, student debt is relatively the same for graduates of public and private colleges and universities in New York state (NYU, $28,000; Skidmore, $23,000) (ticas.org). When I ask my students if they would take more courses in the humanities if tuition were significantly less, they answer with a resounding yes.

I would also like the Delegate Assembly to raise issues of access on the graduate level: How big is too big for a doctoral program in English? Should we reduce the size of what William James called the “Ph.D. Octopus”? If so, are we letting market demand dictate the size of a graduate program? Should we instead be thinking of doctoral level study as avocational rather than vocational? These are all questions that urgently need to be addressed.


PhD, Duke Univ. Ch., Dept. of English, Ithaca Coll. Ed. board (Renaissance section), Literature Compass, 2005–

41. Statement

My perspective is shaped by the eleven years I have spent teaching at a four-year comprehensive college, where undergraduates constitute 90% of the student body. In such an atmosphere, languages and literature are valued primarily because of what they contribute to undergraduate education; within this context there are presently, in my view, two extremely significant series of problems. The first is conceptual and derives from the sense of vague hostility to humanities disciplines characteristic of contemporary professional culture. The language of utility and relevance typically takes as its implicit target fields of study that do not correspond self-evidently to categories of private-sector employment, and the pervasiveness of such rhetoric in turn exerts pressure on undergraduate curricula and on graduate funding to emphasize professional instead of liberal education. The second series is practical and is developing from a single circumstance: across the United States, the numbers of undergraduate majors in languages and literatures are declining. This decline is worrisome not only because of the consequences it may have for the structure of undergraduate programs of study and for faculty recruitment but also and primarily because it suggests that fewer students are taking the opportunity to think critically and reflectively and to consider what truly global citizenship might mean by adopting perspectives available only through the study of languages and literatures. The MLA should continue to advocate for a model of education that engages directly with these problems, and I would welcome the chance to be part of that effort.


Statement

For seven years, I have been an assistant professor of English at a small, liberal arts college, during which time my institution, like many, has struggled with the place of the arts in the face of declining enrollments and increasing pressure on quantifiable student success. I wish to join the Delegate Assembly to give my voice in support of the humanities at this difficult time in our profession.

The MLA has a long-standing tradition of being the humanities advocate, through both the diverse and innovative intellectual work it fosters and its tireless support of people in the profession. Sadly, the work I wish to support as an assembly member will address the lingering concerns of previous years. First, we must find ways to continue to advocate for contingent and adjunct faculty members, ensuring appropriate working conditions. Second, we must ensure that the increasing proliferation of online instruction in institutions of higher education is conducted responsibly and that it in no way undermines the place of the professor. Finally, we must consider ways to support PhD students and ensure that institutions are ethically responsible for preparing their graduates for the challenges of the academic job market and for the possibility of finding work outside academia. As the space for the humanities continues to shrink, we need to ensure that the MLA, and academic organizations in general, are no less hospitable to those unable to secure traditional academic employment.


Statement

Having previously worked at both public and private two- and four-year institutions in a range of positions from adjunct professor to writing center director, I am currently a tenure-track assistant professor at Bronx Community College, CUNY, which serves an extraordinarily diverse student population. My range of professional experience has shown me firsthand the importance of resolving problems such as overreliance on contingent labor and the lagging evolution of promotion and tenure standards. This perspective has been enriched by my work as an elected representative in BCC’s Faculty Senate, which during this past year has engaged with issues such as better representation and professional development opportunities for nonfaculty instructional staff and how to attract, retain, and promote more faculty and staff members of color. Better working conditions for faculty and staff members allow us to better serve students, which is our primary mission. Working toward such improvements is vital at a time when lessened public support and funding create a struggle whose effects I have seen and in which I have taken part in as an active participant in the PSC-CUNY and its long-standing contract dispute with the city and state. I am a longtime member of the MLA and a former representative for New York State in the Delegate Assembly. The MLA can be an important and influential public voice in these debates and policy decisions, and, as a member of the Delegate Assembly, I would be both excited and honored to be part of that work again.


Publications include contrib., The Literary Encyclopedia (online, 2015); review in Renaissance Quarterly.

Statement

It is an honor to be nominated as a graduate student representative to the assembly. The various economic and structural pressures facing our profession are well known and acutely felt by graduate students. The MLA has responded to the current crisis by sponsoring research and tracking of employment outcomes and by producing recommendations for how departments of literature and language can best treat graduate students and contingent faculty members. As a graduate student representative to the assembly I would see a key part of my role as advocating for the inclusion of marginalized voices in the association’s work in these areas. Considering the continued centrality of the association and its convention in our hiring practices, I am also committed to working toward increased accessibility for graduate students and adjuncts.

119. Leslie Nickerson. Grad. student English, Univ. at Buffalo, State Univ. of New York.


Statement

As a delegate for New York State, I plan to represent the interests and needs of graduate students and contingent faculty members in the profession. I have a proven track record of advocacy for these groups through my institutional service as a voting graduate student member in my department, my work on the
Executive Committee and Graduate Review Committee in my department, my service as both an executive board officer and a senator for my departmental graduate student organization within the Graduate Student Association at the University at Buffalo, and my organizing work with the Buffalo Adjunct Movement. I am committed to providing a voice for graduate students and contingent faculty members within the MLA and to supporting efforts to make the work of the primary professional organization in our field more reflective of our needs. I believe the MLA can and should take a strong stand in support of a living wage, benefits, and improved working conditions for its contingent faculty members. I also believe that the MLA should dedicate more resources to professional development and mentoring opportunities for graduate student members, especially as we look ahead toward navigating the job market.

III. Middle Atlantic (5 contests)

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia


Publications include Pragmatic Passions: Melodrama and Latin American Social Narrative (2014); coed., Technology, Literature, and Digital Culture in Latin America: Mediatized Sensibilities in a Globalized Era (2016); contrib., La luz y la guerra: El cine de la Revolución mexicana (2010); articles in A contracorriente, Chasqui: Revista de literatura latinoamericana, MLN, Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana, Revista iberoamericana, Texto crítico.

Statement
As the crisis of the humanities persists, it is crucial for the MLA to continue to provide a space for dialogue and support to all of us across the profession. My interest in serving as a regional representative springs from my desire to advocate for colleagues in our profession on crucial topics including declining enrollments, insufficient faculty governance, and the increasingly vocational nature of higher education. At a time when we are faced with shrinking budgets and increasing labor demands, the MLA can equip us with tools to better confront professional challenges and to better meet the needs of our students. With regard to teaching, the MLA can give force to the importance of language arts in the contemporary period of globalization and changing demographics of United States society. My research on mass media and its technologies would be valuable to a consideration of the ways in which the MLA can continue to provide up-to-date venues for dialogue on the challenges of work in the contemporary humanities. I would be honored to be elected to this post, and my administrative experience as director of a Latin American studies program and my experience as cochair of the mass media and popular culture section of LASA will help me to serve as a regional representative in the Delegate Assembly.


Statement

As a scholar who is at a fairly early stage in her career, I approach the possible work as a delegate with the awareness of how the association often appears to be more a gatekeeper of potential and scarce employment than a source of meaningful support for emerging scholars and adjuncts. I look forward to thinking together about how the association can help the bulk of its constituency on issues such as scarce and precarious employment, student debt, and the closure of departments. Needed improvements might begin, for instance, with revisiting the proposal—adopted by other professional associations—to abolish the prohibitively costly MLA conference interview. My own recent work on environmental crisis has also led me to value greatly the role that aesthetics and speculative thought can play in generating alternatives to some of these same contemporary problems, so I hope also to advance the importance of the humanities in generating new models for planetary crises.

122. Emily C. Francomano. Assoc. prof. Spanish, Georgetown Univ.


Statement

I have been a member of the MLA since 1998 and served from 2008 to 2013 on the executive committee for what is now the forum called LLC Medieval Iberian. In my fifteen years at Georgetown University, I have served as director of undergraduate studies and director of graduate studies (literature) for the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and also as director of the Program for Comparative Literature. More recently, I have participated in ongoing work on rethinking the PhD in my home department and more broadly in Georgetown’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, motivated by my desire to maintain intellectual rigor in the face of the prioritizing of market-driven curricular design. While I applaud efforts to improve conditions for adjuncts due to dwindling prospects for secure and fairly compensated teaching positions, I believe we also need to fight for restoring the levels of support for public higher education necessary for opening tenure lines and for keeping humanities study accessible. I am also interested in promoting greater communication between MLA constituencies working in English and those working in foreign languages, particularly Spanish. I would welcome the opportunity to represent colleagues from the many different types of institutions in our region and to work actively as a delegate furthering the MLA’s continuing mission to promote the humanities, the teaching and study of languages and literatures, and the academic freedom that protects the integrity of our work.
123. **Effie Rentzou.** Assoc. prof. French, Princeton Univ.  
**Statement**  
I am honored by the nomination to represent the Middle Atlantic region in the Delegate Assembly. In an academic climate in which there is a generalized lament on the decline and the demise of the humanities, I am interested in addressing this discourse with dynamic responses that would stay away from the temptation of instrumentalizing the humanities—modeling them on hard sciences or social sciences in terms of results, productivity, and usefulness. This is especially true for foreign languages and cultures, as their place in the university is increasingly circumscribed by utilitarian criteria that define a foreign language as a tool of efficiency in an increasingly globalized world and very often dissociate the language from its culture and history. As a delegate my main goal would be to work toward reversing this trend that affects all aspects of our professional life, from our undergraduate teaching and curricula to institutional politics to our scholarship.

124. **Robert Lawrence Caserio.** Prof. English, comparative lit., and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies, Penn State Univ., University Park.  
Statement
The MLA must increase the attractiveness of English and other modern language studies to undergraduates, who are the source of all our resources for teaching and scholarship. I would urge the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee to propose and invite suggestions about how we can most comprehensively capture the interest of our youngest constituents. The attraction must not depend on “fast reading” and “fast writing,” phenomena that already twenty years ago Pierre Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* denominated as modes of “thoughtless thought.” Those modes environ us and tempt us to sign on. They can be withstood by the association’s and the Delegate Assembly’s ability to stimulate a mindfully meditated comprehension of the world’s natural languages and its artificial ones. Slow reading and slow writing harbor powerful virtues!

Our turn to world literature and the association’s revisions of its divisional structure impress me as essential signs of a will to speak to students, and to engage them, on the best contemporary grounds, without intellectual compromise. The enlargement of thought remains our job, the one we can most control despite the sad vagaries of the job market. To continue to do our work in the face of the corporate university’s (and the corporate college’s) ever-increasing profit-motivated variants of thoughtlessness, the association needs to exemplify freedom of inquiry for undergraduate and graduate students as well as for faculty members, whether tenured or untenured. I hope to contribute to the Delegate Assembly’s share of responsibility in the modeling and maintenance of such autonomy.

125. **E. Jane Hedley.** K. Laurence Stapleton Prof. of English, Bryn Mawr Coll.


Statement
I have been a member of the MLA for forty years, while teaching English Renaissance literature and poetry of all periods at Bryn Mawr College. The value and viability of the liberal arts are particular interests of mine, and so is the teaching of writing. I rely on the MLA to keep me abreast of new developments and ongoing conversations, both in the fields where I do scholarship and, more broadly, as concerns the future of literary studies and the changing landscape of American higher education. Collectively we have a powerful voice, which we have used effectively to weigh in on matters of urgent professional concern. Of particular urgency right now are the future of graduate study in the humanities, the rising cost of higher education, and the growing adjunctification of the professoriat. More specific to the MLA is the question of whether to continue to host departmental search interviews at the convention, now that more and more departments are choosing instead to interview at a distance through videoconferencing. I think we need to get out ahead of this trend, either by discontinuing convention interviews or by subsidizing convention attendance for job candidates. If elected to the Delegate Assembly, I will be excited to contribute to these and other conversations about the priorities and the future of the MLA.

126. **Leslie Zarker Morgan.** Prof. Italian and French, Loyola Univ., MD.

PhD, Yale Univ. NEMLA summer fellowship, 1990; ACLS travel grant, 1994; Fulbright research scholarship (France), Sept.–Dec. 2004; NEH translation grant, 2014–16. Visiting appointment: Università


**Statement**

It would be an honor to represent the mid-Atlantic region in the Delegate Assembly. I bring my experience of collaborating locally with different universities as well as my career in a comprehensive university and serving actively in professional organizations. The MLA needs to address all types of institutions, from research universities to community colleges, including those whose primary function is teaching and whose instructors are often torn between the need or desire for research and the day-to-day teaching and administrative life. The current crisis in the humanities must be addressed in an inclusive manner, allowing for different solutions appropriate to varied institutional missions. In recent years the MLA has priced itself out of the market for many professionals, between the membership fee and conference costs, as witnessed by Vancouver protests. These costs and structures need to be reconsidered, as does the function of the organization in professional life. Part of that reconsideration is to seek humane, realistic solutions—to the current employment crisis in conjunction with our sister professional organizations, such as the American Historical Association, American Philosophical Association, and other groups. Collaboration and standing together eloquently in our diversity before the public offer both the best example and strongest answer to widespread skepticism toward the humanities.

127. Mary L. Poteau-Tralie. Prof. French, Rider Univ.


    Publications include *Voices of Authority: Criminal Obsession in Guy de Maupassant’s Short Works* (1994); contrib., *Land and Landscape in Francographic Literature* (2007); articles and reviews in *French Review, Dalhousie French Studies, Nineteenth Century French Studies, South Atlantic Review, Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly,* *L’érudit franco-espagnol.*
Statement

As we witness the closing of liberal arts programs nationwide in favor of narrowly focused vocational-technical training programs, it is clear that the arguments for such closures are not entirely economic but rather based on a politically motivated philosophical shift away from the humanities and the arts. Students in small private colleges and universities, as well as some public institutions, are deeply affected by this shift. The MLA has a moral obligation to work with our colleagues in institutions facing these draconian program cuts, for their students are traditionally those who were shut out of higher education in the past and who now face limited academic horizons that their peers in top-tier universities do not. We are all in this together as colleagues and scholars and must seek ways to use our resources to provide every student the opportunity for a transformational education based on a solid grounding in the liberal arts. If the trend toward vocational higher education goes unchecked, students who are funneled into these narrow programs cannot hope to be the leaders, innovators, and creators in their fields. I would work with my colleagues in the MLA to find ways to identify programs in danger and provide them with resources and a clear statement of value from the MLA to use to defend themselves, and I would encourage the MLA to pool resources and discuss ideas with colleagues in other academic organizations—AATF, AATG, AATSP, American Philosophical Association, and College Art Association, to name a few.


Statement

It is an honor to be nominated to represent the Middle Atlantic region. During a time when STEM programs continue to be endorsed at every stage of education, it is crucial for the MLA to stress the importance of quality humanities programs in languages and literacy. As an early-career Spanish-language and literacy scholar, one of the foci of my work has been the need for culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies and curricula for students typically referred to as heritage language learners. It is evident, however, that national education policies and emphases limit the funding and resources allocated to the development of such programs. Grounding my work with the MLA in its goal to strengthen the study and teaching of language and literature, it is my intention to enlist my colleagues in promoting the value of such programs, which necessarily requires that we move away from thinking of language and literature courses, departments, and faculty members as dispensable. This raises a series of interconnected topics that I hope to consider, discuss, and intervene in as a member of the Delegate Assembly.

129. Michael A. Smith. Grad. student English, Duquesne Univ.


Statement

I believe that influencing public policy on the humanities will be the most important work of the MLA in the years to come. I am passionate about advocating for the humanities in this way to expand their space and defend their relevancy within the public sphere. My career in government and foundation relations—cultivated alongside my graduate studies—has given me the ability to offer expertise to the MLA in its vital project of championing the humanities.
As a scholar of geocriticism, I recognize the geographic nuances within such a diverse region as our own, and I believe it is important to keep these distinctions in mind when representing the Middle Atlantic in the Delegate Assembly. For the past five years, I have undertaken graduate studies in Pittsburgh, where I have both witnessed and participated in the economic and cultural upswing of the region and have glimpsed the future possibilities herein. As someone who has progressed through graduate degrees by working full-time in institutional development and part-time as an adjunct instructor, I know firsthand the experience of stitching together a teaching career across many campuses, and I can empathize with those heading down the alt-ac path.

As your representative in the Delegate Assembly, I will use this background of inquiry and expertise to inform discussion on the MLA’s agenda, particularly concerning public advocacy and job growth.

**IV. Great Lakes (6 contests)**

*Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin*

130. **Jonathan David Burgoyne.** Assoc. prof. Spanish, Ohio State Univ., Columbus.

PhD, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara. Ed., *La corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures*, 2012–.


**Statement**

Over the last ten years we have all seen the decrease in support (at the state and federal levels) for the arts and humanities and a shift toward STEM education as a national priority. The role of language education has been reduced to skill-based training, and departments of so-called foreign languages have been cut or folded into new programs with a focus on professional training. The MLA must continue to define the value of an education grounded in the humanities and language arts and advocate for their continued support at all levels, from K–12 to our institutions of higher learning.

131. **Juan Armando Rojas Joo.** Assoc. prof. Spanish, Ohio Wesleyan Univ.


Statement

At a time when higher education is advocating and continuously searching for more defined and comprehensive educational maps, the MLA can definitely play an important role in and benefit from the process. Due to its characteristics and advocacy work, the MLA can take the lead and innovate sustainable conditions of communication with other fields of study and offer higher education the resources and essential elements for academic diversity and inclusion. With its organizational experience and its increasing experience in research and teaching, the MLA can offer its members information on how to work with faculty members from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds. The MLA can also lead the way in creating more inclusive academic environments for faculty members and students from underrepresented groups, support equity, and even help review existing policies and procedures to minimize possible bias in higher education.

Due to the nature of our discipline, networking with other fields of study will provide the ability to encourage the development of assorted curriculums and pedagogies. During the current academic branching-out trend, our discipline can engage increasingly diverse student and faculty populations and introduce students in all fields to a variety of global perspectives and languages. By doing so the MLA will continue supporting the intellectual and professional lives of its current and future members, and it will definitely advance in the many areas of the humanities as stated in its mission.

I will support MLA members by advocating for these goals.

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132. Todd Herzog. Prof. German studies, Univ. of Cincinnati.


Statement

I am honored to be nominated to represent the Great Lakes region in the Delegate Assembly. The MLA is a large and diverse organization that unites scholars and educators across areas of study. I have cherished this association since I began my graduate studies two decades ago for the ways in which it has bridged media, disciplines, languages, and methodologies. I also value the MLA in its role as the most important advocate for teaching and scholarship in modern languages. As we all know, these days we need a powerful advocate in order to continue to do what we got into this profession to do: produce and disseminate knowledge. Over the course of my career—in which I have spent more time preparing budgets and reports than I had anticipated when I began—I have learned not only that effective administration and service are
important but that they can be a creative, scholarly act if done conscientiously and imaginatively. The Delegate Assembly continues and supports the valuable work that is shared in the scholarly panels across the MLA annual convention. If elected, I will advocate for effective ways to bridge divides between fields of study; between faculty members, students, and administration; and between the scholarly careers we imagined as graduate students and the realities of operating in today’s world of higher education.

133. **Theodore Franks Rippey.** Assoc. prof. German, Bowling Green State Univ.  


**Statement**

The humanities have a dual charge in these times: develop new, more resonant and impactful practices in teaching and research and make a more persuasive public case for why those practices are most successful when they connect organically to the best traditions of what we do. My work as a teacher-scholar and as an administrator has provided me with a multifaceted understanding of the challenges and opportunities at hand. These include fostering among our students a more conscious, reflective appreciation of the value of humanities-based knowledge and skills and fostering among administrators and external constituencies a more concrete sense of how our intellectual enterprise is essential, not as training for a specific job but as preparation for a meaningful, productive life as a citizen and professional. As a member of the assembly I would promote professional development efforts by the association aimed at advancing collaborative, public humanities research and an applied humanities approach to teaching. I would also engage myself in assembly and association efforts to support and improve public advocacy for language, literary, and cultural studies.

134. **Maggie Broner.** Assoc. prof. Spanish, St. Olaf Coll.  


**Statement**

I am honored to have been nominated to serve in the assembly. Throughout my professional life I have been deeply invested in building bridges to close the gap between language courses and major-level courses, between disciplines, between K–12 and tertiary education, and between literature and linguistics. I see assembly service as another opportunity to build bridges in our profession and to find common areas of interest and concern. I am particularly concerned with the attack on the humanities in general and the modern languages in particular and would like to work toward the articulation of a vision that puts literatures, languages, and the humanities at the center of a liberal education. It is essential to make a case for the importance of the development of critical thinking and empathy through the close analysis of multimodal and multilingual texts. For me, teaching is about empowering students to be informed citizens who develop empathy for diverse populations, their contexts, and their language(s)—and I think departments of literature
and language must play a central role in this aspiration. I am also deeply concerned about the tension between the call for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work and the hyperspecialization that prevents our fields from talking to one another (e.g., linguistics, applied linguistics, English literature, foreign languages and literatures) and keeps us isolated in silos real and symbolic. I’d like to help see where the cracks are; like Leonard Cohen’s song says, “There is a crack . . . in everything / That’s how the light gets in.”

135. **Cynthia Kauffeld.** Assoc. prof. Spanish, Macalester Coll.

   PhD, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison.


   **Statement**

   I would welcome the opportunity to serve in the Delegate Assembly as a representative of the Great Lakes region and am honored by this nomination. The humanities in general and language departments in particular continue to find themselves on the defensive, called on to prove their worth against the tide of emphasis on the STEM fields and amid rising tuition costs, dwindling resources, and increased reliance on adjunct positions. In these circumstances, it is more important than ever that our professional organization, the MLA, reflect the voices of all its members, those from all corners of our region and from all positions within the professoriat, as it weighs in on the debate. I would appreciate the chance to work collaboratively with peers from across the region to address these challenges and to determine the best strategies to advocate for our place within the academy. My service as a representative of the humanities division on my institution’s campus-wide curriculum and governance committee has provided me with valuable experience working with colleagues from various disciplines; I believe this background would serve me well in the capacity of regional delegate. If elected, I would strive for greater accessibility to the MLA for all to share their opinions, and I would make every effort to pursue collective action seeking reasonable conditions of employment and compensation for all members of our profession.

136. **Christine M. Cano.** Assoc. prof. French, Case Western Reserve Univ.


   **Statement**

   My service commitments to my home institution and the profession are anchored in the Faculty Senate and other representative bodies whose concerns overlap with those of the MLA. Serving in the senate of Phi Beta Kappa has brought me into debates on matters that go to the heart of our current teaching environments: namely, freedom of inquiry and expression, academic integrity, and the value and purpose of liberal education. On a practical note, I have become skilled in the types of procedures that make the Delegate Assembly function, such as writing clear resolutions and communicating members’ viewpoints effectively within the constraints of parliamentary debate. As an elected regional delegate, I would do my best to dedicate these skills to the informed representation of the region’s varied interests.

137. **Roser Coll-Gallo.** Prof. Spanish, Cuyahoga Community Coll., Metropolitan Campus, OH.

   PhD, Univ. of California, Los Angeles. Student Support Services Award, Cuyahoga Community Coll. (CCC), 1997–2003, 2005; Metropolitan Campus President’s Citation for Excellence, CCC, 2000, 2001;


Statement

I appreciate the opportunity to serve the association if elected. We are concerned about higher education being constantly challenged by new demands from the private and public sectors, continuous financial cuts, social and technological changes, and political and institutional trends. Modern languages, literatures, cultures, the teaching profession, and the humanities in general are at the core of those challenges, and I strongly believe that it is through active service that we can positively and constructively overcome them. My service at Cuyahoga Community College—as College-Wide Foreign Languages Counterparts chair, as Metropolitan Campus Senate chair, and, currently, as Metropolitan Campus Foreign Languages Coordinator—has given me the opportunity to advocate for students and faculty members and to emphasize the advantages of acquiring a holistic education that above all includes the development of individuals who can adapt to change without losing perspective on the virtues and effects of a solid education. I offer the same commitment and passionate dedication to represent our region and to address the issues that currently concern our varied fields of interest.

138. John Dillon. Postdoctoral research fellow, Univ. of Notre Dame.


Publications include contrib., Folklore and Modern Irish Writing (2014); contrib. (of trans.), Seán Ó Riordáin, Selected Poems / Rogha Dánta (2014).

Statement

There are significant ways in which our research, teaching, and publishing are evolving in relation to new digital methods. These methods complement traditional and valuable skills in literary studies. I have worked on digital publishing projects such as Breac: A Digital Journal of Irish Studies, data-mining projects such as the IBM-Notre Dame Smarter Education Collaboration, and many different text-mining projects. These skills can be used in tandem with traditional literary skills to produce new and creative research. These skills also give students and members of the MLA broader job appeal in areas such as publishing and data analytics both inside and outside an educational context. As a regional delegate, I would work to increase knowledge and access to these new research methods and showcase the potential of computational analysis in research, teaching, and publishing.

Two major developments in literary studies are new literary, computational, and text-analysis methods and data-driven educational assessment. For the past two years, I have worked with IBM Research, India, to describe and predict student emotion in a MOOC context in order to make online learning more personalized. Similarly, although text-mining methods have been introduced to literary studies by a handful of digital humanities scholars, we are only at the tip of the iceberg regarding their impact. These skills provide a quantitative lens based in natural language processing, machine learning, and statistics, which can address traditional literary research questions such as authorship attribution or trend tracking.
139. **Yuhan Huang.** Grad. student comparative lit., Purdue Univ., West Lafayette.


**Statement**

I would be honored to serve as a member of the MLA Delegate Assembly. My interest is rooted in the commitment to promote cross-region, intercultural, and interdisciplinary collaborations as well as to increase the visibility of less represented languages and fields in the MLA. Coming from a comparative literature program, I’ve benefited tremendously from interdisciplinary studies. My own research topic includes aspects of literature, cinema, visuality, memory, history, and politics, and being able to work with professors and colleagues from these various areas provides me fresh perspective on issues related to narration and representation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China—how traumatic memories are twisted, modified, partially effaced, and retold through artistic expression. In addition to being an academic, I have also worked to bridge the divide between Asians and Asian Americans as a student activist, helping to found an Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center at Purdue University. The experience has deepened my understanding of and belief in the power of vigorous collaboration among people from different disciplines, professional ranks, regions, and cultural backgrounds. As an international graduate student pursuing a doctoral degree in the Midwest and at an institution that takes most pride in science and engineering, I understand too well the feeling of trying to have my voice heard—but I will keep on trying. In a time of decreasing institutional support for the humanities, what we do really matters.

140. **Sara Mattavelli.** Grad. student Italian, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison.


Publications include articles in *Luci e ombra, La Fusta: Journal of Italian Literature and Culture*; reviews in *Italica, Annali d’italianistica*. 
Statement

I am honored to be nominated as a candidate for the Delegate Assembly. I have been involved in institutional and professional service throughout my graduate student career, and I would be happy to participate in discussions about the humanities in higher education and MLA policies. I am particularly interested in promoting professional development opportunities for graduate students. In the past year I have been working with administrators within the graduate school at my institution to create professional development workshops for students. In this role I learned a lot about existing needs among students and mentors and how professional development is essential for students to be competitive on the job market, both in academia and outside. Alt-ac careers are a hot topic and will likely gain even more importance in the years to come. For this reason, it is important that graduate students’ advisers and mentors work with their institutions and the MLA to better understand the reality of the current job market and be prepared to help their advisees. Another issue that I care about concerns the role of teaching assistants in the development of language curricula and how this work influences their approach to shaping the future of foreign language programs. The opportunity to discuss ideas and concerns with faculty members is important for the professional development of TAs and for language programs themselves. Since TAs are often the first contact for students, ensuring they have all the resources they need to mentor students is paramount.

141. Lindsey Smith. Grad. student French, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison.


Statement

It would be my pleasure to represent the Great Lakes region as a graduate student delegate. Over the course of my doctoral studies, I have had the opportunity to teach at large public institutions in the United States and France as well as at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest. Besides allowing me to experience a variety of academic contexts, these opportunities have also served as a reminder that financial pressures affect institutions of all sizes, particularly with regard to support for the humanities.

While budgetary issues are especially pertinent for graduate students and contingent faculty members, my interest in serving as a member of the Delegate Assembly stems from a desire to strengthen relations across ranks as well as across disciplines. Interdisciplinary collaboration has been an integral part of my work, which is focused on Caribbean literature in French. My current project brings together musical influences from France, a number of African nations, and the Americas.

Of course, interdisciplinarity offers benefits that extend beyond the realm of research. In the humanities, our work offers an important complement to advances in other areas. With this in mind, I am dedicated to encouraging conversations in the classroom and beyond through the use of digital media. Communication technology is an indispensable tool for cultivating relationships in our increasingly interconnected world. Additionally, such resources can help us emphasize the value of the humanities by facilitating exchanges among students, faculty members, and administrators.

V. South (6 contests)

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virgin Islands, Virginia


Statement

As a teacher and faculty leader at an access-mission four-year college, I am invested in conversations and initiatives that focus us on the shifting demographics of undergraduate education and the challenges and opportunities facing faculty members in teaching-intensive positions. For most of us, this involves a broad look at teaching and student engagement issues from the first-year English classes through undergraduate English research. I am convinced that the MLA can take deliberate steps to more effectively represent these undergraduates and faculty members, and as a delegate, I would advocate that it do so. Some opportunities include more deliberate and intentional focus on promoting innovative pedagogy; more public and inclusive discussions about access and affordability; intentional encouragement of the recruiting and retention of diverse faculty members who reflect the diversity of student bodies; adding organizational support to efforts that expand access and retention, like the lobby to simplify the FAFSA; and advocacy for smart metrics for measuring retention, progression, and graduation.

143. Anna Maria Jones. Assoc. prof. English, Univ. of Central Florida.

Statement

We are inundated with messages about the crisis in the humanities, and indeed there are substantial problems that warrant alarm: the exploitation of contingent and graduate student labor, the decline of shared governance and the tenure system and the concomitant rise of corporate models of administration, the erosion of academic freedom, and the massive funding cuts to higher education. Yet, despite these desperate times, I continue to believe in the value of the work we do as educators and researchers and, just as important, in our collective ability to effect positive change in the world. I believe that we can collaborate to meet challenges, both locally and globally. In my roles as faculty member and administrator at UCF, I have found ways to work with colleagues to support humanities research and teaching, whether by writing grants with librarians to secure funding for digital collections or by facilitating interdisciplinary writing workshops for faculty members seeking publications for promotion and tenure or by working with English graduate students to launch a departmental symposium. These are some small-scale efforts to leverage limited resources to benefit my local academic community, but collectively we have the ability to bring about much more substantive and wide-ranging structural reforms to improve working conditions in our profession even as we sustain our commitments to our students, our intellectual labors, and our communities. I welcome the opportunity to serve our profession in this broader capacity in the Delegate Assembly. For more information on my work, visit my faculty page.

144. David Arbesu. Asst. prof. Spanish, Univ. of South Florida.
145. **Jose Cardenas Bunsen.** Asst. prof. Spanish, Vanderbilt Univ.

PhD, Yale Univ. Raúl Porras Barrenechea Research Award, Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Lima, Perú, 1998; Lenie Morales Prize, Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, Yale Univ., 2003.


**Statement**

My interest in serving the MLA stems from my conviction that the scholarly community has an ethical obligation to be permanently searching for new ways to address the current trends that affect work conditions, the humanistic teaching of languages and cultures, and the constant evolution of our field. I will take this opportunity to advocate strongly to (1) address the pressing issue of the decrease in tenure and tenure-track faculty positions and reduce the reliance on the adjunct workforce, (2) help those colleagues currently in contingent positions reduce the level of insecurity, (3) foster programs and workshops to assist advanced graduate students enter the workforce, (4) protect the nature of the humanistic teaching of languages and cultures by strengthening programs that sustain the study of different languages and their respective cultural traditions, and (5) favor the funding of more research in subjects freely chosen by humanities scholars while meeting the need to investigate the impact of new media on the way we think and see our field.

These matters of crucial interest need to be permanently discussed and voiced at the MLA. If elected to the assembly, I will also remain open to other matters that will arise in the exercise of my duties as representative.

146. **Andy Doolen.** Prof. English, Univ. of Kentucky.


**Statement**

I would be honored to represent the South in the Delegate Assembly. Like many of you, I am deeply concerned by the erosion of higher education, which, not coincidentally, has been marked by the steady marginalization of the humanities on STEM-fixated campuses. I would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with my colleagues in addressing this crisis. While I have always been actively engaged in campus and professional issues, my recent tenure as a director of graduate studies provided invaluable training in how to achieve educational reforms within a large institution. I believe this experience would make me an effective MLA delegate. Thank you for your consideration.

147. **Peter Swanson.** Assoc. prof. world langs. and cultures, Georgia State Univ.


Publications include *Identifying and Recruiting Language Teachers: A Research-Based Approach* (2013); coauthor, *Understanding the World Language edTPA: Research-Based Policy and Practice* (2016);
Statement

Language teaching in the United States is again at the forefront of discussion as Congress recently commissioned a study about language teaching and learning. Spearheaded by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, this study comes at a time when our society is more multilingual and multicultural than ever before. Leading experts in the field are currently examining the current state of language education in the United States. Their mission is to predict the nation’s future education needs and to offer recommendations of how to meet those needs. At a time when globalization is the term du jour, we must advocate strongly that all languages be an integral part of internationalization efforts. Language is at the heart of the human experience, and each of us needs to become an advocate, beginning and sustaining conversations concerning language learning’s influences on economic growth, cultural diplomacy, and future generations’ productivity. Despite dwindling interest in language learning, as shown by decreasing enrollments in many languages, we must be proactive in our communities, states, and nation and advocate in favor of language teaching and learning. Advocacy is not something that only the MLA or ACTFL should do on our behalf. We must start and continue conversations about language teaching and learning and insist on placing languages at the center of all levels of study instead of relegating language study to elective status.


Statement

I taught at Colorado College for one year and have been at Virginia Tech since 1998. I have been highly involved in service that enhances both the undergraduate and graduate (MA program) student experience. On my campus and nationally, I have also been committed to cross-cultural pedagogy and articulating a vision for French studies in the twenty-first century.

One of my concerns is quality education for undergraduates and graduates. For three years (2007–09), I led a workshop for all graduate students at Virginia Tech on how to be a more successful GTA. In this interactive workshop of 500 students, the goal was to make graduate students more thoughtful teachers, which in turn can make their undergraduate classrooms fairer and more engaged environments. Another concern is addressing all aspects of the teaching of modern foreign languages, cultures, and literatures—the canon, our disciplinary norms (e.g., class size), and experimenting with distance learning and Web-based cross-cultural student projects.

We need to articulate the importance of the humanities to students, professors, and administrators. I have been our department’s career adviser for the last eighteen years and have found effective ways to frame the importance of literary studies for undergraduates and their parents. We also need to address the multifaceted problems of the job market for recent graduate students and those who have been hired as
contingent faculty members. Poor wages and unknown, and thus stressful, work conditions are inherent in being hired in as an adjunct professor.

149. **Mary A. Watt.** Assoc. prof. Italian, Univ. of Florida.


**Statement**

One of the greatest challenges facing the academy right now is the need for greater diversity and inclusion across university and college campuses. Throughout the country and beyond, institutions of higher learning are struggling to determine, articulate, and implement best practices for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority faculty members. At the same time, we are rethinking how we can effectively respond to students’ concerns about their learning environment and opportunities for success. Increasingly, these conversations involve questions of course offerings and pedagogy that are connected with the research that informs and often drives our teaching and curriculum design. My own experience as an associate dean tasked with overseeing my college’s efforts to become more diverse and inclusive has led me to rethink much of what I do on a daily basis. It has particularly sparked my imagination as an educator and scholar, causing me to reimagine my research as well as the classroom experience that I create and through which I engage my students. In that same vein, I see this as an auspicious time for the MLA and a tremendous opportunity for all of us. The MLA has historically been extraordinarily conscious of the crucial role that education plays in social and academic transformation. Now, perhaps more than ever, we must continue to be an eloquent voice and effective force in shaping the academy’s response to the urgent call for change. I welcome the opportunity to be part of both.

150. **Jeanne L. Gillespie.** Prof. Spanish, Univ. of Southern Mississippi.


Statement

I have several areas of interest that I would pursue as a delegate for the southern region. First, I would advocate cultivating closer relations among the regional associations and between regional organizations and the MLA. In my work with the South Central Modern Language Association, I see that regional groups have much to contribute to the overall conversations about scholarly and professional matters and that we also could benefit from a more engaged conversation with our colleagues at the MLA offices.

I am deeply committed to the practice of public and engaged humanities, and I would like to further explore the potential of sharing our work beyond academic settings. I have worked on several preservation and access projects and on developing archives of materials for further study in an open-access setting. I am also an active practitioner of engaged, community-based projects for the study of the humanities.

My interest in the public humanities also includes advocacy for our colleagues who practice the humanities in nontraditional settings. I am impressed with the MLA’s work in this area and would like to help engage more with this aspect of the public humanities at the regional levels.

Finally, I am fascinated by anthropological approaches to the study of languages and literatures and of the roles of visual culture and the performing arts in literary studies. I would be an advocate for these areas of interest as well.

I look forward to serving the southern region as a delegate.

151. Rosa Perelmuter. Prof. Spanish, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
Publications include Noche intelectual: La oscuridad idiomática en el Primero sueño (1982), Los límites de la feminidad en Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Estrategias retóricas y recepción literaria (2004); guest coed., Hispanófila (2014); contrib., Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y las vicisitudes de la crítica (1998), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y sus contemporáneos (1998), Approaches to Teaching Puig’s Kiss of the Spider Woman (2007), Approaches to Teaching the Works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (2007); articles in Hispanic Review, Nueva revista de filología hispánica, Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos, Revista iberoamericana, Calíope, Hispanófila, Bulletin hispanique, Revista de estudios hispánicos, Hispania.

Statement

As universities continue to yield more and more to economic pressures and demand more and more accountability from their academic departments, placing the emphasis on the numbers (of majors, of students in courses, of graduates) and the commercial (vocational courses, courses that prepare students for a job), we must be ever vigilant and, together with the MLA, work to defend the value of learning and of the liberal arts and to promote them persuasively and effectively. Let’s also be proactive and find ways to undermine the move toward the elimination of tenure, a valuable tool that protects professors’ independence and makes our profession desirable in spite of its relatively modest remuneration.

☼

152. David Martinez. Grad. student Spanish, Univ. of Georgia.

Statement

There are three pressing matters of professional concern that I would like to address. First, we need to further develop an interdisciplinary approach to our field and do a better job of reaching out to other departments. Second, our field can at times seem a bit isolated from the real world in terms of preparing students for careers and a life outside academia. I would like to address how our field can be pertinent and interesting to those who wish to live outside the confines of academia. Third, in our field, we often discuss issues of income inequality, the gap between the rich and the poor, and, of course, marginalized people who do not have a voice. At the same time, however, we actively participate in and accept such practices within established structures of power that seem reticent to change. Adjunct professors, instructors, administrative assistants, lecturers, and graduate students could be better served and appreciated; at the very least, there should be a consideration of the potentially destabilizing effects of such income inequality within our own field (heads of department often make six or seven times more than adjuncts and instructors), especially during a time of economic crisis that has led to cuts in the funding of our programs.

153. Francesco Masala. Grad. student Hispanic studies, Univ. of Kentucky.


Statement

Serving in the Delegate Assembly would be an honor and an academic duty. My role as a representative would focus on the importance of studying the humanities, particularly languages, literature, and linguistics, in the South. As an international graduate student, I see firsthand the struggles many of my colleagues are experiencing due to the damaging lack of institutional support for the humanities, not only in the South but all over the United States. Currently, graduate students play an essential role in academia, and their professional and intellectual lives need to be fully supported.

My goals will include but will not be limited to disseminating the importance of the MLA, especially to undergraduate and graduate students; enhancing communications between the Delegate Assembly and the MLA membership to allow wide discussion of concerns, problems, opinions, and solutions; analyzing more deeply the current trend of budget cutting in our fields, with particular attention to southern states; sharing my passion for teaching and studying languages; and advancing areas of the humanities strictly correlated to MLA members, such as literatures, linguistics, and pedagogy. I am determined to represent my community with professionalism, passion, and integrity.

VI. Central and Rocky Mountain (4 contests)

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming


PhD, Penn State Univ. Assoc. dir. of grad. studies, Dept. of English, Texas Tech Univ., 2016—. Seminar grant, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2011; grad. research fellowship, Inst. for the Arts and Humanities, Penn State Univ., 2011; Williams A. Ringler Fellowship, Huntington Library, 2014. Best Conference Paper of the Year Award, Comm. on Early Modern Studies, Penn State Univ., 2012; Albert C.
Labriola Award (for distinguished article on Milton by a grad. student), Milton Soc. of America, 2011; Natalie Zemon Davis Award (for best article), Renaissance and Reformation, 2012.

Publications include contrib., Identities in Early Modern English Writing: Religion, Gender, Nation (2014); articles in Milton Studies, Philological Quarterly, Renaissance and Reformation, Studies in Philology; review in Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada.

Statement

As a Renaissance scholar who takes an interdisciplinary approach to studying Shakespeare, Milton, and their afterlives in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture, I would be honored to represent the diverse interests of my region in the Delegate Assembly. The MLA has a long history of celebrating diversity, and my research on a variety of topics is both a product of that diversity and an attempt to bridge gaps between different disciplines and media as well as between academic and popular cultures.

Moreover, as someone recently on the job hunt, I represent a younger generation of scholars facing a job market crisis unlike any seen before. These scholars are struggling in a profession with increasingly fewer tenure-track and non-tenure-track positions. As the associate director of graduate studies at my institution, I run weekly seminars for our Professional Development Curriculum, which equips students with the tools they need to thrive in these conditions. I am committed to helping young professionals succeed in their scholarly aspirations and in pursuing academic and alt-ac careers; my actions in the Delegate Assembly would mirror that devotion. It is my firm conviction that training junior scholars in professionalism goes hand in hand with the MLA’s campaign of enlarging the place of the humanities in our society. I wish to serve in the Delegate Assembly so that I, too, might contribute to that important endeavor and—in a university environment gravitating toward the STEM fields—lend my voice on behalf of what the humanities have to offer.

Gregory E. Rutledge. Assoc. prof. English, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln. 


Statement

Given the global and geopolitical changes afoot, our current era is a time when we urgently need to understand the importance and power of human storytelling. Specifically, we need to reevaluate the governing paradigms of the canon in place since the nineteenth century—since the 1890s for American literature, when it first entered the academy as a formal subject of study. Now, in 2016, the fault lines of the governing paradigms have reached a point of crisis and opportunity: crisis in the humanities, a common subject for lamentation and yet an opportunity for reconstituting how we understand storytelling as the fissures open up new vistas and alternative ways of storytelling as ancient as the art form itself.

As I write this (from Gimpo, South Korea), I lay claim to the unique combination of perspective, training, and experience I would bring to the MLA as a delegate for this region—an honor, most certainly, for all the fine candidates so nominated. A Southerner born and bred, an African-American male from a working-class mother-led family, an activist Atlanta lawyer who (re)turned to literature and cultural studies,
and now a member of an Afro-Korean familial intersection, I can personally attest to the need for the broadest reconfiguration of the paradigm.

My research, spanning African-American literature and culture and, most recently, Afro-Korean connections, is governed by the imperative calling for the expansive methodology that needs championing. If elected to the Delegate Assembly, such would be my charge and privilege.


Statement

The MLA has a powerful voice in collegiate humanities education and research, and members must continue to drive the strategic visioning of the organization and our impacted fields. My interests span several conversations: advocacy for language learning and humanities study on and beyond campus; access to digital resources for scholars and students; and participation by faculty members in collaborative governance. I see ways for the MLA to address a range of issues facing individual faculty members, from bolstering the health of language and literature departments to facilitating the depth of research in our many disciplines to expanding the public humanities conversation that transposes our work into the vernacular of the communities in which we live. Informed by leadership experience in faculty governance and disciplinary and regional humanities boards, my work in less commonly taught languages at a state research university has prepared me well to represent you in the assembly. The role of higher education in civic life is fiercely contested, with external stakeholders’ demands pushing modifications that run counter to the core elements of the academy. Tensions within the academy feel no less hazardous, with pressures on faculty and staff members, administrators, and boards to deliver a quality education to today’s students and to increase research productivity with decreasing access to research funding. It is clearly a fascinating time to engage in the governance processes within higher education, and I am pleased to stand for election to the Delegate Assembly as a candidate for Region 6.


Statement

My concerns about the future of the study of languages and literatures—and the humanities in general—are extensive, not surprisingly so given the state of affairs in higher education in recent years. My
strongest concerns center on the difficulties graduates face in gaining living-wage, secure employment; the imbalance of rights, responsibilities, and remuneration for non-tenure-track faculty members; threats to the tradition of tenure; and, finally, threats to departmental budgets within the humanities. Further, I am consistently intrigued and often worried about how we “market” ourselves as the humanities in an age where such invaluable work is all too frequently deemed unvaluable by politicians and publics alike. I hope to be involved in these discussions as an MLA delegate.

158. Feroza Framji Jussawalla. Prof. English, Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque.


Statement

I have been at the forefront of postcolonial studies from its inception in 1984 and have been active in the transition from commonwealth to postcolonial literary studies. I am concerned with bringing into academia and into our profession the issues of equity and cross-cultural understanding that we espouse in our teaching of literary theory. We have to look not just at how the other is represented, across race, class, and gender, but at how we are treated as others in the profession and in our departments. How do we make our profession more inclusive and hospitable and break through the cliques that prevent publication and promotion? My interest is to address issues that particularly affect women and minorities, while at the same time considering how we can include all races, cultures, and critical interests harmoniously.

Administratively, there are many protections we need to put into place for faculty members, whether tenured, untenured, or probationary, as tenure is losing its value and posttenure reviews are being unjustly used. We need an MLA statement to universities on this important issue. In an age where print publications are getting to be harder to come by, departments need to be encouraged to create fair evaluation policies for tenure, posttenure, and adjunct appointments. We need to guard against separations and programmatic reductions.

I have worked in literature, composition, and creative writing and believe I am uniquely qualified to represent the concerns of faculty members in our profession, both in our region and nationally.
159. **Nil Santiáñez.** Prof. Spanish, St. Louis Univ.  
PhD, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana.  

160. **Kerry Manzo.** Grad. student English, Texas Tech Univ.  
Publications include forthcoming article in *South Asian Review*.  

161. **Julio Cesar Perez-Mendez.** Grad. student Spanish, Texas Tech Univ.  
Statement

As a candidate to represent Region 6, Central and Rocky Mountain, I will focus on promoting the importance of the integration of cultures and languages. The MLA should include languages other than English in postgraduate training, publications, and specific panels on culture and languages.

VII. Western United States and Western Canada (5 contests)

Alaska, California, Guam, Hawai‘i, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington; Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan


Statement

I am honored to be nominated to represent the western United States and western Canada in the Delegate Assembly.

I have forged my vision of the humanities in higher education over a thirty-two-year career in a small liberal arts college in California, teaching modern Spanish literature, culture, film, and language. I have also regularly taught courses in translation on existentialist literature and in the area of gender and sexuality studies.

I passionately believe that the role of languages and the study of literatures and cultures in languages other than English must be reaffirmed as central to the liberal arts mission. Given the growing presence of Spanish in American society, I further believe that Spanish should be integrated into our larger academic programs. Humanistic study, however, should be available to students not only in the primary languages of the United States but in a wide range of world languages, representing a diversity of cultural traditions and historical periods. It should also, when appropriate, be situated in postnational contexts, such as the global Hispanophone, and in the various languages of Iberia. As educators, we must pay greater attention to how we prepare students of the humanities for careers outside academia. We must also work diligently to ensure that our non-tenure-track colleagues are fully supported, given that they carry an ever increasing share of our departmental responsibilities.

If elected to the Delegate Assembly I will keep these concerns in mind while striving to advance the overall goals of the MLA.

163. Ana Maria Gómez-Bravo. Prof. Spanish, Univ. of Washington, Seattle.

PhD, Univ. of California, Berkeley. Previous appointments: Purdue Univ., West Lafayette, 1993–2012; Univ. of Scranton, 1991–93. Grant, Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain’s Ministry of


PhD, Univ. of Chicago. Feministas Unidas Essay Prize, 2007; Adam Dublin Award for the Study of Global Multiculturalism (for scholarly or creative work), Whitman Coll., 2012–13. LASA.


Statement

Fifteen years of visiting and tenure-track teaching at three different campuses across the country in addition to my current role as chair of Whitman College’s Spanish department have allowed me to experience firsthand many of the challenges facing our profession. I strongly advocate for committed participation in faculty governance as a necessary response to budget shortages, declining numbers of undergraduates enrolled in language and literature programs across the country, the ongoing crisis in humanities publication, and perhaps most importantly, increasing opposition to academic freedom and autonomy. With a research focus in social justice and human rights, I am particularly sensitive to the vulnerabilities and rights of women, minorities, LGBTQ communities and contingent faculty members as well as graduate students. If elected to the Delegate Assembly, I will actively respond to the MLA’s call to advocacy. We must use our collective voice to exert pressure on state and federal legislators; defend the value of the humanities, particularly languages and literatures; protest funding cuts for student grants while simultaneously working to decrease the burden of student debt; protect the right for collective bargaining; and speak out strongly against anti-immigration policies.


Statement

I am excited to serve as a delegate because of the expansive influence the MLA has over the professional and disciplinary aspects of humanities study. My scholarly interests are in the literature, culture, and law of nineteenth-century British colonialism, with particular emphasis on race and sexuality. While I teach at a liberal arts college, I was educated at large public universities (BA, UCLA, and PhD, UC Irvine). My experiences of public and private institutions convince me that there are shared and urgent concerns in humanities education that need attention. In my view, the most vital challenges we face concern how we validate the study of race and minoritism within the academy, the allocation of resources for the humanities, and our support of contingent faculty members. While most institutions affirm the need for inclusive interdisciplinary departments, a diverse curriculum and student body, and nonexploitative work conditions, these ideals are far from realized. Further, questions of inclusiveness and equity are related, I believe, to the increasing corporatization of the academy and a movement toward thinking of the humanities as service fields. If elected to the assembly, I will be interested in shaping the MLA’s agenda for building more robustly inclusive programs, advocating for more equitable labor practices in the profession, and increasing the profile of humanities scholarship.

166. Laura J. Beard. Prof. Spanish, Univ. of Alberta.


Statement

As a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Carleton College, I bring to my work the experience of, and a passionate commitment to, excellence in a liberal arts undergraduate education. Since completing my PhD at Johns Hopkins University, I have spent my teaching career in large, publicly-funded research institutions with both graduate and undergraduate programs. My experiences as a faculty member and administrator in both the United States and Canada, my other international teaching and research experiences, and my commitments to diversity, equity, international, and intercultural work give me a broad basis to represent the region. I have been a member of the MLA for twenty-seven years, have participated in two ADFL summer seminars for chairs, and have participated in many MLA conventions. I would be honored to serve the MLA as a regional delegate.


Candidate Information


Statement

Proceeding from the assumption that understanding culture outside one’s own time and place is difficult but essential to human prosperity, I am keen to see the MLA do the hard work of fulfilling its mission to “facilitate scholarly inquiry in and across periods, geographic sites, genres, languages, and disciplines in higher education” (see ). I am therefore interested in seeing the MLA promote cross-cultural contacts among scholars, especially with those located in Asia, Oceania, Africa, and Latin America. Concretely, this means not only endorsing scholar exchange programs but also encouraging translation into English of literary works in less-taught languages and actively lobbying for expanded language study. As an institution devoted to understanding culture in the diverse senses of this term, the MLA also has a duty to support the cultures it studies by standing in solidarity with, and advocating the defense of, those that suffer persecution.


Statement

The Delegate Assembly should advocate for and support the core mission of the MLA, which is to promote research and teaching in literature and language and to defend the professional interests of all instructors. We should articulate the importance of the study of literature and language for all students, including second language acquisition as well as composition and rhetoric, in the face of skepticism from state legislatures and the public about the value of the humanities. We should articulate the reasons why language and literature are important at a time of significant changes in higher education. We should draw attention to the erosion of employment status and working conditions for many instructors in these fields due to the increased reliance on part-time faculty members and the erosion of tenure. The Delegate Assembly should abet the MLA’s efforts to combat these developments and advocate for better working conditions throughout higher education, which currently faces economic pressures from diminishing state spending on
Candidate Information

public universities, declining enrollments at some institutions, more diverse student populations, increasing levels of student debt, rapidly rising tuition, and so on. The Delegate Assembly should therefore avoid sectarian disputes over domestic and foreign policy issues. Instead, we should work together in the interests of all teachers of literature and language by helping to develop viable solutions to the mounting economic challenges facing higher education.


Statement

As an adjunct professor of French, I convey the message that learning a language is not merely a matter of linguistic fluency: it erases the borders. Whether in the classroom or outside it, I dedicate myself to human progress and approach issues through a humanist lens. As an MLA delegate, I will consider the following matters during discussions and meetings: the appreciation of cultural diversity around the world; the defense of humanities and liberal arts education in general, with an emphasis on a universal and humanist approach in the higher education curriculum; a focus on the quality of teaching, learning, and training; and a broad and open approach of tolerance and justice that can question the status quo of social and political issues.

My cultural and educational backgrounds in languages and literatures (French and Spanish) as well as in management and organizational leadership allow me to adopt a system’s thinking approach. I will continue to play the devil’s advocate to challenge the mainstreams and use emotional intelligence especially when addressing those who are voiceless and most vulnerable.

Some of the posts that I wrote a while ago are available on my blog.

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170. Brian Bernards. Asst. prof. East Asian langs. and cultures, Univ. of Southern California.


Statement

I support the ongoing restructuring of the MLA’s forums to provide a more inclusive organizational structure that recognizes evolving demographics as well as shifting and emergent trends in the humanities. I support an MLA convention structure that promotes novel thematic and critical paradigms that cut across humanities disciplines and allow for maximum dialogue among them. I see my own work as playing a contributive role in propelling postcolonial studies beyond the analysis of literature and other cultural production in Western and European languages, acknowledging that a multiplicity of intercultural relations and exchanges, outside a West and the rest model, have shaped our modern world and inspired global imaginaries. While area studies frameworks are vital to deepening our understanding of local epistemology, the MLA should encourage scholars to take advantage of opportunities to initiate conversations under
countless thematic rubrics such as creolization, ecocriticism and environmental humanities, comparative
archipelagoes, gender studies, postsocialism, and travel literature, which acknowledge but are not bound or
isolated by language and area divisions. I wholeheartedly support the MLA’s commitment to redress the
class, gender, and racial inequities and disparities exacerbated by the corporatization of higher education,
which has greatly diminished the faculty and student voice in the university structure.

171. **Michael C. Cohen.** Assoc. prof. English, Univ. of California, Los Angeles.

PhD, New York Univ. Previous appointments: Louisiana State Univ., 2009–11; Macalester Coll.,
Collections Library, 2013; Hellman Fellowship, Univ. of California, Los Angeles (funded by Hellman
Family Foundation), 2014–15. Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Essay Prize (for excellence in

Publications include *The Social Lives of Poems in Nineteenth-Century America* (2015); contrib.,
Cambridge History of American Poetry* (2014); articles in *American Literary History*, *Emily Dickinson
*African American Review*, *Victorian Poetry*.

**Statement**

Thank you for considering me as a candidate for the Delegate Assembly. Since receiving my PhD in
English nearly ten years ago, I have had the opportunity to teach in several regions of the country and at a
small liberal arts college and two large public universities. My experiences at these places have made me
sensitive to the differing needs of different types of institutions as well as to their shared commitment to
creating vibrant academic communities through teaching, research, and faculty governance. I have been a
member of the MLA since 2001. As a representative to the Delegate Assembly I would support the MLA’s
ongoing advocacy on behalf of the humanities, its promotion of innovative new fields and programs of study,
and its commitment to faculty-driven initiatives in teaching and pedagogy. I would also advocate for
embattled disciplines and departments during a difficult period of retrenchment in higher education. I believe
that at its best the MLA can be an effective institution for supporting our shared goals and needs as teachers
and scholars, and as a member of the Delegate Assembly I will continue that mission.