

Proposed CLA Constitution and Bylaws Revisions

**84th Annual CLA Convention
Business Meeting – April 10, 2026**

[Current CLA Constitution and Bylaws](#)

**Standing Committee on the Constitution
Chair: Past President Dr. Donna Akiba Sullivan Harper
Constitution@clascholars.org**

The Constitution

I-Name.

Current: Founded in 1937 by a group of Black scholars and educators as The Teachers of English in Negro Colleges, the name of this organization shall be the College Language Association, hereafter referred to as the “Association.”

Suggested: Founded in 1937 **on the campus of then LeMoyne College in Memphis, Tennessee**, by a group of Black scholars and educators as The Teachers of English in Negro Colleges, the name of this organization shall be the College Language Association (CLA), hereafter referred to as **CLA**. *(If approved, “CLA” would replace “the Association” throughout the document)*

Rationale: Adding the city and state eliminates the need for separate incorporation documents when we file for incorporation in the state. Replacing “the Association” with “CLA” makes the document more consistent with actual usage.

II. Mission.

Current: The Association promotes and cultivates the study of languages and literatures to improve higher education experiences for students and teachers at colleges and universities across the world. Our annual Convention and peer-reviewed academic journal, the College Language Association Journal (CLAJ), support our commitments to literary excellence, inclusivity, and advocacy for scholarly research in and the teaching of Black literatures and cultures as necessary aspects of higher education.

Suggested: **The College Language Association (CLA) is organized exclusively for the literary, educational, and charitable purposes of advancement of education and eliminating prejudice and discrimination.** CLA promotes and cultivates the study of languages and literatures to improve higher education

experiences for students and teachers at colleges and universities across the world. Our annual Convention and peer-reviewed academic journal, *CLAJ*, support our commitments to literary excellence, inclusivity, and advocacy **for the historically marginalized**.

Rationale: Reflects our current mission according to the IRS and on our website. Necessary to ensure that we're compliant with our IRS statements

III. Membership. 3.7.

Current: Members of the Association are expected to adhere to the Association's "Affirmation of Core Communal Values and Expectations for Collegial and Respectful Behavior."

Suggested: **CLA members** are expected to abide by CLA's Code of Conduct and Privacy Policies.

Rationale: Removes antiquated language and reflects current policies.

VI. Convention. 6.6

Current: To transact business, two-thirds of members attending the convention shall constitute a quorum for an Association business meeting.

Suggested: To transact business, **a simple majority** of members attending the convention shall constitute a quorum for a CLA business meeting.

Rationale: Current quorum calculation reflects an antiquated policy when the convention attendees were in fewer numbers and where the business meeting was likely one of the central activities for the organization.

VIII-Amendments.

Current: This Constitution shall be amended by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at regular business meetings during any convention provided the proposed amendments have been disseminated to all members one month prior to the meeting.

Suggested: This Constitution shall be amended **by a simple majority** of the members present at regular business meetings during any convention, provided the proposed amendments have been disseminated to all members one month prior to the meeting.

Rationale: Is incongruous with 6.6, which requires two thirds of convention attendees to attend the business meeting

The Bylaws

I. The Officers.

Suggested Addition

1.13 The Executive Committee will appoint a Parliamentarian to serve as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. The Parliamentarian shall serve as the final authority on all matters of parliamentary procedure.

Rationale: CLA abides by Robert's Rules of Order and an officer to help maintain consistency and adherence to parliamentary procedures is beneficial to the health of the organization.

II. The Executive Committee.

Current:

2.3 The Executive Committee shall oversee the negotiation, signing, and implementation of all Association-related contracts. Upon the approval of the committee, all contracts and financial documents shall require two Executive Committee signatures.

Suggested:

2.3 The Executive Committee shall oversee the negotiation, signing, and implementation of all Association-related contracts. Upon the approval of the committee, all contracts and financial documents shall require two Executive Committee signatures, **one of which must be the Treasurer.**

Rationale: The last Constitutional update added two signatories to contracts instead of just one, and this update specifies that one of the signatories is one of the primary financial officers of the organization.

III. Select Committees.

Current:

3.3. The Editorial Board, together with the Editor, Associate Editor, Assistant Editor, Managing Editor, and Book Review Editor, shall be comprised of six to eight Advisory Editors drawn from the membership of the Association, representing both English and the World Languages, and appointed to staggered five-year terms with the prior approval of the Executive Committee. No Advisory Editor may serve more than two consecutive five-year terms. The Editor is authorized to appoint and remove for cause any member of the Editorial Board with the approval of the Executive Committee. The Editorial Board shall make a recommendation to the Awards Committee on recipients of the Darwin T. Turner Best Essay Award.

Suggested:

3.3. The Editorial Board, together with the Editor, Associate Editor, Assistant Editor, Managing Editor, and Book Review Editor, shall be comprised of six to eight Advisory Editors drawn from the membership of the Association, representing both English and the World Languages, and appointed to staggered five-year terms with the prior approval of the Executive Committee. No Advisory Editor may serve more than two consecutive five-year terms. The Editor is authorized to appoint and remove for cause any member of the Editorial Board with the approval of the Executive Committee. The Editorial Board shall make a recommendation to the Awards Committee on recipients of the Darwin T. Turner Best Essay Award, **when they deem that such an award is merited**. There shall be no requirement to recommend the award.

Rationale: We have inconsistently awarded the Darwin T. Turner Best Essay Award, and this change provides constitutionally leeway to award or not to award this prize.

VI. Membership Year.

Current: Membership is annual. For regular, retiree, student, and institutional members, dues cover 365 days from the purchase date of a new membership, leap years excepted. The Membership year shall extend from January 1 to December 31.

Suggested: Membership is **365 days from the purchase date of a new membership, leap years excepted**.

Rationale: The second and third sentences of the current version appear to be in conflict and are not in alignment.

2026-2028

NOMINATIONS SLATE

MEET THE CANDIDATES



**Secretary,
Dr. Kendra R. Parker**



**Membership Engagement,
Dr. Shayla M. Atkins**



**Membership Engagement,
Dr. Magana Kabugi**



**English Area Representative,
Dr. Jacquetta T. Ayewoh**



**English Area Representative,
Dr. Rondrea Mathis**



**Assistant Treasurer and
World Languages Representative**



POSITION

SECRETARY

The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the Association, compile minutes for distribution, keep duplicate records of all financial transactions, assist in preserving the archives of the Association, and serve as Secretary of the Executive Committee.

CANDIDATES

Dr. Kendra R. Parker

Kendra R. Parker, associate professor at Georgia Southern University, will bring experience in editorial work, archival research, and organizational service to the role of Secretary. She previously served as Assistant Editor of the *CLA Journal* (2014–2018) and is completing her term as CLA English Area Representative (2024–2026). Her archival research, which resulted in *Understanding Octavia E. Butler* (2025), reflects her dedication to careful record-keeping, handling delicate materials, and the preservation of a writer's legacy. In addition, her service as Social Media Coordinator for the Department of English and as president of the Octavia E. Butler Literary Society requires consistent documentation, organization, and clear communication. Dr. Parker is willing to continue serving CLA in a longer-term capacity, and the position of Secretary aligns well with both her professional experience, her meticulous attention to detail, and her commitment to the Association.



POSITION

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR

Membership Engagement Director – The Membership Engagement Director shall chair the Membership Committee, serve as the Executive Committee liaison to the Standing Committee Chairs, and shall perform the duties of the Secretary in the absence of the latter.

CANDIDATES

Dr. Shayla M. Atkins

Dr. Shayla Atkins is a professor of English and director of Renaissance Scholars Honors Program in the Honors College at Montgomery College. She teaches composition, technical writing, and a variety of literature courses. She specializes in 20th and 21st centuries African American women's drama and has published articles on Lynn Nottage and Lorraine Hansberry, and contributed to an encyclopedia on the Harlem Renaissance. Dr. Atkins earned her degrees in English from Florida A&M University, University of Maryland, and Howard University.

Dr. Atkins' role as a director of an honors program includes recruiting students to and selecting faculty for the honors program. She oversees the campus honors community gatherings that bring honors students and faculty together each semester, creates professional development and programming opportunities for students, and organizes and hosts the semester welcome receptions. With these experiences and skills, Dr. Atkins sees serving as Membership Engagement Director as an opportunity to continue building programming and opportunities that welcome and engage CLA members during annual conventions and throughout the year.



Dr. Magana Kabugi

My name is Dr. Magana Kabugi and I'm an assistant professor of English at UNC Greensboro, where my teaching and research focus on 20th and 21st century Black literature, Black intellectual history, and HBCUs. My current book project explores how various Black freedom movements, as well as other factors such as the rise of Reagan conservatism, shaped intellectual and cultural life at HBCUs in the post-Civil Rights era. Today, we are in a similarly pivotal period that will impact the teaching of literature and languages for Black scholars. The very idea of the humanities, and Blackness itself, is being heavily scrutinized and openly antagonized by government officials. Though these challenges are daunting, they also present an opportunity to CLA, its values and intellectual commitments. I have been active in CLA and most recently have served as the "VIP Handler" (an official liaison to college presidents in the host cities). As Membership Engagement Director, I would seek to find new ways of curating a sense of collective community among CLA members, including spearheading a membership drive and mobilizing our undergraduates, a constituency that holds much promise for the Association. In this moment of uncertainty, let's illuminate the path forward.



POSITIONS

ASSISTANT TREASURER

The Assistant Treasurer shall perform all duties of the Treasurer in the absence of the latter.

POSITION

ENGLISH AREA REPRESENTATIVE

The English Area Representative shall serve on the Program Committee to coordinate all English Area presentations and panels.

This individual will ascend to the position of Vice President in two years and subsequently to the position of President in four years.

CANDIDATES

Dr. Jacquetta T. Ayewoh

My name is Dr. Jacquetta T. Ayewoh and I am seeking the position of English Area Representative. I am a former secondary level English Language Arts teacher and principal from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In my role as a principal, I was instrumental in creating and supervising curriculum in adherence to Pennsylvania's Common Core, as well as supervising a team of general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. As a current Assistant Professor of African American Literature at Lincoln University (Pa), I maintain my 4:3 courseload in addition to participating in conference and symposium planning committees for the university. Similarly, in my previous lecturer role at Howard University, I worked alongside my peers in the First Year Writing Program to plan and successfully implement the department's annual First Year Writing Conference and the inaugural Visions of Freedom Film Festival. While also serving in this capacity, I was responsible for accepting/rejecting proposals in response to the publisher CFP, as well as creating panels and presentation schedules for presenters and moderators. Finally, as a literary scholar, my research interests include, but are not limited to: 20th-21st century African American literature, Black Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, and Black Cinema and Media Studies.



Dr. Rondrea Mathis
Albany State University

I became acquainted with the College Language Association as an undergraduate student at FAMU, working with Dr. Yakini Kemp, past CLA president and past CLA treasurer. Dr. Kemp hired me to stuff envelopes and mail Convention documents to members, and I knew I wanted to one day serve the organization. Another of my mentors—Dr. Emma Waters-Dawson—also served as CLA president, so I know the value of CLA.

I currently serve as the inaugural Secretary & Communications Director, and under my tenure, we reestablished the CLA Bulletin, revamped the CLA website, organized social media campaigns for Black History Month and Women’s History Month, increased site traffic, and prepared special Convention information documents.

As English Area Representative, I will work with the incoming Membership Engagement Director to leverage my HBCU background to better recruit and retain faculty from HBCUs who face unique challenges to conducting funded research and public scholarship.

I am prepared for this role as I have served on the CLA Executive Committee and Program Committee (2024-2026)—and am the only HBCU faculty member—while teaching twelve classes per year.

CLA is my only professional organization, and I wish to continue my service in scholarship and fellowship.



POSITIONS

WORLD LANGUAGES REPRESENTATIVE

The World Languages Representative shall serve on the Program Committee to coordinate all World Languages presentations and panels.

VOTING

Friday, April 10, at 10:15 am CST, join us for the CLA Business Meeting where we will announce the election results, recognize new CLA officers, and acknowledge the service of officers completing their tenure. Be sure to vote in the 2026-2028 College Language Association Election.

SUPPORT CLA

BE PART OF THE CLA LEGACY



Help CLA continue supporting the study of World Languages and Literature

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Support CLA by becoming or renewing your personal membership. Need help remembering? Select the automatic renewal option. Already updated on your membership fees? Gift a membership and become institutional member!

DONATE

Make CLA part of your planned giving, annual giving, and life planning. All donors are acknowledged in our convention program as recognition for all that you do to support the Association.

BECOME A SPONSOR

Sponsor an event at our 2026 CLA Annual Convention in Jackson, MS. All sponsors will be acknowledged in the Convention app and during the Convention program.

ADVERTISE WITH US

Purchase an advertisement to appear in the program booklet for the CLA annual convention, *CLA Journal*, or to advertise available positions at your institution on the CLA website.