

# Minutes of the September 2025 Council Meeting

## September 10, 2025, APSA Council Meeting

### PRESENT:

**Taeku Lee**, *Harvard University*, President

**Susan Stokes**, *University of Chicago*, President-elect

**Mark Warren**, *University of British Columbia*, Past-President

**Sara W. Goodman**, *University of California, Irvine*, Treasurer

**Juliet Hooker**, *Brown University*, Vice-President

**Vincent Hutchings**, *University of Michigan*, Vice-President

**Caroline Tolbert**, *University of Iowa*, Vice-President

### Council members:

**Lonna Atkeson**, *Florida State University*; **Julia Azari**, *Marquette University*; **Nadia Brown**, *Georgetown University*; **Jason Casellas**, *University of Houston*; **Pearl Dowe**, *Emory University*; **Stacie Goddard**, *Wellesley College*; **Michael Goodhart**, *University of Pittsburgh*; **Anna Grzymala-Busse**, *Stanford University*; **Leigh Jenco**, *London School of Economics*; **Alice Kang**, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*; **Alison McCartney**, *Towson University*; **Susan McWilliams**, *Pomona College*; **Julie Mueller**, *Southern Maine Community College*; **Tamir Moustafa**, *Simon Fraser University*; **Daniel Nielson**, *University of Texas at Austin*; **Aseem Prakash**, *University of Washington*; **Melissa Rogers**, *Claremont Graduate University*; **Sara Rushing**, *Montana State University*; **Christina Schneider**, *University of California, San Diego*; **Candis Smith**, *Duke University*; **Cherie Strachan**, *University of Akron*; **Shatema Threadcraft**, *Vanderbilt University*; **Erica Townsend-Bell**, *Oklahoma State University*.

### APSA Staff:

Kimberly A. Mealy, Michelle Allendoerfer, Benjamin R. Fiore-Walker, Dan Gibson, Ben Goodrich, Jon Gurstelle, Casey Harrigan, Kristin Kessler, Alejandra Sampson, Karima Scott, India Simmons, Andrew Stinson, Stephen Stoupa, Clarissa Westphal Nogueira

### INTRODUCTION

APSA President Taeku Lee calls the 2025 APSA Fall Council Meeting to order.

### CONSENT AGENDA

Lee introduces the consent agenda for Council approval. The consent agenda includes the Spring 2025 Council meeting minutes, Summer 2025 Council meeting minutes, 2025-2026 APSA committee appointments and editorial board changes for *Journal of Political Science Education*; *Perspectives on Politics* and *PS: Political Science and Politics*. Dowe moves to approve

the consent agenda; Schneider seconds and the motion passes with 27 for and 1 abstention.

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Lee opened by expressing deep appreciation for APSA's Executive Director, APSA staff, Council members, and Executive Committee colleagues. While noting the unique challenges of the past year, he noted that serving in this role has provided a powerful vantage point on the dedication that sustains the Association. He reported on his participation at multiple conferences, including participation in panels and meetings at the IPSA World Congress. Lee also described significant progress by his Presidential Task Force on AI in Politics, which is now organized into eleven topic-based committees and is expected to produce a comprehensive edited volume on AI's implications for research, teaching, and the profession. He previewed the task force's planned activities at the annual meeting, including a public roundtable and a working session with committee chairs.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Mealy began by expressing her gratitude and noting the privilege of working with APSA's staff, Council, and presidential leadership during her first year in the role, particularly amid a challenging political environment. She reported significant progress in advancing APSA's strategic mission, strengthening organizational capacity, and expanding member engagement. She highlighted ongoing governance initiatives -including onboarding for new Council members, the successful completion of the nominating process, and strong progress on committee appointments- as well as staff updates, new hires, HR benchmarking, and forthcoming performance reviews. Mealy also provided updates on planning for future annual meetings, siting negotiations for 2030 and 2031, successful programmatic activities such as the Teaching and Learning Conference and virtual research meetings, and upcoming priorities focused on implementing the strategic plan.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

Goodman introduced the treasurer's report to update the council on the association's financial position. She opened by expressing deep appreciation for APSA staff and colleagues, noting the indispensable support provided across finance, publications, and operational areas. She reported that APSA's financial position remains strong, marked by the endowment surpassing the \$60 million threshold due to favorable equity and bond market conditions. She highlighted that the Investment Committee has been meeting quarterly, strengthening financial oversight and governance. Goodman also commended the successful draw-

down and distribution of NSF dissertation grant funds as a significant achievement that advances APSA's mission to support student research. She reported robust annual meeting registration and concluded by underscoring the Association's overall financial stability and resilient membership amid a challenging external climate.

#### REPORT ON APSA'S ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Ben Goodrich provided an overview of significant challenges in the federal policy landscape, noting recent attempts by the administration to reorganize or reduce funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), including the cancellation of political science grants, estimated at roughly \$10 million this year. He also highlighted the potential implications of the Improving Oversight of Federal Grant Making Executive Order, which may impose additional vetting requirements on discretionary research grants. These developments pose serious concerns for APSA members and higher education institutions, including heightened vulnerabilities for international scholars and students.

Over the past year, APSA has expanded its advocacy efforts through increased engagement with members of Congress and their staff to protect political science funding and other at-risk programs. The Association has issued and joined multiple public statements, launched an opt-in advocacy communications channel, and revamped its advocacy webpage to provide resources and opportunities for member involvement. Goodrich also emphasized APSA's ongoing collaboration with partner organizations and participation in advocacy days, as well as plans to further broaden congressional outreach efforts in the near future.

McWilliams emphasized the importance of strengthening support for state-level advocacy, noting that policy environments vary considerably across states and that some members face growing challenges related to teaching and research. Goodrich shared that APSA, in partnership with the Consortium of Social Science Associations, is developing an advocacy training webinar to help members engage more effectively with their representatives. He also noted that APSA continues to collaborate with coalition partners who monitor state-level developments and, when appropriate, issues statements and letters to address emerging policy concerns affecting higher education.

#### UPDATES ON ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING

Kristin Kessler reported strong participation at the annual meeting, with more than 5,400 registrants and additional on-site registrations underway. The program includes 1,452 panels, among them 297 hybrid sessions supporting approximately 300 virtual participants, as well as 21 short courses, 85 business meetings, 59 receptions, and 41 exhibitors occupying roughly 100 booths in the exhibit hall. She noted the substantial work of the program chairs in assembling this year's meeting. Looking ahead, APSA's 2026 Annual Meeting will be held in Boston from September 3–6 under the theme "Democracy Under Threat: How to Understand, Protect, and Rebuild," with the call for papers opening soon. She also reported progress on future meeting planning, with contracts for the Council-approved 2030 and 2031 sites in Atlanta and Minneapolis currently being finalized.

#### JOURNAL PUBLISHER RFP PROCESS

President Taeku Lee called for a confidential discussion.

#### EDITOR REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Jon Gurstelle reported on the appointment and renewal of editors for APSA's four flagship journals and noted that three ad hoc review committees, convened in the spring to evaluate the editorial teams of *Perspectives on Politics*, *PS: Political Science & Politics*, and the *Journal of Political Science Education*, completed their work over the summer. All committees unanimously recommended renewal of the current editor teams. He thanked the committee chairs and members for their timely work and highlighted themes raised in the reviews, including the need for clearer Association-wide guidance on AI policy and continued efforts to diversify authorship and reviewer pools. Brown emphasized editors' requests for consistent AI guidance tailored to different types of journals, while Lee noted that the Presidential Task Force will offer recommendations in this area. The Council unanimously approved the renewal recommendations for the *Journal of Political Science Education*, motion by Candis Smith, seconded by Juliet Hooker; the *Perspectives on Politics*, motion by Candis Smith, seconded by Juliet Hooker; and the *PS: Political Science & Politics* motion by Juliet Hooker, seconded by Christina Schneider.

#### SITING APPROVAL PROCESS REVIEW

Executive Director Mealy opened the discussion by reviewing the Council response memo to the Commission report on the Los Angeles annual meeting, noting that one of its proposals was a revised siting approval process requiring three levels of review: the Conferences and Meetings Policy Committee, the Executive Committee, and final approval by the Council. She explained that this new process was implemented for the first time over the summer and highlighted the difficulty of conducting the vote electronically due to the requirement for unanimous participation and approval.

Kristin Kessler then described the prior siting process, in which staff prepared recommendations in coordination with the Executive Director, who made the final decision, consistent with industry norms. Under the new proposal, the Director of Meetings and the Executive Director would offer a final recommendation to the Conferences and Meetings Policy Committee, which would assume primary approval authority, elevating matters to the Executive Committee only if substantive concerns emerged.

During discussion, several Council members offered reflections. Townsend-Bell emphasized the need for the policy committee to remain active and engaged; Mealy underscored the inherent unpredictability and complexity of siting negotiations; McWilliams noted that because siting decisions occur many years in advance, additional Council oversight at the point of decision may be of limited value; and McCartney recommended that the Council be kept informed of potential locations under consideration.

Kessler responded that APSA already works from an established and recently updated list of eligible cities and can provide early regional guidance on possible sites. Smith and Schneider expressed support for the proposed approval process, citing the detailed siting criteria the Council had previously established, and the multi-stage input process already built in committee review. Schneider further noted that committee members already receive information about potential sites and participate in multiple discussions before a recommendation is finalized.

Goodhart moves to accept the recommendation and approve the proposed updates to the siting approval process,

Prakash seconds and the motion passes with 24 in favor and 1 opposed.

### **AWARD PROPOSAL**

The Council discussed a new award proposal. The proposal concerns a biennial APSA award supported by a \$5,000 endowment. Casey Harrigan reported that the Membership and Professional Development Policy committee had reviewed the proposal. McCartney expressed appreciation for the desire to recognize important work but noted that the committee's primary concern centered on issues related to naming, precedent, and the broader question of APSA's growing number of awards.

Lee raised concerns about setting a precedent for donors funding awards that may introduce new complications for the association. Stokes added that many existing APSA awards follow longstanding norms and suggested the need to formalize an APSA-wide policy on award naming criteria. McWilliams further suggested that the relevant caucus representing first-generation scholars should be consulted and recommended that the donor consider placing the award within a particular section or serving as a lead donor in a broader fundraising effort.

Smith observed that the discussion reflected two separate but related issues: (1) whether the Council should support the specific proposal, and (2) what APSA's criteria for new awards should be, and that the latter issue should be resolved first. Goodhart asked about existing policy, and Lee confirmed that although a policy exists, it is not sufficiently clear.

Further discussion emphasized the procedural importance of establishing robust criteria before approving new awards. Goodhart suggested charging a committee with clarifying the criteria for new awards. McCartney recommended seeking legal guidance; Lee noted that doing so might involve considerable cost.

Council then reviewed recent award precedents, with Executive Director Mealy and Casey Harrigan summarizing the last several award decisions. After extended discussion, Smith asked whether it would be appropriate to move that the award policy be reviewed.

The following motion was put forward: "Council direct the membership and professional development committee or a designated subcommittee thereof to develop and propose new criteria for Determining the Scope and Purpose of New Awards, including such questions as naming, funding, eligibility criteria, conflicts of interest, administration, etc. It is further moved that all new and pending award proposals be tabled until after such criteria have been approved by Council." The motion was moved by Candis Smith, seconded by Aseem Prakash and passed unanimously.

### **APSA'S STRATEGIC SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS IN THE CURRENT POLICY ENVIRONMENT**

President Taeku Lee called for a confidential discussion.

### **POLICY COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Teaching and Learning Policy Committee chair, Jason Casellas, reported a productive year of programming, highlighted by the 2025 Teaching and Learning Conference held in February in Alexandria under the leadership of program co-chairs Terry Gilmore and Steve Meinhold. The committee also noted preparations for the TLC at APSA 2025, co-chaired by Alison McCartney and Erin Richards, and the successful facilitation of two thematic teaching and learning symposia, one on human rights pedagogy in June and another on teaching American

politics in times of uncertainty later in the summer. The committee additionally collaborated with other APSA departments to produce "Why Political Science Matters" resources now available on the APSA website.

The Public Engagement Policy Committee, chaired by Julia Azari, shared that a post-election reflection blog featuring 12 scholarly commentaries on the 2024 US election had been published.

The Publications Policy Committee, chaired by Susan McWilliams, engaged in extensive discussion on open access trends, the emerging implications of AI for scholarly publishing, and expressed the need for continued attention to editorial recruitment. The committee also discussed APSA's document retention policy and recommended establishing a committee to update and revise it, and that until a new document retention policy is in place, APSA refrains from destroying records. In response to Goodhart's question about whether an ad hoc committee had already been appointed, Executive Director Mealy explained that the Executive Committee had only received the proposal a few days prior to the Council meeting, so it could not be included on the fall agenda. She confirmed that the proposal would be addressed at the Executive Committee's December meeting and noted that, as per APSA Bylaws, the Rules and Elections Committee is the standing committee that has purview over any policy that's included in the Board Policy Manual.

### **PRESIDENT'S ELECT REPORT**

President-elect Susan Stokes shared an update on the work of the newly established task force, "The University in an Era of Democratic Erosion." Stokes expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve in the role and highlighted the insights gained from engaging with APSA leadership and staff. The task force aims to assemble scholars with expertise in the politics and higher education systems of various countries or regions. The initiative has evolved, with a subgroup now tasked with studying the intersection of democratic erosion and the challenges facing higher education institutions domestically.

### **PAST-PRESIDENT REMARKS**

Warren provided remarks highlighting the health and strong governance of APSA, noting the organization's resilience in addressing ongoing challenges. He also provided an update on his Presidential Task Force on Democratic Innovation, which focuses on fostering innovations within core democratic institutions to enhance their responsiveness and resilience, including legislatures, judiciaries, and executive agencies. Warren reported that the task force has held two workshops, and that most chapters for the planned edited volume are now completed.

Mealy thanks the outgoing council members and officers for their dedication and service.

Lee adjourns the meeting. ■