

Minutes of the December 2025 Council Meeting

December 15, 2025, APSA Council Meeting

PRESENT:

Susan Stokes, *University of Chicago*, President
Beth Simmons, *University of Pennsylvania*, President-elect
TaeKu Lee, *Harvard University*, Past-President
Sara W. Goodman, *University of California, Irvine*, Treasurer
Sherri Wallace, *University of Louisville*, Vice-President

Council members:

Lonna Atkeson, *Florida State University*; **Julia Azari**, *Marquette University*; **Nadia Brown**, *Georgetown University*; **Barry Burden**, *University of Wisconsin*; **Nicholas Carnes**, *Duke University*; **Thomas Dolan**, *University of Central Florida*; **Colin Elman**, *Syracuse University*; **Jane Gingrich**, *Oxford University*; **Stacie Goddard**, *Wellesley College*; **Anna Grzymala-Busse**, *Stanford University*; **Alice Kang**, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*; **Alison McCartney**, *Towson University*; **Tamir Moustafa**, *Simon Fraser University*; **Julie Mueller**, *Southern Maine Community College*; **Melissa Rogers**, *Claremont Graduate University*; **Sara Rushing**, *Montana State University*; **Candis Smith**, *Duke University*; **Cherie Strachan**, *University of Akron*; **Shatema Threadcraft**, *Vanderbilt University*; **Betina Wilkinson**, *Wake Forest University*; **Deborah Yashar**, *Princeton University*.

APSA Staff:

Kimberly A. Mealy, Executive Director; Michelle Allendoerfer, Dan Gibson, Jon Gurstelle, Casey Harrigan, Kristin Kessler, Alejandra Sampson, Stephen Stoupa.

CALL TO ORDER

APSA President Susan Stokes called the meeting to order.

CONSENT AGENDA

President Stokes introduces the consent agenda items which includes the 2026 record dates, the 2025 fall meeting minutes, APSA committee appointments, and the APSR associate editor's appointments.

Council members requested edits to the Fall 2025 Minutes. Smith asked for a correction of her surname. Moustafa asked for an inclusion denoting that confidential sessions were held during the fall meeting, and that no documents were to be destroyed until a full revision of said policy. Council accepted the requested edits to correct Smith's surname, add a note that the council had confidential discussions, and add a note that there was a request that no documents should be destroyed until the Document Retention Policy be reviewed by Council.

Mealy confirmed that since she has been ED, APSA staff

has not pulled any documents out of storage, nor destroyed any documents. On a question on the current status of the Document Retention Policy, Mealy shared that it was currently being reviewed by the Executive Committee.

A Motion to approve the consent agenda items, with approved amendments to the Fall Council Minutes, was put forward by Candis Watts Smith, seconded by Alice Kang and passed unanimously.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Stokes opened her report by expressing appreciation for the opportunity to serve and by acknowledging the contributions of the Executive Director and staff, Council members, and colleagues on the Executive Committee. She welcomed the engagement of President-elect Beth Simmons and referenced their recent visit to the APSA Association's Washington, DC offices, where they met with staff and reviewed operations. She underscored the value of these visits and commended the staff for their continued professionalism and commitment.

President Stokes also reported on her participation in regional conferences, including the Northeast Political Science Association meeting in Philadelphia, and noted her intention to continue such engagement throughout 2026. Finally, she provided an update on her Presidential Task Force on "The University in the Era of Democratic Erosion," citing a recent roundtable in Chicago that highlighted the global scope of challenges to democratic resilience. She indicated that the Task Force remains on track to deliver its report in advance of the Boston meeting and that dissemination efforts are in progress.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Executive Director, Kimberly A. Mealy, opened the report by welcoming new and returning Council members and noting a productive year across the association. She highlighted continued progress in implementing the APSA Strategic Plan and overseeing staff, operations, and organizational assets, alongside regular engagement with the APSA President and governance bodies. Key governance updates included support for Council and committee activities, completion of the APSA election, onboarding of new Council members, and the launch of the APSA Connect platform to enhance communication and information sharing. Operationally, the association advanced its budget planning for fiscal year 2026, completed its fiscal year 2024 audit, and initiated preparations for a new AMS database transition, while also finalizing the internal performance review processes.

Executive Director Mealy further emphasized positive

trends in development and membership, with increased contributions, a significant share of first-time donors, and steady membership levels. Programmatic and convening activities remained robust, including a successful annual meeting in Vancouver, ongoing planning for upcoming meetings, and continued administration of major grant programs and initiatives. Advocacy efforts focused on promoting academic freedom and support for the political science discipline, with expanded engagement through partnerships, events, and new resources. Looking ahead, priorities include planning for the next strategic cycle 2027–2029 and advancing a salary compensation review, positioning the association for continued growth and impact.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Sara W. Goodman provided an overview of her responsibilities, including reporting on the association's financial condition, overseeing investments, and supporting the budget and audit processes. She emphasized that, while APSA remains in a sound financial position with strong assets and endowment support, the association continues to operate within a context of financial uncertainty and relatively narrow margins. The proposed fiscal year 2026 budget reflects a cautious approach, with modest adjustments to membership dues and registration fees and a planned draw on endowment funds to sustain core programs. Additional considerations include attendance projections for the upcoming Boston annual meeting, the evolving external funding landscape, and ongoing efforts by the Investment Committee to explore portfolio diversification.

Supplementing this overview, Stephen Stoupa, APSA's Finance and Administration Director, highlighted key operational and financial planning items, including the implementation of a new database system. Goodman also provided updates on endowment fund draws and a newly executed agreement supporting the Congressional Fellowship Program. On the expenditure side, the budget includes provisions for staff salary adjustments of 3% and a forthcoming compensation review to ensure alignment with market conditions.

Gingrich asked for clarification regarding the reclassification of royalties and editorial support within the budget. Stoupa explained that the change reflects a reorganization rather than a substantive shift in funds. On the revenue side, royalties and editorial support from Cambridge University Press are now more clearly categorized under publications-related income, resulting in an apparent increase due to the consolidation of previously separate grant-related entries. On the expense side, editorial and honoraria costs have been realigned to distinguish publication-related expenses from other awards and travel-related items, which are now grouped separately. This adjustment was undertaken to improve clarity and consistency in financial reporting.

Motion for approval of the 2026 budget was moved by Candis Watts Smith and seconded by Deborah Yashar and passed unanimously.

AWARD POLICY PROPOSAL

President Stokes introduced the agenda item concerning the APSA's awards policy proposal and invited Casey Harrigan to provide background on the proposal. Harrigan reviewed the evolution of APSA's awards policies, noting that an initial policy adopted in 2010 was replaced by a revised policy approved

by Council in 2016. She recalled that at the Fall 2025 Council meeting, discussion of a proposed new award led Council to direct the development of new criteria governing the scope and purpose of awards—including naming, funding, eligibility, conflicts of interest, and administration—and to table all new and pending award proposals until such criteria were approved. Following that directive, the Membership and Professional Development Committee drafted a new policy, which was subsequently reviewed by the Rules and Elections Committee, as required by APSA bylaws. The Rules and Elections Committee proposed additional revisions, and the revised draft was presented to Council for consideration.

During discussion, Smith raised questions about the proposed requirement that individuals honored through award naming be deceased, acknowledging the rationale for the provision while suggesting that the policy might allow for greater flexibility, such as permitting awards to be named for individuals who are retired or emeritus faculty. McCartney supported this suggestion, proposing that retirement from full-time employment could serve as an appropriate standard. Rushing asked whether the policy could more clearly distinguish between a financial contribution and the naming of an award, drawing on institutional experiences with separating donations from naming of the proposed award. Smith further suggested that all awards be subject to a regular review interval of 15 years and also recommended that the awards policy itself include a provision for review.

Moustafa raised a question on the role of the Rules and Elections Committee. Executive Director Mealy added that the Rules and Elections Committee, according to APSA's bylaws and governing documents, reviews policies included in the board policies manual.

A motion to send back the proposal to the Rules and Elections committee for additional revisions was moved by Betina Wilkinson and seconded by Anna Grzymala-Busse. The motion passed with 23 votes in favor and one abstention.

CHILDCARE SERVICES RECOMMENDATION

Kristin Kessler, Director of Meetings and Events, shared a report on the recommendations of the ad hoc committee on childcare, which was convened following the 2025 April Council meeting to evaluate APSA's current approach and consider alternatives. The committee reviewed the existing reimbursement model, under which eligible annual meeting attendees may apply in advance and receive reimbursement for childcare expenses after submitting receipts. This model was adopted following the discontinuation of on-site childcare after 2019 due to insurance limitations and associated liability risks, as confirmed through consultation with legal counsel and insurance advisors. In its deliberations, the committee assessed cost, accessibility, legal considerations, and member feedback, including survey data from annual meeting participants.

Based on this review, the committee recommended continuing the reimbursement model as the most viable and low-risk option. At the same time, it proposed several targeted enhancements to improve access and effectiveness, including increased outreach and clearer communication, particularly to junior, international, and first-generation scholars, along with raising the reimbursement cap from \$500 to \$600 per family. The committee also recommended introducing an advance payment

option for those with financial need, with appropriate acknowledgment of associated tax implications. It was noted that the proposed reimbursement level would be at the high end among peer organizations. Looking ahead, the committee encouraged APSA to periodically reassess member preferences, including gauging potential future interest in revisiting an on-site childcare model should conditions allow.

Council members engaged in a substantive discussion regarding the committee's recommendation to maintain the childcare reimbursement model and the potential for future modifications. Kang supported broader member consultation, emphasizing evolving caregiving needs. While Moustafa and Burden, requested additional data on risk, peer practices, and prior benchmarking to better inform future consideration of alternative models.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on whether to expand the reimbursement program beyond childcare to encompass broader caregiving responsibilities. Kang, Wallace, and Brown expressed support for a more inclusive approach, noting the potential to improve accessibility for members with diverse caregiving obligations. In response, Kessler and Mealy indicated that such a change would require further review, including legal considerations and clarification of eligibility and documentation requirements. Concerns were also raised by Yashar, Rushing, and Wilkinson regarding potential budgetary implications and increased demand, including how limited funds would be allocated if applications exceed available resources. Stokes suggested proceeding with a vote on the current proposal while referring to broader questions, such as program expansion and long-term demand assessment, for further study, potentially through a continued or newly constituted committee.

Motion to approve the current proposal was moved by Sherri L. Wallace and is seconded by Cherie Strachan and passes with 24 in favor and 1 abstention.

UPDATE FROM THE AD HOC ORGANIZED SECTIONS COMMITTEE

Harrigan and McCartney provided an update on the work of the Ad Hoc Organized Sections Committee, which has been actively reviewing data on section membership, dues, activities, and annual meeting participation since its formation following the Spring 2025 meeting. Harrigan reported that the committee has conducted multiple meetings and is in the process of developing recommendations but has requested additional time to finalize its work. McCartney emphasized that while extensive quantitative data has been analyzed, the committee's deliberations extend beyond metrics alone, taking into account broader considerations such as member engagement, disciplinary value, and evolving participation patterns, including the impact of free graduate student memberships on section sustainability.

McCartney underscored concerns about resource constraints, including limited space at the annual meeting and the risk of increasing fragmentation across sections. She noted that while formal elimination of sections remains an available mechanism and has been used in cases of inactivity, the committee is not currently recommending widespread discontinuation. Instead, the focus is on establishing clearer "on-ramps and off-ramps," strengthening criteria for section viability, and exploring alternative models such as expanded use of working groups for more time-limited or specialized areas. Wallace raised the

question of whether eliminating sections should be more actively considered, while McCartney acknowledged this possibility but emphasized a preference for preventative strategies and support mechanisms for sections at risk. Additional ideas discussed included encouraging greater coordination among sections, such as co-hosted events and increased use of virtual meetings, to address space limitations and improve member experience. The committee will incorporate this feedback as it refines its recommendations for Council review.

JOURNAL PUBLISHER RFP PROCESS

President Stokes called for a confidential discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

Smith raised questions about the recent turnover among APSR associate editors, and Carnes requested additional details on the current turnover figures. Gurstelle explained that changes in editorial composition are not unusual, noting that the size and workload of the editorial team have grown significantly over time alongside increased submissions. Gurstelle added that three members of the current 16-person editorial team stepped down for a range of personal and professional reasons, consistent with patterns observed in previous editorial teams.

Wilkinson inquired whether the turnover signaled broader concerns about the editorial model. Gurstelle emphasized that such transitions are typical given the scale and demands of the role and do not reflect systemic issues. He expressed confidence in the proposed replacements and the overall functioning of the editorial team. Smith mentioned that she had been directly provided with differing perspectives on the editor turnover and asked if more detailed information could be shared. Gurstelle noted that a forthcoming report from the editorial team will provide additional insight into APSR operations.

Moustafa asked to discuss the APSA Document Retention Policy. He stated that while conducting his own personal research and accessing the APSA archives at the George Washington University Library, he observed significant inconsistencies across decades of archived materials, in terms of the types of materials archived. This experience prompted him to question the adequacy of the current retention policy, APSA's current document storage and plans for archiving. Moustafa said that he considers this to be a fundamental issue relevant to the history and governance of the association, and he hopes it can be addressed by the Council.

President Stokes responded by recognizing the substantial work APSA staff had undertaken to benchmark policies from comparable organizations and to develop potential improvements upon the policy. She emphasized that she supports the review of the policy and the need to maintain a high-quality, sustainable archive. Stokes highlighted the practical challenges involved in this effort, including the time and cost of maintaining archives. She added that she would recommend addressing the retention policy in tandem with a storage policy.

Kang noted that Executive Director Mealy had previously indicated the Executive Committee was currently reviewing the issue and asked whether the Council might expect a proposed revision in the spring.

Executive Director Mealy confirmed that the Executive Committee is currently reviewing the Document Retention Policy, following a request from the Publications Policy Committee

Chair, and added that because this policy is included in the APSA Board Policies Manual, consistent with APSA bylaws and the Board Policies, it would also need to be reviewed by the Rules and Elections Committee. The Executive Committee discussed this matter during their last meeting in early December 2025, during said meeting, staff presented benchmarking data and other relevant information. Executive Director Mealy stated that the association is following the bylaws and established governance processes. She concluded by stating that when the Executive Committee finalizes its review, it will then share the draft proposal with the Rules and Elections Committee, who in turn will share the proposal with the Council for their review.

Mealy stated that APSA staff are adhering to all established procedures and that the association deeply values the materials in question and is grateful to the Publications Policy Committee for bringing this matter forward.

In reference to earlier remarks on the disposal of documents, Executive Director Mealy added that no documents have been reviewed or destroyed during her tenure and stated that any earlier staff actions would have followed the existing reten-

tion policy. Mealy then underscored that any future archiving effort would require dedicated funding and Council discussion. She also stated that the existing policy ensures APSA meets its legal obligations. Moustafa closed by thanking Mealy, expressing appreciation that the issue is receiving attention.

Mueller requested an update on APSA's nominations to the Historical Advisory Committee (HAC) at the US Department of State Executive Director Mealy explained that in July of 2025, APSA had been asked to submit six nominations for the HAC. Mealy confirmed that APSA has submitted all required information and is now awaiting a response from the Office of the Historian. Mealy noted that she has been coordinating with counterparts at other associations that also have congressionally mandated nomination responsibilities.

President Stokes inquired if there were any further items for new business. With no additional items raised, she called for the adjournment of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned.



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