Position Guide: UMRA Secretary
Last Updated: March 2020

All UMRA officers, committee chairs, etc., learn things during the year that they wish they had known earlier. “Position Guides” like this are designed to make some of that learning available to their successors. The first edition of this position guide for the Secretary position was prepared in summer 2016. Annually secretaries should expand, correct, and update it as.

Part I: Responsibilities

According to the 2018–19 Operating Manual, the Secretary:

- Serves on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee.
- Takes minutes at all meetings of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, as well as the annual meeting of the membership in May and any additional Association meetings.
- Prepares minutes and sends them to the President to review and then circulate to the Executive Committee and, in the case of Board or Association minutes, to the Board as well.
- If requested, brings paper copies to Board meetings for those who do not use email. Chip, I have never done that—it might help to note which copies—minutes only? The President brings agendas, committee chairs bring copies of reports or ??
- Posts Board minutes on UMRA website (provisionally after President’s approval, permanently after Board approval). I have never posted them after Pres approval—never been given that kind of approval, it has always waited until the Board meeting. Cathy Lee Gierke posts all documents from the meetings when I send them to her.
- Updates Operating Manual each summer and submits to Executive Committee, and then Board, for refinement and final approval; posts revised version on website. I have not done this and that seems like a big responsibility for the secretary. Would think that is an Exec Cmte job but would be good to discuss.
- Writes up proposed Bylaw changes and sends to President for inclusion in Executive Committee and Board mailings and ultimately for Association action; posts revised Bylaws on UMRA website. In so far as these changes are approved in Exec or Board meetings they are in the minutes, not elsewhere that I have done.
- At the end of the year (usually September), submits minutes, new versions of Bylaws and Operating Manual, and other documents generated or maintained by the secretary to the chair of the History Committee for inclusion in UMRA’s annual submission of materials for the University Archives. Again, Bylaws and Operating Manual needs discussion of whose responsibility. What I have done and is not listed here is provide Gloria Williams with copies of all Exec and Board meeting minutes, reports, attachments, agendas, etc. Also had to update the Agenda that Bill sends out since he often gets the date wrong, doesn’t include the year, and mis-numbers the agenda items.
- Other responsibilities as requested by the president or Executive Committee; e.g., provides reminders for when to name the nominating committee; keeps track of terms
served on the board and committees and presents the information in easy-to-read form (such as a spreadsheet). Have never done this either.

Part II: Activities

Term: The position is re-elected annually, so it goes essentially year-to-year. It takes about a year to get completely acclimated, however, so most occupants of the position will probably want to serve at least two years, if possible. The Secretary is a fully (I would get rid of “functioning”—just note “full member”) member of the Executive Committee and Board, not just the person recording what goes on in meetings (which doesn't always happen in other organizations), and you will find your participation in the meetings highly valued by their members.

Time commitment: On average you will probably spend three or four hours a month writing up two sets of minutes: Board and Executive Committee. (In May there’s a third set, for the annual Association meeting.) Attendance at meetings of both bodies consumes another four hours or so —perhaps six once you add transportation time and time reading background materials. Other tasks, including email communication, probably take another two to four hours a month. So perhaps the total workload comes to about ten hours per month—and less in summer.

Meetings: The Executive Committee usually to meets on Tuesday one week before each Board meeting. Meeting locations and exact times vary. The Board meets in Coffman immediately before the monthly luncheon. The annual Association meeting takes place as part of the May luncheon. (Usually its only real business is election of Board and officers; occasionally a Bylaws amendment is on the agenda as well.) Executive Committee meetings usually take an hour to an hour and a half; Board meetings take an hour and a half to an hour and forty-five minutes.

Writing up and revising the minutes afterward: If possible, draft minutes within a few days after a meeting, then send them to the President who will send them back with any comments or corrections. Bill rarely acknowledged my sending him the minutes. He did this past month but that was a first. After incorporating these, send the (Omit clean,) corrected version back to the President for inclusion among the attachments to the following month’s emailing to the Executive Committee. Further revisions (usually very small) follow the Executive Committee meeting. The President then includes the revised draft of the Board minutes in the mailing for the Board meeting. Minutes should include a notation “Pending Approval” before they are approved, and “Approved” after final approval of the board.

Getting minutes to the UMRA Website: After the Board has given its final approval, send the Board minutes—and, in May, the Association minutes—to the webmaster for posting on the website. (In contrast, the Executive Committee meeting notes are just for internal use and do not go to the Board or to the website.) If you would prefer to post the minutes yourself, contact the webmaster for current instructions.

Updating the Operating Manual: Done once a year, over the summer, after the May Board and officer elections. Each secretary develops a different process for this; it might be most effective to send emails to all officers and committee chairs requesting updates of the relevant section. In September the finished draft update goes to the Executive Committee and then the Board. After
Board approval the new version needs to be posted on the website. **Again, did not do this last year. Not sure it has to be Sec responsibility—good to discuss at an upcoming Exec/Board meeting.**

**Covering for secretary absences:** Although officers are expected to attend all Executive Committee and Board meetings when feasible, absences because of travel, illness, or unavoidable conflicts sometimes occur. As soon as you know you will need to miss a meeting, notify the President and seek someone who can fill in for you. Among the more promising candidates might be a past Secretary.

**April reminder to president elect:** Sometime around the April meeting, you might want to remind the president-elect to get a thank-you gift for the outgoing president, to be presented at the May Annual Meeting. **Seems to me this could be done by the past president better than the secretary**—feels too “secretary” like.

**Archiving responsibilities:** Each year the History Committee gathers UMRA materials together to store in the University Archives. The person who has generated the materials gets them to the chair of that committee, currently Gloria Williams, by early fall (most typically at the September Board meeting). The secretary is therefore responsible for passing on the following for the year just concluding:

- Executive Committee minutes
- Board minutes
- Association minutes
- Bylaws (at least if there have been any changes during the year)
- Updated version of Operating Manual
- Updated version of this position guide
- **I provided all attachments from the Exec and Board meetings—not the annual reports obviously but the monthly reports.**

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**Appendixes: Tips from Former Secretaries**

The following tips are ideas/systems that worked well for their authors. They represent personal preferences which some future presidents might find helpful and others not. Unlike the preceding sections, they are not designed to be updated annually but simply to stay as part of the document, to be used if helpful, ignored if not, deleted if subsequent change renders them irrelevant.
Appendix 1: Tips for Taking Minutes (Chip Peterson, Secretary 2015–2016)

I tried taking minutes on my laptop once, but I found it the necessary cursor movement awkward (for example, going back up to record a late arrival after the meeting had begun). After that experiment I always took notes by hand. To make it easier, however, after Jean (Kinsey, that year’s UMRA president) sent out the agenda I prepared a sheet in the format I would ultimately use for the minutes, estimated how much discussion there was likely to be on each item, spaced accordingly after each heading, and ran off the result to use for taking notes during the meeting. Because of all the blank space I left for each item, often the worksheet came to four or five pages. I used only one side when I printed so that would be able to turn it over and continue on the back if it turned out I had underestimated how much discussion a particular item would generate. The black print in the following example shows what that sheet looked like when I arrived for the meeting; the red print adds annotations for this guide.

UMRA Board of Directors
Minutes Meeting of Tuesday, 24 May 2016
[Considered unofficial pending Board approval]

[This was the complete Board list for the year. I just circled names as people arrived for the meeting, then moved the un-circled names down into the “Members absent” section when I wrote up the minutes.]

Members absent:

Other participants: John Anderson, Bud Clawson, Ginny Hanson, Jan Hogan, Dale Swanson
[These were non-members who sometimes attended. I circled of those who did, added names of any other visitors not on this brief list, then removed the others when writing up minutes.]

Kinsey called the meeting to order at a.m.

1. Welcome
   Kinsey welcomed all.

2. Agenda
   The Board adopted the agenda as previously distributed by email. [That’s what usually happened; if not, I crossed out this line, took notes, and later changed the typed text.]

3. Minutes
   The Board approved the previously distributed minutes of its April 26 meeting with no changes. [If there were changes I just revised this afterward.]

4. Treasurer’s Report
   [For a fairly routine item like this that I suspected would generate little discussion, I would often leave just a few blank lines for note-taking.]

5. Update and draft MOU between UMRA and the U of M
   [For an item like this, which concerned a memorandum of agreement with the Provost’s office and seemed likely to generate much more discussion, I would sometimes leave as much as half a page for note-taking.]

Committee reports

10. Nominations Committee
The meeting adjourned at a.m.

Do we want to add “Minutes submitted by . . . ?”