

Crib Sheet: UMRA President Chip Peterson, August 2018

All UMRA officers, committee chairs, etc., learn things during the year that they wish they had known earlier. Some might choose to develop what I have been calling a “crib sheet” to summarize some of the knowledge they have accumulated. This was my attempt at such a document. I drafted it upon completion of my term as president (2017–2018), in the hopes that future presidents might expand, correct, and update it as needed and pass the revised version on to their successors. Over the course of several years it should come to embody a good deal of accumulated wisdom and experience.

***Added note, August 2020:** A number of things in this document are already out of date, To cite just one example, under a proposed change in the bylaws, future presidential terms will begin July 1 rather than September 1. I have made no attempt to update the document, but hope it will prove sufficiently useful as a point of departure for future presidents to update.*

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Part I: Responsibilities

This section lists the duties of not only the President but also the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, both of which the President chairs.

President:

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

- Per the Bylaws, serves as the chief executive officer of the Association.
- Establishes the agenda for Executive Committee and Board meetings, chairs both, and presides at the monthly luncheons.
- Serves as the official representative of the Association; holds ultimate responsibility for all negotiations, arrangements and agreements on behalf of the Association; and maintains liaison with appropriate university, community, and Big Ten organizations.
- Bears lead responsibility for overseeing and developing Association programs and initiatives.
- Communicates with the membership through a column in the monthly newsletter, the Association website, Board and member listservs, and other ways appropriate for the Association.
- Is responsible for, or delegates responsibility for, seeing that adequate copy is prepared for the monthly Newsletter, and works with Newsletter editors to oversee production of the Newsletter.

- Appoints committees and their chairs as specified in Article VII of the Bylaws. (In practice, Presidents have usually just ratified appointments made by committee chairs.)
- Reviews draft minutes before sending to Executive Committee and/or Board for approval.
- At the end of the year (usually in September) sends the President’s notes, columns, and relevant papers to the History Committee for inclusion in UMRA’s annual contribution to the U Archives.

Board of Directors

UMRA’s Bylaws prescribes the Board’s duties as follows:

- “The Board of Directors shall advance the purposes of the Association and shall report regularly to the membership regarding its actions and activities. Responsibility for the general conduct of the affairs of the Association shall be assigned to the Board of Directors, which shall have full power and authority to do all acts and perform all functions which the Association might do or perform, except it shall not have the power to modify the substance of official action taken by the membership or to amend the Articles of Association. The Board of Directors shall administer the property and funds of the Association, as authorized by law and directions of the membership.”

The Operating Manual describes a board member’s duties as follows:

- Participates in the eight yearly Board meetings (Sept.-Nov. and Jan.-May) and in special retreats when held; notifies the president when other commitments will prevent attendance.
- Reads Board materials in advance of each meeting and comes prepared to contribute constructively to discussions and decisions.
- Is acquainted with such UMRA governance documents as the Bylaws and the Operating Manual, key policies, and major reports.
- Serves on at least one UMRA committee.

Executive Committee

The Operating Manual outlines the Executive Committee’s duties as follows:

- Advise and deliberate on issues concerning UMRA that may need to come before the Board
- Act as a short- and long-range planning committee, including the budget
- Send policy suggestions or recommendations to the appropriate committees for deliberation and possible action
- Propose the agenda for Board meetings
- Determine any end-of-year awards for outstanding service to UMRA
- Maintain the Operating Manual.

Part II: Flow of Duties/Activities within Each Year

This section offers a timeline for tasks that need to be addressed at particular points in the year.

Although all UMRA terms of office technically run from September 1 to August 31, in the case of the office of President, summers in practice are a period of a sort of joint presidency, in which the outgoing and incoming Presidents work closely as a team. This section therefore includes some items for the summer preceding the official beginning of your term.

June/July:

- Acquaint yourself thoroughly with key materials on the website. Especially important are some of the documents in the “About Us” section, including the Bylaws, the Operating Manual, the Personnel document, the most recent annual Treasurer’s Report, and some of the files in the UMRA History sub-section.
- Communicate with the current President as much and as often as needed as you prepare for the upcoming year.
- Chat with editors about the nature of the President’s column for the monthly newsletter. (Its nature and title have varied over the years. In 2017-18 it was called, “From the Board” and focused mostly on the outcome of Board meetings, but it need not be the same in future years.)

August:

- Schedule special Executive Committee meeting for late August or early September, to be attended by outgoing and incoming members alike. (This meeting is optional but often proves useful.)
- Assure that responsibility is clearly identified for updating each document in the About Us section of the UMRA website.
- With help from the outgoing President, begin drafting updates to key UMRA documents, especially the Operating Manual and the Personnel list. Especially important: The Personnel document and Operating Manual, both of which should be ready for Board review at the September meeting if possible, otherwise October.
- If you have chosen to schedule the special Executive Committee mentioned above, use it to get advice from outgoing members, establish a meeting schedule for year, discuss Executive Committee duties/processes/culture, review Operating Manual and discuss potential changes to it, and highlight a few likely issues for the upcoming year. Invitees: outgoing, continuing, and incoming Executive Committee members. (Could be held late August or early September.)
- Find out which committee chairs, representatives and liaisons, etc., wish to continue. Ask chairs to let you know what changes in their committee membership they wish to propose. Find out if there are any changes in affinity group chairs. After incorporating results into it, submit the Personnel document to the Webmaster. (Although more time-consuming than a single email to everyone, it may be worth considering individual emails, which tend to draw quicker responses.)
- If you have decided to hold the special Executive Committee meeting, use it to get acquainted, discuss Executive Committee duties/processes/culture, solicit advice from outgoing members, preview a few likely issues for the upcoming year, and begin discussing updates to the Operating Manual. Invitees: outgoing, continuing, and incoming Executive Committee members.
- Submit draft of your column for the September newsletter.

September:

- Review reports and other materials submitted to you and the now Past President for the Archives and consider which of them may merit Board discussion.
- Working with the Past President, conduct informal orientation for new Board members.
- Remember that the Treasurer’s annual financial report for the previous year needs to be on the agenda for the Executive Committee and Board meetings alike.

- Plan and execute first monthly round of meetings (Executive Committee, Board, membership; see Part III for sequence of tasks within the month).

October:

- Touch base with committee chairs and other key people to answer any questions and assure that things are functioning smoothly.

November:

- Remember that the Treasurer's first-quarter financial report (for July through September) should be on the agenda for the October Executive Committee and Board meetings alike.

December:

- Consult with the immediate Past President about the process for creating the Nominating Committee. (The Bylaws prescribe that the Past President chairs the Nominating Committee and the Board names its members. The Bylaws are silent, however, on how the Board goes about this. In practice, in recent years the Past President has recommended people to fill the other four positions. Nonetheless, each year the President and Past President should decide together whether to continue or change this practice.)

January:

- Support the President-Elect as requested with the search for Nominating Committee members..

February:

- Remember that the Board needs to approve the Nominating Committee by this month.
- Remember to include the Treasurer's second-quarter financial report (for October through January) on agendas.
- Initiate negotiations with the Campus Club about venue, time of day, format (e.g., plated dinner vs. buffet), and budget for next year's meetings.

March:

- Based on the conversations with the Campus Club, bring any recommendations to the Board concerning next year's meetings.

April:

- Seek final agreement with Campus Club concerning arrangements for next year's monthly meetings.
- In the Executive Committee meeting, develop a recommendation concerning UMRA's representation at the annual conference of the association of Big Ten retiree organizations and the biennial conference of AROHE (the Association of Retiree Organizations in Higher Education), and put it on the Board agenda for information and possible discussion.
- Have Executive Committee discuss any special awards for service to UMRA (for presentation at the annual meeting in May).
- (In even-numbered years only) Identify task force to plan summer retreat, and seek Board input on dates and objectives

May:

- Include on the Board agenda a brief discussion of the annual meeting, including election logistics in the unlikely event of one or more nominations from the floor.
- Remember to include the Treasurer's third-quarter financial report (for February through April) on agendas.
- Preside at, and give a brief oral report to, the annual membership meeting.
- (In even-numbered years only) Fix date and place for summer retreat, which traditionally has been held sometime during August.

June/July:

- Finish updating this position guide and turn over to President-Elect.
- (In even-numbered years only) Work with retreat planning task force to be sure things stay on track.
- Review Treasurer's third-quarter financial report (for March through May) and share with Board by email.

August:

- Meet with incoming President and incoming President-Elect to facilitate smooth transition to the new regime and to turn over useful electronic files for them to place on their hard drives and continue to build upon.
- (In even-numbered years only) Hold biennial retreat.
- After consultation with upcoming year's Executive Committee, establish a fixed day, time, and place for its meetings throughout the year.
- Send message(s) to officers, committee chairs, etc., concerning annual reports and other materials for UMRA's annual contribution to the University Archives. These should come not only to you but also to the incoming President.
- Prepare President's annual written report and any other presidential materials that ought to go with it to the Archives.

September:

- Review reports and other materials submitted to you for the Archives, and discuss with new President any policy implications. Print them and turn over the hard copies to the History Committee chair for deposit in the Archives.
- Relax a bit; you are now officially Past President.

Part III: Flow of Duties/Activities within Each Month

Membership meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of every month from September through November and January through May. (Exception: If in a particular year Thanksgiving or Memorial Day would fall during that same week, the corresponding meeting is held the third Tuesday instead.) The Bylaws prescribe that the Board should meet the same day. The Executive Committee in recent years has consistently met the previous Tuesday. The newsletter comes out earlier in the month and prominently features information on the monthly membership meeting and speaker.

Much of the President's workload revolves around this monthly cycle. Suggestions:

- *Before UMRA year begins:* Within the UMRA folder on your hard drive, establish a first-order sub-folder entitled something like, “UMRA meetings—ExCom & Board.” As soon as ideas or materials for a meeting begin to accumulate for a meeting, create a second-order sub-folder entitled (for example), “UMRA 2018.09.18 ExCom mtg.” or “UMRA 2018.09.25 Board mtg.” Use a consistent filename format for all meetings so that folders will arrange themselves chronologically on your directory by meeting date.
- *Early in each month:* Start preparing lists of items for the Executive Committee and Board to consider this month, and begin preparing agendas and relevant supporting materials.
- *No later than a week before the Executive Committee meeting:* Pull together the agenda and attachments. (Agenda items are often numerous, but at a minimum they always include approval of agenda, approval of minutes of previous Executive Committee meeting, review of draft Board minutes of previous meeting, and development of proposed agenda for upcoming Board meeting. Often they also include discussion of draft attachments for the Board meeting.) Around the same time, send a message to the Board listserv asking committee chairs, representatives/liasons, etc., to send you by a specified deadline (usually about the day after the Executive Committee meeting) any reports they want on the Board agenda.
- *No later than four days before the Executive Committee meeting:* Send out the meeting materials as email attachments.
- *Right after the Executive Committee meeting:* Incorporate any changes the Executive Committee has made in materials for the Board meeting and continue developing any other materials.
- *No later than four or five days before the Board meeting:* Put the finishing touches on the Board agenda and other attachments and send the full packet to the Board listserv as email attachments.
- *In the remaining days before the Board meeting:* Begin working on the President’s column for the next month’s UMRA newsletter. Also, prepare notes for your announcements at the membership meeting, and be sure anyone else who is to speak there is prepared.
- *Right after the Board meeting:* Incorporate news from the Board meeting into your draft of the President’s column and send it to the newsletter editor.
- *End of month and beginning of following month:* Review and edit the Secretary’s draft minutes of the Executive Committee and Board meetings; these will go subsequently to the Executive Committee’s next month’s meeting for further editing and approval (Executive Committee minutes) or submission to Board for approval (Board minutes).

Part IV: Miscellaneous Additional Information/Tips/Reminders

Keeping this document current: Developments during the year will make parts of this position guide obsolete or will make you think of topics that should be added. Instead of waiting to update it until the end of the year, make a copy at the beginning of the year, assign a new filename to that copy, and then continually add edits or notes to yourself as time goes by. By the summer you will be well on your way to an updated version for your successor.

Helping keep website accurate: During your year as President you will probably have a more comprehensive view of what is going on in UMRA than any other member. Keep an eye out for information on the website that is no longer current and help the Webmaster update as needed.

Emailing: Although not part of the formal job description, the President spends a good deal of time emailing other officers, committee chairs, etc., and responding to emails from other UMRA members and from people outside the organization. To help prepare for a smooth succession at the end of your year as President, copy the President-Elect on most of your correspondence.

Listservs: In addition to the newsletter and the website, two listservs will prove important tools for you:

- *Membership listserv* (UMRA-members@lists.umn.edu): This includes all current members of UMRA. It is used to distribute the newsletter, to send important announcements (e.g., membership renewal instructions), to publicize special events, to distribute surveys, etc. To avoid member burnout about the volume of messages, try to be reasonably sparing in its use.
- *Board listserv* (UMRA-board@lists.umn.edu): This is broader than its name implies. In addition to Board members it includes committee chairs, representatives and liaisons, affinity group chairs, and other key UMRA leaders (e.g., editors, webmaster, database manager, etc.). The President uses it frequently, including for sending monthly Board meeting materials.

Keeping meetings moving: Board meetings are usually scheduled to last an hour and a half. They should not run much overtime because the social hour and the monthly membership meeting follow them, so it is important to keep them on track. Consider including a suggested timeline in the agenda; then then remind members if the meeting starts to fall too far behind schedule. Although there is usually more flexibility for Executive Committee meetings, out of courtesy to members you should try to keep these moving crisply as well.

Retreats: The UMRA retreats, mentioned at various points in Part II above, have occurred in the summer of even-numbered years since 2012. They give the Board, officers, committee chairs, and other UMRA leaders a chance to spend a day backing away from the day-to-day operations of the organization and thinking about the big picture.

Town halls: In October 2017, in lieu of a speaker, the monthly membership meeting featured a structured open discussion of where members wanted UMRA to go. It proved fruitful, and the Board drew on it repeatedly as it moved forward through the year. It should probably not be an annual event, but future Presidents and Program Committees might keep in mind the possibility of a repeat of the experiment at an appropriate moment.

Candy: Last—and certainly least—the President has traditionally been the person who purchases the candy for the monthly membership luncheons. You need not actually place the candy on the table; Campus Club staff will do that. You can save trips to the supermarket by buying several months' supply at a time and leaving the excess at the Campus Club. Check each month on how the supply is holding up so you will not need to rush out for a last-minute purchase. Like other reimbursable expenses, just pass the receipt to the UMRA treasurer. For the future, it might be worth considering alternatives to leaving this duty in the President's already substantial portfolio of duties. (For example, might the Luncheon Committee consider taking it over?)

A Model for UMRA Board Agendas and Attachments

Chip Peterson, President 2017–2018

No two presidents will have exactly the same approach to organizing meeting agendas and attachments. This memo outlines the particular system I used during my year as president. I hope it can be placed in the UMRA President’s toolkit for use by any future president who finds it useful.

I tried during my year to design the agenda and attachments to facilitate the flow of the meeting and to be as convenient as possible for board members. Features:

A. Heading

- The heading always includes the day, date (including year), time, and location of the meeting.

B. Attachment numbering

- Each attachment is numbered, and its number is keyed to the corresponding item on the agenda.
- The attachment number appears (along with the meeting date) in the upper right corner of the attachment itself. The sample agenda on the following page illustrates.
- The attachment number also appears in its filename. For example, the first six attachments for this particular meeting had the following filenames:
 1. UMRA Board agenda 2018.04.24.doc
 3. UMRA Board minutes 2018.03.27.doc
 - 4b. Commun-Outreach update.doc
 - 4c. SCFA rep report.docx
 - 4d. Prospect Park senior highrise.doc
 - 4e. Membership Graph 2018-04-20.pdf

C. Time prods

- I found the first column (“Target Start Time”) to be useful for keeping the meeting moving. Neither I nor the board members adhered to it compulsively, but once in a while, if discussion bogged down. I could remind everyone that we were falling behind and still had a lot of business to attend to.

Comments:

- The three features I have summarized here—heading, attachment numbering, and time prods—are quite independent of each other. Although I found all worthwhile, another president might choose to use only one or two of them (or, of course, none).
- The attachment numbering system has one down side: You have to be very careful to check to be sure numbers are consistent in the three places they appear: on the agenda, on each attachment, and in each filename. If you have the agenda almost ready and then a new item comes in, remember you’ll have to make the resulting changes in all three places—and not only for this particular item and attachment but also for all others farther down on the agenda.

**UMRA Board of Directors
Meeting of Tuesday, 24 April 2018
9:00–10:30 am, Campus Club 411**

AGENDA

Target Start Time	Item
9:00	1. Adopt or modify agenda
9:00	2. March Board minutes (Attachment 2)
9:05	3. (Re)introductions & announcements
9:10	4. Reports & proposals <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. JOIE—Bud Clawsonb. Communications & Outreach Committee—Claudia Parliament (Attachment 4b)c. Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs—Terry Roe (Attachment 4c)d. Executive Committee update on Prospect Park senior development—Chip Peterson (Attachment 4d)e. Membership graph—Virgil Larson (attachment emailed separately to Board, 4/23)
9:35	5. Draft UMRA policies on marketing and advocacy—Chip Peterson for the Executive Committee(Attachment 5)
9:45	6. Draft member survey on afternoon format in West Wing—Chip Peterson for the Executive Committee (Attachment 6)
9:55	7. Luncheon and buffet fees for 2018–2019—Chip Peterson & Jerry Rinehart for the Executive Committee (Attachments 7a & 7b)
10:20	8. Other business?
10:30	Adjourn