

FROM THE EDITOR—BACK TO SCHOOL

By the time you read this issue of *JPAE*, the fall semester will be well under way. We are all laboring under difficult times in the classroom, facing new budgetary pressures and demands upon the curriculum to be more accountable in terms of relevance and demonstrating outcomes. Teaching and curricula do not exist in a vacuum; they must respond to changing times and needs. Change and innovation are vital to making learning fun and relevant.

The stereotypical lackluster professor talks into his or her yellowed, coffee-stained notes from old lectures that are recycled again and again, each year failing to innovate or update classes beyond those first presented as a junior professor. On my first day of teaching, my department chair gave me the best advice I ever received: “Never be afraid to experiment.” By that, he meant that as teachers we need to experiment, take a chance, do something different, all in the name of finding out what does or does not work in our efforts to reach students and stay relevant. I try to live this advice in all my classes, fearing that if I do not, my notes and teaching too will become yellowed and stained and I will turn into the stereotype I saw in some who came before me.

This issue of *JPAE* brings us all back to school in the sense of urging professors to rethink what we do in the classroom. The world tritely but truly has changed, and the teaching of public affairs must capture that. Challenges such as the events of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the new fiscal crisis of the state all demand that we go back to school and think about what we are trying to teach.

Stephanie Newbold’s “No Time Like the Present: Making Rule of Law and Constitutional Competence the Theoretical and Practical Foundation for Public Administration Graduate Education Curriculum” is an important piece reminding public affairs teachers that the law matters. Specifically, at a time when cultural or other core competencies are being defined and articulated, knowledge about the legal and constitutional foundations of public affairs needs to be emphasized more. The law is the touchstone for all public affairs fields and disciplines, and our curriculum should acknowledge and inculcate it in our students.

Charles Szypszak’s “Teaching Law in Public Affairs Education: Synthesizing Political Theory, Decision Making, and Responsibility” follows up on Newbold’s argument. He too contends that there are foundational legal and political theories at the root of the diverse fields and practices of public affairs. While one does not need to be a lawyer or go to law school to be an effective manager, there is no question that a solid knowledge of the law is essential. Szypszak argues for the creation of a special class on legal and legal affairs as part of the curriculum.

It is almost a cliché now to say that the events of 9/11 changed everything, including the field of public administration. If those events did not change everything, hurricane Katrina did. Terms such as *homeland security* and *emergency management* were seldom discussed in public, let alone in public affairs programs. Naim Kapucu’s “Developing Competency-Based Emergency Management

Degree Programs in Public Affairs and Administration” argues for the need to rethink our programs, focusing especially on the emerging role of emergency management programs. Professor Kapucu urges first recognition that emergency management is an emerging and important field within public administration and then commitment to developing ways to define and measure core competencies within this new area.

Budgeting and fiscal management are always important skills, but they are even more so in the fiscal and political climates faced by governments and managers now and in the future. Michael T. Peddle and Kurt Thurmaier discuss the necessary skills in these areas in “Reformulating and Refocusing a Fiscal Administration Curriculum.” They point out that while NASPAA has established core competencies in general for public affairs programs, they have not done so for particular subfields. They draw attention to what they think administrators in general versus fiscal specialists should know, offering recommendations as to how public affairs programs should address these dual needs.

Is there something unique about the skill sets required of individuals who work in the public sector versus those in the private and nonprofit sectors? Dennis R. Young and Mary Clark Grinsfelder, in “Social Entrepreneurship and the Financing of Third Sector Organizations,” confront this question. They look at the concept of entrepreneurship in the nonprofit sector, asking how it contrasts with similar concepts of entrepreneurship located in business and to a lesser degree in government. They contend that those working in the third sector require a broader mix of entrepreneurship skills, necessitating a more inclusive method of teaching these skills if a curriculum is to reflect what is demanded at work.

Public affairs programs in the United States increasingly are drawing upon international students. But these students clearly face culture shock and other issues as they seek to study and live in the United States. Many schools and public affairs programs commit resources to ensuring these international students become socially integrated and make a smooth transition into their programs. But what has been the result, and how does the integration affect student learning? Glenn A. Melnick, Gurvinder Kaur, and Joanna Yu, in “Social Integration and Academic Outcomes: The Case of an International Public Policy and Management Program,” research this important question. Their study of two cohorts of international students offers significant recommendations about what programs can do to enhance the learning experiences of their students both in the classroom and in social and other events.

Universities have missions and values. Often both are forgotten or overlooked once one moves down from 30,000 feet and gets to the level of programs and individual courses. Yet the latter should advance or reflect the former. In “Advancing and Assessing Public Service Values in Professional Programs: The Case of the Hauptmann School’s Master of Public Affairs Program,” Rebekkah Stuteville and Laurie N. DiPadova-Stocks present a terrific case study that looks

at how a university connects its institutional mission and values to what is taught in a public affairs program. While the study is of one school, the authors offer good advice on how other programs can reflect their university's values in what occurs in their public affairs classrooms.

William C. Adams offers another perspective on JPAA's yearlong celebration and investigation of the Fulbright experience. His "Teaching Public Management as a Fulbright Scholar in Malaysia" provides personal and professional observations on how the Fulbright affected him. He also offers great how-to observations on securing, planning, and benefiting from the experience.

Johnnie Woodard's book review of *Review of Public Administration: An Introduction*, by Marc Holzer and Richard W. Schweser, critically evaluates an important teaching text. He describes this volume as well suited for undergraduate students. The book is topical, covering most major areas of public administration, and faculty looking for a comprehensive text that introduces students to the field are well advised to consider it.

Overall, back to school is a fine metaphor for this issue. Every piece urges reconsideration of what we are doing in public affairs programs as well as offers suggestions for how to do it better. If public affairs programs are to survive for the future, their evolution is imperative. As educators we need to make the case not just in words explaining why we are relevant but also in actions used in training our students. If we fail to do that, we shall become as yellowed as the lecture notes of the stereotypical stodgy professors we all wanted not to emulate.

TRANSITIONS

Mark Kruger has been part of the *JPAA* for years, doing exemplary layout and production work for the journal. After this issue, he moves on as a creative director for Disney. Mark has done great work for us, and we wish him well in his next adventure.

— *David Schultz*
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