

# Journal of Public Affairs Education

**Editor's Midterm Report  
to the Executive Council of the  
Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration**

**September 26, 2022**

*Editors-in-Chief*

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This report from the co-Editors-in-Chief of the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* to the executive council of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration covers operations and editorial activities from January 1, 2022 through August 31, 2022. The report presents information about the journal's status and its influence on the field and details regarding the submission and processing of manuscripts and any relevant news from the editorial office. As appropriate, we have provided information from previous years for comparison. Finally, the report lists both the members of the editorial team and the editorial board for the reporting period.

### Importance and Impact

The *Journal of Public Affairs Education* strives to achieve a position as a leading journal in the field of public administration. To this end, we are undertaking efforts to improve the overall quality of the journal and our reputation throughout the discipline. Currently, the journal is not indexed in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). This means that the journal does not have an impact factor calculated for the journal. At our request, Taylor and Francis manually calculated the impact factor for the journal. The result of this calculation is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Impact Factor

Year	Articles Published	Citations	Impact Factor	Rank
2017	62	28	0.452*	44/48
2018	56	33	0.589*	44/47
2019	73	60	0.817*	40/48
2020	50	73	1.460*	39/47
2021	53	129	2.434*	30/49

\* Estimated

The impact factor gives the average number of citations in 2021 to articles published in the journal during 2020 and 2019. We are happy to report that our estimated 2021 impact factor for the journal is 2.434, a 66.7% increase over the estimated 2020 impact factor and a 313.2% increase over the 2018 impact factor. There were 49 public administration journals included in the SSCI. If *Journal of Public Affairs Education* was one of these journals, our estimated 2021 impact factor for the journal would place us as 30<sup>th</sup> of the journals.

Table 2. SCOPUS CiteScore

Year	Citable Documents	Citations	CiteScore	Rank
2018	23	27	0.9*	95/142
2019	110	191	1.7	69/157
2020	101	209	2.1	75/165
2021	97	311	3.2	62/190
2022	85	318	3.7**	

\* 2018 data is incomplete due to JPAE's accepted into the index in the fall of 2018

\*\* As of September 5, 2022

In the fall of 2018, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* was accepted for inclusion in Elsevier's SCOPUS Index, which produces an annual "CiteScore" for the journal. The CiteScore

is a measurement of a journal's impact, as measured by the ratio of citations to documents over a period of four years. The 2021 CiteScore, for example, counts the citations received in 2018-2021 and divides this by the number of publications published for the same years. Table 2 provides the journal's CiteScore, along with the journal's ranking among public administration journals indexed in SCOPUS.

The 2021 CiteScore for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is a 3.2. This means that the average article published in the journal was cited 3.2 times during the years considered for the calculation. This score also ranked the journal as 62<sup>nd</sup> out of the 190 public administration journals for whom scores can be calculated. This effectively places the journal in the 56% percentile of public administration outlets. In addition, the 2021 CiteScore experienced a growth of 52.4% over the 2020 score. As of September 5, 2022, the journal's 2022 CiteScore is estimated at 3.7, 15.6% higher than the 2021 score and 76.2% higher than the 2020 score.

Part of the growth in the impact factor and CiteScore can be attributed to improved quality of research being accepted for publication since we began our term. Due to page limits imposed by Taylor and Francis, we have to be more discerning in the manuscripts we accept for publication. As a result, we have begun turning some manuscripts away that would have likely been accepted under the previous editorial team. By increasing the number of manuscripts submitted to the journal and staying within the allotted page limit of the journal, we are forced to accept only the absolute best manuscripts submitted.

The improvement that we have seen in the impact factor and CiteScore is significant and reflects the journal's growing standing in the field. The continued improvement of the scores, however, is slow. As we continue to publish higher quality and impactful research, we expect that the scores will continue to increase. Also of importance is the role that social media plays with the journal. Previous research has suggested that scholars are more likely to become aware of and cite research that they see on their social media accounts. This highlights the continued importance of our social media editor and social media strategies.

### Submissions and Turnaround Time

The total number of manuscript submissions and the mean number of days from submission until the first editorial decision is made are provided in Table 3. The table provides the annual data beginning in 2011 when records in the Editorial Manager web service began and is extended to August 31, 2022, the closing date of this report. In 2021, the journal received 89 submissions. Thus, we have received 60 submissions as of the closing day in 2022. For comparison, in 2018, the journal also received 61 submissions by the closing date. In 2019, the journal had received 56 submissions. In 53 and 61 were received in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Table 3. Yearly Submissions and Mean Turnaround Time

Year	Number of Submissions	Mean Turnaround Time (Days)
2011	47	34
2012	48	43
2013	69	40
2014	94	79
2015	93	64
2016	52	51
2017	41	72
2018	96	26
2019	82	38
2020	101	32
2021	89	26
2022*	60	26

\* Represents submissions from January 1 through August 31

As Table 3 also shows, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* editorial team has been successful at reducing and maintaining a reduced turnaround time for the processing of manuscripts. Between 2011 and 2017, the journal experienced an average mean turnaround time of 55 days. A goal of our editorial team is to maintain a quick review process of 30 days or less. Since beginning our editorial term in 2018, we have maintained an average turnaround time of 30 days. Thus far in 2022, we are happy to report that we are currently maintaining a mean turnaround time for the first decision on manuscripts of 26 days. As the number of submissions received by the journal has increased, finding reviewers has become a challenge. Since the pandemic started, many potential reviewers are either not responding to requests to review or responding that they cannot review due to time constraints placed on them as a result of the pandemic. As a result, we have ensured that reviewing the journal's imposition is minimized, leaving us to take a more active approach to find adequate reviewers.

### Editorial Decisions

Table 4 provides the decision outcomes for initial submissions, first revisions, second revisions, and third revisions during the reporting period. As outlined in this table, from January 1 through August 31, 2022, we made decisions on 68 manuscripts.

Table 4. Editorial Decisions

Decision	Initial Submission (n=62)	First Revision (n=28)	Second Revision (n=12)	Third Revision (n=1)
Desk Reject	20	---	---	---
Reject	7	3	1	---
Revise and Resubmit	31	8	---	---
Accept	4	17	11	1

We have tried to take a preemptive approach with our desk rejects in making editorial decisions on manuscripts. To preserve a positive relationship with our reviewers, we have sought to desk reject those submissions that were inappropriate for the journal or unlikely to merge from review with a favorable decision. At the same time, we have seen a dramatic increase in the quality of manuscripts being submitted, leading to higher than expected positive decisions.

## Reviews and Referees

From January 1 through August 31, 2022, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 135 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until the receipt of the review is 24.8 (or 23.4 days from the day the referee accepts the invitation). The distribution of recommendations from the reviews we received is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency of Reviewer Recommendations

Recommendation	Percentage (N=135)
Reject	11.9%
Revise and Resubmit	49.7%
Accept with Minor Revisions	19.3%
Accept as is	19.3%

We believe that the frequency of the reviewer recommendations shows a skewed relationship. Upon taking over as editors in 2018, we realized that many reviewers recommended accepting all manuscripts sent to them regardless of the manuscript quality. At that time, we adjusted our assigning of manuscripts to include the use of the rating tool in which we can quickly indicate the quality of a review. This allows us to ensure manuscripts are sent to reviewers to provide a more accurate perspective of the manuscripts. Thus far in 2022, we have seen a recommendation of accept for 38.6% of manuscripts, compared to 42.7% in 2021, 35.3% in 2020, 33.9% in 2019, and 43.2% in 2018. We have also seen a decline in recommendations to reject manuscripts. This may reflect an improvement in the quality of manuscripts submitted to the journal and efforts to desk reject manuscripts that were unlikely to emerge from the review process; however, it may also be reflective of long-standing reviewer perspectives about the kind of research that appears in the journal.

While 135 reviewer reports were received, a total of 159 review requests were sent out during the reporting period. The distribution of responses to the invitation is provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Responses to Invitation to Review a Manuscript

Response	Percentage	Subtotal
Completed Review	77.3%	78.6%
Review in Progress	1.3%	
Declined Invitation	9.4%	21.3%
Never Responded	7.5%	
Review Not Submitted	4.4%	

Compared to other journals in the public administration, reviewers for the journal are performing at a high rate. For example, a mean review time of 26 days and a non-response rate of 7.5% of review requests are unusually low, and a completed review rate of 77.3% is unusually high, all of which are testaments to the willingness of reviewers to engage the journal and its mission.

### Circulation and Reads

We believe that it is essential and valuable also to monitor the circulation of the journal and what is being read within its pages. The number of article downloads that the journal experiences are provided in Table 7. In 2016 and 2017, the journal was accessible through JSTOR and the NASPAA website. Download information on articles through the NASPAA website is not available. However, these downloads are expected to have been minimal as all major indices at the time pointed towards access through JSTOR. Since the publishing relationship with Taylor and Francis began in 2018, we have seen a significant increase in the number of article downloads. Last year, 2021, has been our greatest year of downloads, with a total of 114,617 downloads. This year, however, the number of article downloads is expected to be lower. As of May 31, 2022, we had 33,738.

Table 7. Number of Article Downloads

Year	Taylor & Francis	JSTOR	Total
2016*		38,314	38,314
2017*		42,336	42,336
2018	9,906	45,383	55,289
2019	25,865	35,904	61,769
2020	41,232	53,553	94,785
2021	51,605	63,012	114,617
2022**	19,302	14,436	33,738

\* Represents years that predate journals publishing relationship with Taylor and Francis

\*\* Represents article downloads from January 1 through May 31

We also want to draw attention to the articles that our readership is turning to the most. Table 8 provides the five articles that have been downloaded the most in the last 12 months. Gerton and Mitchell wrote the most downloaded article as part of the National Academy of Public Administration's announcement of the grand challenges. Young and Wiley's article on preventing faculty sexual misconduct in public administration programs was the journal's second most read article. This article has also received the most attention of any article published by the journal on social media and in the news, with an Altmetric score of 140. It is worth noting that of all the most read articles, only Young and Wiley's is open access.

Table 8. Most Downloaded Articles in the Past 12 Months

Title	Author	Volume/Issue	Downloads
Grand Challenges in Public Administration: Implications for Public Service Education, Training, and Research	Teresa Gerton and Joseph P. Mitchell	25(4)	6,388
Erased: Why Faculty Sexual Misconduct is Prevalent and How We Could Prevent It	Sarah L. Young and Kimberly K. Wiley	27(3)	4,738
Stepping up to the Plate: Making Social Equity a Priority in Public Administration's Troubled Times	RaJade M. Berry-James et al.	27(1)	2,701

Financial Condition Analysis: A Key Tool in the MPA Curriculum	Craig S. Maher, Carol Ebdon, and John R. Bartle	26(1)	1,583
Work-Life Balance and Well-Being of Graduate Students	Juita-Elena (Wie) Yusuf, Marina Saitgalina, and Daivd W. Chapman	26(4)	1,211

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### **News, Opportunities, and Challenges**

In addition to the data reported above, we would like to highlight several pieces of news. As mentioned previously under “Importance and Impact,” the estimated impact factor for the journal is 2.434. If we were listed in SSCI, this would place the journal at 30<sup>th</sup> of 49 journals.

Historically, Clarivate, the company that manages the SSCI and ESCI indices, has only produced an impact factor for journals listed in the SSCI. Beginning in 2023, however, they will also be releasing impact factors for journals listed in ESCI. This is exciting news for the journal as it helps make the journal more accessible for international audiences to submit to. At the same time that we will begin receiving an impact factor, Clarivate has reduced the specificity of the measure, such that all impact factors released in 2023 will only include the measure to one place past the decimal point. We would also be remiss if we did not mention that the journal has faced an ongoing, long-term problem of getting reclassified. Currently, we are listed in ESCI as an education journal. We have been working to be reclassified as a public administration journal.

One area of concern with the journal is its case studies section. The section has been under the direction of Sean McCandless, who has done a fantastic job. The issue of concern is the growing competition for case studies in the field, leading to fewer case studies submitted to the journal. Several other journals have started publishing case studies of their own; however, the biggest competition for case studies at this point is coming internally from NASPAA. The relationship between NASPAA and the ICMA to produce a case studies book has drawn some writers away from the journal. Additionally, we believe that creating and emphasizing case studies with NASPAA’s Publicases will only make the challenge of finding case study writers more difficult. While the case studies book has had a noticeable impact on the number of case studies we have received, we do not yet know the extent to which Publicases will impact the journal’s section. Thus far, we have seen some authors express uncertainty on the difference between the two outlets. Our expectation, however, is that the internal competition for case studies being created by NASPAA will make the section unsustainable for the journal.

Another area of news that we would like to highlight relates to symposia. We frequently receive requests to editor special issues of the journal. Unfortunately, the number of requests far exceeds the number of issues we publish. To ensure that we continue publishing the highest quality of research, we have limited the number of symposia we publish to an average of one per year and focus only on those with the broadest reach. This year, we have a symposium on comparative and international public affairs education that is scheduled to be published in the December 2022 issue. A second is a symposium, which focuses on mentorship in higher education, is currently underway and is tentatively scheduled for December 2023. This symposium is being edited by Sara Rinfret, Sarah Young, and Bruce McDonald. We believe that both symposia will help further the journal’s reputation and support our mission to advance teaching and learning scholarship in public affairs programs.

An ongoing challenge for the journal has been ensuring that NASPAA members have and maintain access to the journal. We have received complaints from faculty at some institutions that they do not have access to the journal. We have discussed the program with Taylor and Francis. The problem appears to be twofold: that the publisher is not receiving updates on members who should have access when they are supposed to receive the updates and that some

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schools who are on the list of members that Taylor and Francis has are not receiving access. We are supportive of remaining with Taylor and Francis, however, we would recommend that NASPAA and the executive council address this issue with Taylor and Francis as it is having a negative impact on the journal.

Even with these challenges, the journal has made significant progress this past year and over our tenure. In particular, the journal has increased the quality of its articles, and this is reflected in the improvement in its mock impact factor scores and CiteScores. Additionally, due to the help of our wonderful reviewers, we have been able to get the time to first decision under 30 days, which is a significant achievement for a peer-reviewed journal that is growing in submission numbers.

As a last piece of news, our term of editors-in-chief for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* ends on December 31, 2023. We have enjoyed our experience with the journal; however, we believe that it is important for journals to have periodic changes in editorship in order to bring new life into the journal. We are excited to support the NASPAA executive council as they begin the process of searching for a new editor.

### **Editorial Team**

The current editorial team for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is:

#### **Editors-in-Chief**

Bruce D. McDonald – North Carolina State University  
William Hatcher – Augusta University

#### **International and Engagement Editor**

Kendra Stewart – College of Charleston

#### **Case Studies Editor**

Sean McCandless – University of Illinois Springfield

#### **Book Review Editors**

Rachel Emas – George Washington University  
Stephanie Dolamore – Gallaudet University

#### **Social Media Editor**

Megan Hatch – Cleveland State University

#### **Assistant Editor**

Michaela Abbott – North Carolina State University

### **Editorial Board**

Members of the editorial board for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* serve three-year, rotating terms that adhere to the calendar year with service beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup> in year one and ending on December 31<sup>st</sup> in year three. Each year, ten members of the editorial board end their service. To select new members, the editors-in-chief of the journal and NASAA's journal oversight committee each nominate five new members. Nominations are then subjected to confirmation by the other nominating group.

The current editorial team for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is:

Domonic Bearfield – George Washington University  
Erin Borry – University of Alabama at Birmingham  
Ian Elliott – Northumbria University  
Michelle Evans – University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Aimee L. Franklin – University of Oklahoma  
Tia Gaynor – University of Cincinnati  
Ting Gong – City University of Hong Kong  
Doug Goodman – University of Central Florida  
Mary E. Guy – University of Colorado Denver  
Jeremy Hall – University of Central Florida  
Renee Irvin – University of Oregon  
Myung H. Jin – Virginia Commonwealth University  
Meagan M. Jordan – Old Dominion University  
Jamie Levine Daniel – Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis  
Peng Liu – Renmin University of Hong Kong  
Jeannine Love – Roosevelt University  
Elaine Yi Lu – John Jay College  
Craig S. Maher – University of Nebraska Omaha  
Charles E. Menfield – Rutgers University  
Janine O'Flynn – University of Melbourne  
Rosemary O'Leary – University of Kansas  
Cristian Pliscoff – Universidad de Chile  
Gabriel Puron-Cid – Centro de Investigacion y Docencia  
Sara Rinfert – Northern Arizona University  
Jessica Sowa – University of Delaware  
Edmund C. Stazyk – SUNY University at Albany  
Ador Torneo – De La Salle University  
Sally Wallace – Georgia State University  
Sarah L. Young – Kennesaw State University  
Yahong Zhang – Rutgers University