Journal of Public Affairs Education

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

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Journal of Public Affairs Education
2020 Annual Report

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 activates from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. 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 editorial team members 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 journal's overall quality and our reputation throughout the discipline. Currently, the journal is not indexed in the Social Science Citation Index. 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

* Estimated
** The 2019 estimated impact factor is between 0.817 and 1.111

We are happy to report that our estimated 2019 impact factor for the journal is 0.817, a 38.71% increase over the estimated 2018 factor and an 80% increase over 2017. The estimated 2019 impact factor for the journal places us at 40th of 48 among public administration journals. (The estimated high end of our impact factor is a 1.111, which would be an 88.62% increase over the previous year's score and would rank the journal as 37 out of 48 public administration journals.) The impact factor gives the average number of citations in 2019 to articles published in the journal during 2018 and 2017. As 2017 was the first year of our editorial term, the 2019 data is our first opportunity to see and understand our work's impact on the journal and its position within the discipline.

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	207	2.0**	---

* 2018 data is incomplete due to JPAE's accepted into the index in the fall of 2018
** As of February 7, 2021

In the fall of 2018, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* was accepted for inclusion in Elsevier's SCOPUS Index. After collecting data on the journal's publications and citations for nearly two years, the journal is now receiving a "CiteScore." 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 2020 CiteScore, for example, counts the citations received in 2017-2020 and divides this by the number of publications published for the same years. Table 2 provides the journals CiteScore and the journal's ranking among public administration journals that are indexed in SCOPUS.

The estimated 2020 CiteScore for the Journal of Public Affairs Education is 2.0. The final 2020 CiteScore for the journal will not be released until summer 2021. This means that the average article published in the journal was cited 2.0 times during the years considered for the calculation. Our 2019 CiteScore was a 1.7, which gives the journal the rank of 69th out of the 157 public administration journals for whom scores can be calculated. This effectively places the journal in the top 56% of public administration outlets. Although a full year of data was not available for Elsevier to calculate the complete score for 2018, the journal received a 2018 score of 0.9.

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 Taylor and Francis's page limits, 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 journal's allotted page limit, we are forced to accept only the absolute best manuscripts submitted.

The process of improving the impact factor and CiteScore of a journal is slow but not insurmountable. This can be achieved by publishing higher quality research that appeals to a broader audience. It can also be increased by increasing the accessibility of the research published. Our transition to Taylor and Francis as the publisher of the journal helps increase the accessibility of the research we publish. 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 through the end of 2020. During the period, the journal has received an average of 72.3 submissions per calendar year. Since we started our first term as editors in 2018, we have seen an increase in the number of submissions, with 63.4 submissions per year before our term and 93 submissions per year since we began.

In 2020, the number of submissions was down for the first half of the year. We believe, however, the decline in submissions was related to the outbreak of COVID-19. Similar trends have also been noted by editors of other public administration journals as faculty struggle to balance teaching online, their research agendas, and managing households. Although the year ended with

the most submissions the journal has received in a single year, given the uncertainty of the pandemic's long-term impact on the academy, continued attention on the number of submissions needs to continue, and efforts to recruit outstanding manuscripts should be made.

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

* Represents submissions from January 1 through August 31

As Table 3 also shows, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* editorial team has successfully reduced and maintained a reduced turnaround time for the processing of manuscripts. Between 2011 and 2020, the journal experienced an average mean turnaround time of 47.9 days. In 2020, our average turnaround time for manuscripts was 32 days. While our editorial team's goal is to maintain a quick review process of 30 days or less, the recruitment of reviewers for manuscripts has been challenged by the current pandemic. Since March, 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. We have worked to ensure that the imposition of reviewing for the journal 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, during 2020, we made decisions on 97 manuscripts.

Table 4. Editorial Decisions

Decision	Initial Submission (n=97)	First Revision (n=22)	Second Revision (n=8)
Desk Reject	32	---	---
Reject	22	1	---
Revise and Resubmit	23	5	---
Accept	20	16	8

In making editorial decisions on manuscripts, we have tried to take a preemptive approach with our desk rejects. To preserve a positive relationship with our reviewers, we have sought to desk reject those inappropriate submissions 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 submitted, leading to higher than expected positive decisions.

Based on the editorial decisions made during 2020, the journal had a 43.6% acceptance rate. For comparison, the 2018 and 2019 rates were 43.8% and 36.4%, respectively. The journal had an average acceptance rate of 54% between 2012 and 2017. The highest acceptance rate was seen in 2017 at 75%, followed by 2016 with 59%. While our acceptance rate is still high, we are working to improve the journal's quality and reduce the acceptance rate. Too drastic of a change in the acceptance rate in any one-year risks disenfranchising our author-based. However, a progressive reduction in the acceptance rate over time allows for an understanding that the journal is moving forward and gives the community time to adjust to the new expectations.

While we anticipate the journal's acceptance rate will continue to decline over time, it is essential to note that our goal is never to reject a manuscript solely based on improving the statistics.

Reviews and Referees

Throughout 2020, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 156 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until the receipt of the review is 24.1 (or 22.6 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=156)
Reject	18.6%
Revise and Resubmit	46.1%
Accept with Minor Revisions	21.8%
Accept as is	13.5%

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 rating tool's use to 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. In 2020, we saw a recommendation of accept for 35.3% of manuscripts, compared to 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 156 reviewer reports were received, 238 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	69.3%	
Review in Progress	0.0%	
		69.3%
Declined Invitation	15.1%	
Never Responded	12.2%	
Review Not Submitted	3.4%	
		30.7%

Compared to other journals in the public administration, reviewers for the journal are performing at a high rate. A mean review time of 22.6 days and a non-response rate of 12.2% of review requests are unusually low. A completed review rate of 69.3% is unusually high, all of which are testaments to reviewers' willingness to engage the journal and its mission. One point of concern regarding reviewer behavior was a change in their lack of responses after accepting the review request. In previous years, the number of reviewers who failed to turn in a review was marginal; however, in 2020, they accounted for 3.4% of all review requests.

News

The *Journal of Public Affairs Education* underwent significant change in 2018. This includes editorial changes and publisher changes. In 2019 we began to emerge from that transition period and started considering the future of the journal. We started planning the journal's future by conducting a survey of public affairs faculty and administrators in the spring semester. The survey showed that while faculty found the journal useful in their teaching, many did not consider it a legitimate publication for tenure and promotion purposes. Tied with this was a belief by many people that the journal is not peer-reviewed. We believe that these perspectives can be overcome, but that perspectives do change slowly. As such, we need to continue improving the journal's quality and its reputation in the field.

As mentioned previously under "Importance and Impact," the journal's estimated impact factor is 0.817. If we were listed in SSCI, this would place the journal at 40th of 48 journals. (If we used the upper end of the estimated impact factor of 1.111, the journal would be ranked 37th out of 48 journals.) On the recommendation of Taylor and Francis, we are waiting to apply for inclusion in SSCI until our impact factor would place us in the top 60% of public administration journals. Journals have a limited number of times they can apply for SSCI, and our publisher reports their highest rates of success with applications when the journal can pass the 60% mark.

In December, we also made two changes to our editorial team. Jessica Terman from George Mason University stepped down as our book review editor. Additionally, J.W. Decker from NC State University stepped down as our editorial assistant. Both Jessica and Winn were valued

members of our team; unfortunately, Jessica had other administrative duties in her department, which constrained her ability to continue with the journal. Winn stepped down due to his upcoming graduation from the Ph.D. program. As reported in our annual report, Rachel Emas from Rutgers University and Stephanie Dolamore from Gallaudet University have stepped into the book review editor role. Michaela Abbott from NC State University has stepped into the role of editorial assistant. All three individuals began serving in their roles effective January 1, 2021.

One last area of news that we would like to highlight relates to symposia. We frequently receive requests to editor special issues of the journal. 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. In May 2020, we published a symposium on MPA programs in Asia. The symposium was guest-edited by Myung Jin from Virginia Commonwealth University. An additional symposium that focused on work-life balance in the academy was published in December 2020. The journal's current editorial team edited this issue. Two additional symposia are in the works. The first is a symposium on ethics education in public administration that Jonathan West is editing from the University of Miami. The publication for this issue is tentatively scheduled for December 2021. The second is a symposium on international and comparative public administration, which is being edited by the journal's current editorial team. The publication of the symposium is tentatively scheduled for December 2022. 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.

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 – Rutgers 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 in year one and ending on December 31 in year three. Each year, ten members of the editorial board end their service. The editors-in-chief of the journal and NASAA's journal oversight committee each nominate five new members to select 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:

We want to express our appreciation to the editorial board members whose term ended in 2020. These members are:

Josafina Bruni-Celli – Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administracion
Rex Facer – Brigham Young University
Andrew Graham – Queen's University
Donald Kettl – University of Texas at Austin
Jodi Sandfort – University of Minnesota
Lan Xue – Tsinghua University