

# Journal of Public Affairs Education

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

**January 20, 2019**

*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, 2018 through December 31, 2018. The report presents information about the status of the journal and its influence on the field, as well as 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. This means that the journal does not have an impact factor calculated for the journal. At our request, earlier this year Taylor and Francis manually calculated the impact factor for the journal.

Unfortunately, this score is significantly lower than we had expected. The estimated 2017 impact factor for the journal places us at 44<sup>th</sup> of 48 among public administration journals. The impact factor gives the average number of citations in 2017 to articles published in the journal during 2016 and 2015. The 2017 impact factor was 0.452. The process of improving the impact factor of a journal is slow, but not insurmountable. This can be achieved by publishing higher quality of 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 a publisher of the journal assists in increasing the accessibility of the research we publish. Not only are all articles now available in one single, easy to search location, but Taylor and Francis is also assisting in having the journal included in more indices to expand accessibility further

Regarding publishing better quality of research, the standards for acceptance of publication in the journal had slipped in recent years, with a 54% percent average acceptance rate between 2012 and 2017. The highest acceptance rate was seen in 2017 at a rate of 75%, followed by 2016 with 59%. 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. Over time, this should help to increase the impact factor.

Based on conversations with the journals production editor at Taylor and Francis, a key to improving the citation count of the journal is to focus on accepting manuscripts that have the broadest appeal. This includes an appeal to as many people within the public affairs discipline and higher education research. We have aimed to address the issue of maximizing the broad appeal by focusing on which manuscripts are accepted for publication. This has led to some manuscripts being rejected that might have been accepted under past editors but also maximizes

the utility of the journal to the field. At the same time, Taylor and Francis is helping to build awareness of the journal by increased marketing of the journal and making select articles from new issues open access for a limited time.

### **Submissions and Turnaround Time**

The total number of manuscript submissions and the mean number of days from submission until an editorial submission is made are provided in Table 1. 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 2018. Although the data shows a significant decline in submissions in recent years, it also shows the beginning of a resurgence for 2018. During, 96 manuscripts were submitted to the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*. This rate of submissions represents a 134.1% increase over the total number of submissions received in 2017 and is the most submissions that the journal has received in a single year in the dataset. Although the growth in submissions over the previous year is important, it is important to consider that this growth may not be permanent and that continued promotion of the journal is still needed.

Table 1: Yearly Submissions and Mean Turnaround Times

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

As Table 1 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. Thus far in 2018, the mean turnaround time is 26 days, 46 days shorter than the review time in 2017 and 29 days shorter than the average mean time from 2011 through 2017. During 2018 only a small number of manuscripts have languished in wait for reviewer comments. In such instances we have contacted the reviewers to ensure their continued participation and, when necessary, made an editorial decision based upon the available information rather than trying to solicit an additional reviewer.

### **Editorial Decisions**

Table 2 provides the decision outcomes for initial submissions, first revisions and second revisions during the reporting period. As outlined in this table, during 2018 we made decisions on 98 manuscripts.

Table 2: Editorial Decisions

Decision	Initial Submission (n=98)	First Revision (n=31)	Second Revision (n=5)
Desk Reject	28	---	---
Reject	24	6	---
Revise and Resubmit	32	1	---
Accept	14	24	5

Most first revision and second revision manuscripts were submissions that the journal received under the previous editorship. In making decisions on these manuscripts in subsequent rounds, we tried to adhere to the comments and guidance given to the authors from the old editors and the reviewers they selected.

Based on the editorial decisions made during 2018, the journal had a 43.8% acceptance rate. As noted earlier, the journal had an average acceptance rate of 54% between 2012 and 2017. The highest acceptance rate was seen in 2017 at a rate of 75%, followed by 2016 with 59%. While our acceptance rate is still high, we are working to progressively improve the quality of the journal and reduce the acceptance rate. Too drastic of a change in the acceptance rate in any one year risks disenfranchising our author-based. A progressive reduction in the acceptance rate over time, however, 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 acceptance rate of the journal will continue to decline over time, it is important to note that our goal is to never reject a manuscript solely on the basis of improving the statistics.

### **Reviews and Referees**

Throughout 2018, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 197 referee reports. The majority of these reports (191) were requested after the first of the year, with 6 of the reports having been requested in the 2017 calendar year.

The mean number of days from the invitation to review until the receipt of the review is 22.3 (or 19.8 days from the day the referee accepts the invitation). The distribution of recommendations from the reviews we received is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of Reviewer Recommendations

Recommendation	Percentage (N=197)
Reject	17.3%
Revise and Resubmit	39.5%
Accept with Minor Revisions	25.4%
Accept as is	17.8%

We believe that the frequency of the reviewer recommendations shows a skewed relationship. Early in the year, we realized that many reviewers recommended accepting all manuscripts sent to them regardless of the manuscript quality. We have 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 that can provide a more accurate perspective of the manuscripts.

While 197 reviewer reports were received, during the reporting period a total of 268 review requests were sent out. The distribution of responses to the invitation is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Responses to Invitation to Review a Manuscript

Response	Percentage	Subtotal
Completed Review	72.1%	
Review in Progress	2.2%	
		74.3%
Declined Invitation	11.2%	
Never Responded	14.5%	
		25.7%

In comparison to other journals in the social sciences, a non-response rate of 14.5% of review requests is unusually high. As we work to improve the quality of the journal and the quality of the reviews that we receive, we believe that this rate will decline.

## News

There have been several important pieces of news related to the journal that is worthy of noting here. First and foremost is the transition of the journal from being self-published by NASPAA to being published by Taylor and Francis. According to the terms NASPAA reached with the new publisher, the journal is still owned by NASPAA and managed by the editorial team it selects; however, the day to day responsibility of producing the journal is conducted by Taylor and Francis. The arrangement to transition to Taylor and Francis dates to the previous editorial team. The timeline for making the transition coincided with the start of our editorial term earlier this year.

The transition to Taylor and Francis was rocky as issues such as access to the journal for member schools and adding the archive of the journal to the Taylor and Francis system had to be worked out. In regards to adding back copies of the journal to the system, we were able to obtain digital copies of volumes 10 through 23 from NASPAA. These were processed and made available on the website in April of this year. Volumes 1 through 9 were a slower process as we needed to obtain hard copies of each issue. Hard copies of many issues were obtained from NASPAA. Jim Perry and Ed Jennings also provided copies of what missing issues they had. The remaining issues were found for sale on eBay and purchased. We are happy to announce that as of August 28<sup>th</sup> all back issues of the journal appear on the Taylor and Francis website.

Second, we have worked to improve the indexing of the journal. In October, we were accepted into Elsevier's SCOPUS Index. This listing will help encourage an international authorship from faculty at NASPAA member schools. We also began the necessary preparation for our application to Clarivate Analytics for the Emerging Journals Citation Index (ESCI, the precursor for inclusion in the Social Science Citation Index [SSCI]). During the preparation of our application, it was discovered that the journal already belonged to the index. We are currently working with Taylor and Francis to get the publication records of the journal updated in ESCI. We anticipate that the updating of our ESCI records to be complete by summer.

As mentioned previously under "Importance and Impact," the estimated impact factor for the journal is 0.347. If we were listed in SSCI, this would place the journal at 44<sup>th</sup> 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.

To improve the quality of the journal, we have undertaken several outreach opportunities. These include hosting an editor's panel at the 2018 Midwest Public Affairs Conference and the 2018 Southeastern Conference of Public Administration. These panels provide audience members the opportunity to discuss the mission of the journal, talk about the types of manuscripts we are seeking, and discuss our publication and review process. We have also worked to improve our engagement with a broader group of researchers through two symposia. The first is a symposium with the Academic Women in PA organization. The symposium will be published in Vol. 25, Issue 2, and features five articles addressing a range of important issues for the field by both new and seasoned scholars. The second is a symposium on public administration programs in Asia. This symposium is being led by Myung Jin from Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Jin is also a new member of our editorial board. Initial proposals of manuscripts for the issue were reviewed in October. Manuscripts invited for submission are due this spring. After undergoing the review process, we anticipate that the symposium will be published in Vol. 26, Issue 2.

In November, we also made a change to our editorial team. Lori Brainard stepped down as our case studies editor. Stephen Kleinschmit from the University of Illinois at Chicago has stepped into the role.

## **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**

Stephen Kleinschmit – University of Illinois at Chicago

### **Book Review Editor**

Jessica Terman – George Mason University

### **Social Media Editor**

Alicia Schatteman – Northern Illinois University

### ***Assistant Editor***

J.W. Decker – 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.

Under the previous editors, the size of the editorial board fluctuated. In 2017, the board consisted of 36 members, only 16 of whom had a term extending into 2018 or 2019. To achieve a long-term balance of the editorial board, only ten new members were nominated. This produced an editorial board of 26 members for 2018, six of whom will end their service at the end of the year. Following our ten members per year process, a consistent board size of 30 members will be maintained effective January 1, 2019.

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

Mohamad G. Alkadry – University of Connecticut  
Shelly Arsneault – California State University, Fullerton  
Peter Bergerson – Florida Gulf Coast University  
Espiridion Borrego – University of Texas Pan American  
Josafina Bruni-Celli – Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administracion  
DeLysa Burnier – Ohio University  
Rex Facer – Brigham Young University  
Susan Gooden – Virginia Commonwealth University  
Andrew Graham – Queen's University  
Jeremy Hall – University of Central Florida  
Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore – Michigan State University  
Megan Jordan – Old Dominion University  
J. Edward Kellough – University of Georgia  
Donald Kettl – University of Texas at Austin  
John J. Kiefer – University of New Orleans  
William Earle Klay – Florida State University  
Kristina Lambright – Binghamton University  
Laura Langbein – American University  
Scott Lazenby – Lake Oswego, Oregon  
Craig S. Maher – University of Nebraska Omaha  
Rosemary O'Leary – University of Kansas  
Jodi Sandfort – University of Minnesota  
Robert A. Schuhmann – University of Wyoming  
Patricia Shields – Texas State University  
Jessica Sowa – University of Baltimore  
Lan Xue – Tsinghua University

*Journal of Public Affairs Education*  
2018 Annual Report

We would like to express our appreciation to the members of the editorial board whose term ended in 2018. These members are:

Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore – Michigan State University  
Meagan Jordan – Old Dominion University  
J. Edward Kellough – University of Georgia  
Kristina Lambright – Binghamton University  
Laura Langbein – American University  
Scott Lazenby – Lake Oswego, Oregon

The new members of the editorial board who will begin their term in 2019 are:

William Brown – Texas A&M University  
Carol Ebdon – University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Kathleen Hale – Auburn University  
Myung H. Jin – Virginia Commonwealth University  
Jason Jolley – Ohio University  
Elaine Yi Lu – John Jay College  
Michael D. Siciliano – University of Illinois at Chicago  
Katherine Willoughby – University of Georgia  
Clayton Wukich – Cleveland State University  
Jong-Il You – KDI School of Public Policy and Management