

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 28, 2018

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 August 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 44th 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.

Lastly, Taylor and Francis will be working with us to improve the overall impact factor of the journal. A representative from the publisher has volunteered their time to meet with us during our editorial board meeting at the NASPAA conference. The topic of conversation is how we can improve our citation count and how the editorial board can provide assistance in this process.

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. The table provides the annual data beginning in 2011, when records in the Editorial Manager web service began and is extended to August 31, 2018, the closing date of this report. Although the data shows a significant decline in submissions in recent years, it also shows the beginning of a resurgence for 2018. During the first eight months of 2018, 61 manuscripts were submitted to the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*. This rate of submissions represents a 49% increase over the total number of submissions received in 2017. Although the growth in submissions over the previous year is important, it is still below the 2014 record of 94; however, projections based on the number of submissions received so far this year suggest that the 2018 submissions should be close to the old pattern.

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*	61	24

* Represents submissions from January 1 through August 31

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 24 days, 48 days shorter than the review time in 2017 and 33 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, from January 1 through August 31, 2018, we made decisions on 76 manuscripts.

Table 2: Editorial Decisions

Decision	Initial Submission (n=44)	First Revision (n=28)	Second Revision (n=4)
Desk Reject	11	---	---
Reject	17	1	---
Revise and Resubmit	16	1	---
Accept	---	26	4

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.

Reviews and Referees

From January 1 through August 31, 2018, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 97 referee reports. The majority of these reports (91) 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 20.9 (or 18.2 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=91)
Reject	19.6%
Revise and Resubmit	40.2%
Accept with Minor Revisions	20.6%
Accept as is	19.6%

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 97 reviewer reports were received, during the reporting period a total of 177 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	51.4%	
Review in Progress	22.0%	
		73.4%
Declined Invitation	10.2%	
Never Responded	16.4%	
		26.6%

In comparison to other journals in the social sciences, a non-response rate of 16.4% 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 has been 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 28th 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 May we applied Scopus. Anticipated review time for the application is currently 18 months from submission, with an estimated November 2019 decision. We were also in the preparation of applying Clarivate Analytics for the Emerging Journals Citation Index (ESCI, the precursor for inclusion in the Social Science Citation Index [SSCI]); however, in 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. 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 44th 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 Academia Women in PA organization. The second is a symposium on public administration programs in Asia. Both symposia are currently in the works and will go to print in 2019. Thus far, the engagement with researchers from both communities, many of whom have had little to no interaction with the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* in the past, has been positive.

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

Lori Brainard – George Washington University

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 1st in year one and ending on December 31st 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
Meagan 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