

# 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 30, 2020**

*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, 2020 through August 31, 2020. 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, 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 40<sup>th</sup> 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 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 the impact of our work 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	91	157	1.7**	---

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

\*\* As of September 7, 2020

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 2019 CiteScore, for example, counts the citations received in 2016-2019 and divides this by the number of publications published for the same years. Table 2 provides the journals CiteScore, along with the ranking of the journal among public administration journals that are indexed in SCOPUS.

The 2019 CiteScore for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is a 1.7. This means that the average article published in the journal during the was cited 1.7 times during the years considered for the calculation. This score also ranked the journal as 69<sup>th</sup> 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 the improvement in the 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 process of improving the impact factor and CiteScore 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 the publisher of the journal assists in increasing 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 is 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, 2020, the closing date of this report. During the period, the journal has received an average of 67.5 submissions per calendar year. Both 2018 and 2019 show significant growth over the average in terms of the number of submissions, 96 and 82 respectfully. During 2020, the number of submissions is down. For comparison, in 2018 the journal received 61 submissions by the closing date. In 2019, the journal had received 56 submissions. We believe, however, the decline in submissions is related to the outbreak of COVID-19. Before the onset of the pandemic in March, the submission rate for 2020 was exceeding both 2018 and 2019 rates. Similar trends have also been noted by editors of other journals in public administration as faculty struggle to balance teaching online, their research agendas, and managing households. Given the uncertainty of the long-term impact of the pandemic 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*	53	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 2020, the journal experienced an average mean turnaround time of 40 days. A goal of our editorial team is to maintain a quick review process of 30 days or less. We are happy to report that we are currently maintaining a mean turnaround time for the first decision on manuscripts of 26 days. As with the number of submissions, 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 are not able to 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, from January 1 through August 31, 2020, we made decisions on 57 manuscripts.

Table 4. Editorial Decisions

Decision	Initial Submission (n=57)	First Revision (n=14)	Second Revision (n=5)
Desk Reject	15	---	---
Reject	11	1	---
Revise and Resubmit	17	4	---
Accept	14	9	5

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 submissions that were inappropriate for the journal or unlikely to merge from review with a positive 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, 2020, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 102 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until the receipt of the review is 23.8 (or 22.3 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=102)
Reject	18.9%
Revise and Resubmit	43.2%
Accept with Minor Revisions	22.5%
Accept as is	15.3%

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 that can provide a more accurate perspective of the manuscripts. Thus far in 2020, we have seen a recommendation of accept for 37.8% 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 be reflective of 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 102 reviewer reports were received, during the reporting period a total of 153 review requests were sent out. 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	66.7%	70.0%
Review in Progress	3.3%	
Declined Invitation	13.7%	30.1%
Never Responded	13.1%	
Review Not Submitted	3.3%	

In comparison to other journals in the public administration, reviewers for the journal are performing at a high rate. A mean review time of 23.8 days and a non-response rate of 13.1% of review requests are unusually low and a completed review rate of 66.7% is unusually high, all of which are testaments to the willingness of reviewers to engage the journal and its mission.

## 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 began our planning of the future of the journal 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 the purposes of tenure and promotion. 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 working on improving the quality of the journal and its reputation in the field.

As mentioned previously under “Importance and Impact,” the estimated impact factor for the journal is 0.817. If we were listed in SSCI, this would place the journal at 40<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.

In December, we also made two changes to our editorial team. Stephen Kleinschmit from the University of Illinois at Chicago stepped down as our case studies editor. Alicia Schatteman from Northern Illinois University stepped down as our social media editor. Both Stephen and Alicia were valued members of our team; unfortunately, both had other administrative duties in their departments which constrained their ability to continue with the journal. As reported in our annual report, Megan Hatch from Cleveland State University has stepped into the role of social media editor for the journal effective January 1, 2020. Her work in supporting the journal has been outstanding and she is directly responsible for the uptick in social media engagement with the journal and the articles we publish. Additionally, effective April 1, 2020, Sean McCandless from the University of Illinois Springfield has taken on the role of case study editor. In the few short months since he has taken over the role, Sean has recruited several submissions to the case study section, the first of which is currently in production for publication. Several additional case studies are in the second round of review and are looking promising.

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. Two additional symposia are in the works. The first is an issue centering on work-life balance in the academy that will be published in December 2020. This issue is being edited by the journal's current editing team. The second is a symposium on ethics education in public administration that is being edited by Jonathan West from the University of Miami. The publication for this issue is tentatively scheduled for December 2021. We believe that both symposia will help further the reputation of the journal and support our mission to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning 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 Editor**

Jessica Terman – George Mason University

### **Social Media Editor**

Megan Hatch – Cleveland State 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.

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

Shelly Arsneault – California State University, Fullerton  
William Brown – Texas A&M University  
Josafina Bruni-Celli – Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administracion  
Carol Ebdon – University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Rex Facer – Brigham Young University  
Aimee L. Franklin – University of Oklahoma  
Ting Gong – City University of Hong Kong  
Doug Goodman – University of Central Florida  
Andrew Graham – Queen's University  
Mary Guy – University of Colorado Denver  
Kathleen Hale – Auburn University  
Jeremy Hall – University of Central Florida  
Renee Irvin – University of Oregon  
Myung H. Jin – Virginia Commonwealth University  
Jason Jolley – Ohio University  
Meagan M. Jordan – Old Dominion University  
Donald Kettl – University of Texas at Austin  
Peng Liu – Renmin University of Hong Kong  
Elaine Yi Lu – John Jay College  
Craig S. Maher – University of Nebraska Omaha  
Rosemary O'Leary – University of Kansas  
Jodi Sandfort – University of Minnesota  
Michael D. Siciliano – University of Illinois at Chicago  
Jessica Sowa – University of Baltimore  
Edmund C. Stazyk – SUNY University at Albany  
Katherine Willoughby – University of Georgia  
Clayton Wukich – Cleveland State University  
Lan Xue – Tsinghua University  
Jong-Il You – KDI School of Public Policy and Management  
Yahong Zhang – Rutgers University