

# 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 27, 2021**

*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, 2021 through August 31, 2021. 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. 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 | 73                 | 50        | 1.460*        | 39/47 |

\* Estimated

We are happy to report that our estimated 2020 impact factor for the journal is 1.460, a 78.7% increase over the estimated 2019 impact factor and a 148% increase over the 2018 impact factor. The estimated 2020 impact factor for the journal places us at 39<sup>th</sup> of 47 among public administration journals. The impact factor gives the average number of citations in 2020 to articles published in the journal during 2019 and 2018.

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 | 84                | 247       | 2.9**     | ---    |

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

\*\* As of September 4, 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 journal's CiteScore, along with the journal's ranking among public administration journals indexed in SCOPUS.

The 2020 CiteScore for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is a 2.1. This means that the average article published in the journal was cited 2.1 times during the years considered for the calculation. This score also ranked the journal as 75<sup>th</sup> out of the 165 public administration journals for whom scores can be calculated. This effectively places the journal in the top 54% of public administration outlets. In addition, the 2020 CiteScore experienced a growth of 23.5% over the 2019 score. As of September 4, 2021, the journal's 2021 CiteScore is estimated at 2.9, 38.1% higher than the 2020 score and 70.6% higher than the 2019 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, 2021, the closing date of this report. In 2020, the journal received a record of 101 submissions. Thus, we have received 61 submissions as of the closing day in 2021. For comparison, in 2018, the journal also received 61 submissions by the closing date. In 2019, the journal had received 56 submissions, and in 2020 the journal received 53 submissions.

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* | 61                    | 23                          |

\* 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 2021, the journal experienced an average mean turnaround time of 46 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 2021, we are happy to report that we are currently maintaining a mean turnaround time for the first decision on manuscripts of 23 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, 2021, we made decisions on 68 manuscripts.

Table 4. Editorial Decisions

| Decision            | Initial Submission<br>(n=68) | First Revision<br>(n=23) | Second Revision<br>(n=13) |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Desk Reject         | 25                           | ---                      | ---                       |
| Reject              | 14                           | 3                        | ---                       |
| Revise and Resubmit | 26                           | 14                       | 1                         |
| Accept              | 3                            | 6                        | 12                        |

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, 2021, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 115 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until the receipt of the review is 24.4 (or 23.1 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<br>(N=115) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Reject                      | 15.7%                 |
| Revise and Resubmit         | 44.4%                 |
| Accept with Minor Revisions | 22.6%                 |
| Accept as is                | 17.4%                 |

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 2021, we have seen a recommendation of accept for 40% of manuscripts, compared to 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 115 reviewer reports were received, a total of 139 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     | 71.2%      | 74.0%    |
| Review in Progress   | 2.8%       |          |
| Declined Invitation  | 10.8%      | 25.9%    |
| Never Responded      | 12.9%      |          |
| Review Not Submitted | 2.2%       |          |

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 23 days and a non-response rate of 12.9% of review requests are unusually low, and a completed review rate of 74% 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. Table 7 provides the total number of institutions with access to the journal. Access includes NASPAA member programs that have access as part of their NASPAA membership and institutions that receive access as part of a subscription or subscription package. In 2018, when the journal transitioned to Taylor and Francis, only 172 institutions had access to the journal. In 2020, 2,763 programs had access. This is a 1,506.4% increase in accessibility to the journal.

Table 7. Number of Institutions with Access

| Year | Number |
|------|--------|
| 2018 | 172    |
| 2019 | 2,603  |
| 2020 | 2,763  |

The number of article downloads that the journal experiences are provided in Table 8. 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, 2020, has been our greatest year of downloads, with a total of 94,784 downloads. We do, however, expect to exceed that this year. As of August 31, 2021, we had 75,436 downloads. As a point of comparison, this is a 35% increase over downloads by the same date last year.

Table 8. 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** | 28,554           | 46,882 | 75,436 |

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

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

We also want to draw attention to the articles that our readership is turning to the most. Table 9 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 117. It is worth noting that of all the most read articles, only Young and Wiley’s is open access.

Table 9. 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)        | 8,964     |
| Erased: Why Faculty Sexual Misconduct is Prevalent and How We Could Prevent It                               | Sarah L. Young and Kimberly K. Wiley            | 27(3)        | 4,667     |
| Stepping up to the Plate: Making Social Equity a Priority in Public Administration's Troubled Times          | RaJade M. Berry-James et al.                    | 27(1)        | 3,107     |
| Financial Condition Analysis: A Key Tool in the MPA Curriculum   | Craig S. Maher, Carol Ebdon, and John R. Bartle | 26(1)        | 1,154     |
| A Tribute to H. George Frederickson – One of Public Administration's Modern-Day Founding Fathers             | Randall S. Davis et al.                         | 26(3)        | 974       |

## News

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 1.460. If we were listed in SSCI, this would place the journal at 39<sup>th</sup> of 47 journals. On the recommendation of Taylor and Francis, we are waiting to apply for inclusion in SSCI until our impact factor places 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.

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. Our expectation, however, is that the internal competition for case studies being created by NASPAA will make the section unsustainable for the journal.

Last fall, we began a discussion with the editors of the journal *Teaching Public Administration* about the broader recognition of scholars who have made significant contributions towards public administration education and research into public administration education. The decision was to establish a new award that would be jointly presented by the two journals, titled as the Joint Journal of Public Affairs Education and Teaching Public Administration Award for Excellence in Public Administration Education. Both editorial teams decide on the recipient. The presentation of the award will rotate between NASPAA’s conference in odd years and the Joint University Council’s Public Administration Committee’s annual conference in the UK in even years. The award intends to encourage research into public administration education further. We are excited to announce that the first winner of the award is Mary Guy from the University of Colorado Denver.

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. 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 ethics education scheduled to be published in the December 2021 issue. The symposium is being edited by Jonathan West from the University of Miami. The second is a symposium on international and comparative public administration, 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<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 – Rutgers University  
Erin Borry – University of Alabama at Birmingham  
William Brown – Texas A&M University  
Carol Ebdon – University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Aimee L. Franklin – University of Oklahoma  
Ting Gong – City University of Hong Kong  
Doug Goodman – University of Central Florida  
Mary E. Guy – University of Colorado Denver  
Kathleen Hale – Auburn University  
Jeremy Hall – University of Central Florida  
Renee Irvin – University of Oregon

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Myung H. Jin – Virginia Commonwealth University  
Jason Jolley – Ohio University  
Meagan M. Jordan – Old Dominion University  
Jamie Levine Daniel – Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis  
Peng Liu – Renmin University of Hong Kong  
Elaine Yi Lu – John Jay College  
Craig S. Maher – University of Nebraska Omaha  
Janine O’Flynn – University of Melbourne  
Rosemary O’Leary – University of Kansas  
Cristian Pliscoff – Universidad de Chile  
Michael D. Siciliano – University of Illinois at Chicago  
Jessica Sowa – University of Baltimore  
Edmund C. Stazyk – SUNY University at Albany  
Ador Torneo – De La Salle University  
Sally Wallace – Georgia State University  
Katherine Willoughby – University of Georgia  
Clayton Wukich – Cleveland State University  
Jong-Il You – KDI School of Public Policy and Management  
Yahong Zhang – Rutgers University