

Reflections On Founding *JPAE*: Fifteen Years After

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What now is the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* was founded in 1994 as the *Journal of Public Administration Education*, and the first issue was published in May, 1995. Although it was only 15 years ago, much has changed since then — when we all were just learning how to use the Internet and E-mail, no one had a cell phone, the U.S. was the “world’s only superpower,” and we were just beginning to “reinvent” government. The journal was the brainchild of George Frederickson at the University of Kansas and Frank Marini at the University of Akron. They recognized the lack of a published resource for teaching in the field of public affairs, and wanted to do something about providing a destination for scholarly work on educational issues in public administration.

The first three years of the journal’s operation was as a partnership between public administration programs at the University of Akron and the University of Kansas, plus an affiliation with the American Society of Public Administration’s (ASPA’s) section on public administration education (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration sponsorship did not begin until 1998). With financial support from the University of Kansas, the public administration program at the University of Akron took on editorial responsibilities for the journal. Marini served as editor-in-chief, I (Dan Balfour) was the managing editor, Cheryl Simrell King (University of Akron) was the Issues Editor, and Francois Doamekpor (University of Akron) served as the book review editor.

Starting a new journal was an exciting project, yet it was by no means certain that a publication dedicated to this fairly narrow domain would survive over time. While the editorial team was confident that the hundreds of public administration programs in the U.S. and abroad would welcome the journal as a teaching resource, no one really knew whether there would be enough submissions of acceptable quality to sustain it as a viable enterprise. In other words, although there was a demand for the journal, there was little confidence that the scholarly community would supply the necessary articles, and there was

concern about whether retention and promotion committees would recognize a publication dedicated to public affairs education. As a new journal that was run by junior faculty members at a mid-tier university, and with no reputation other than the good names of its founding editors (who were able to recruit some prominent figures to the editorial board), the *Journal of Public Administration Education* was not necessarily where scholars would look to publish their work, even if it focused on this topic. Hope and skepticism ran high as the editorial team undertook the task of producing the first few issues.

Fortunately for the journal (and for our field), a number of excellent scholars stepped up to the plate in those early days and submitted articles and essays that helped it get off the ground and establish credibility. With no backlog of articles to work from, the Special Issues section played an important role in that 1995 debut year, making the journal of immediate value to its readership. Those first two Special Issues sections included (a) one on doctoral education in public administration, and (b) one on MPA program rankings. The debut section featured essays by Astrid Merget (1995), Ross Clayton (1995), and Guy Adams and Jay White (1995). The second one featured essays by James Perry (1995), C.E. Teasley (1995), and Curtis Ventriss (1995). They helped put *JPAE* on the map and enabled it to stand the test of time as a source of insightful discussions about important issues in the field. The first issue of the *Journal of Public Administration Education* only had three peer-reviewed articles, by Leanna Holmer and Guy Adams (1995), Richard Box (1995), and Pamela Leland (1995). With their combination of relevance and rigor, these high-quality articles set the bar for future submissions.

The five years that I spent as managing editor of *JPAE* gave me a lasting appreciation for the hard work that editors put into producing journals that chronicle the history and development of our profession and field of practice, and for the importance of timely reviews (!). Public administration and the world it operates in are very different now than they were when *JPAE* was launched. In this 21st century of challenge and opportunity, the need for this journal is greater than ever, as we strive to make public affairs relevant to new generations of scholars, students, and public servants.

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