

New Associate Editor Joins *JCES* Team, Looks Forward to Helping Journal Continue “to Grow, Inform, and Inspire”



I still remember the time I held in my hands the first journal article that had I co-authored. It was 1988 and I was a senior in college—the paper was based on work I had completed during a six-month, full-time research internship at

Oak Ridge National Laboratory the previous year. I remember feeling very proud because the paper represented the culmination of a ton of effort, starting with executing a set of somewhat tedious experiments (they didn't start out being tedious, but between making mistakes and verification experiments, they got tedious), followed by thoughtful analysis, and then writing up the results in the form of a manuscript. My research paper went through at least ten drafts—the back and forth writing and critiquing process between me and my research mentor was my first exposure to writing toward a standard of excellence instead of “the good old college try,” which had been sufficient to that point in my career. The paper had to be strong enough for submission to the *Biochemical Journal*, which my mentor informed me was “a good journal,” whatever that meant—I had no scale against which to judge, so I took his word for it.

As I reflect on that moment 26 years and many publications later, I now have a strong grasp of what makes a journal article good. A good journal article tells a detailed story that no one has told before—it must be unique to be published. A good article builds on existing literature in some way. It provides context so that a reader can situate the work within a broad framework. And it provides perspective, and a jumping off point for future thought.

I also have a strong grasp of what makes a journal good. There are many tools today to judge the quality of journals that were not available in 1988. Generally, the lower the acceptance rate of a journal, the better quality it is. Another metric often used in STEM¹ fields is the impact factor of a journal, the average number of citations per year for the articles published in that particular journal²—so a journal with an impact factor of less than one is considered lower quality than a journal like *Science*, which has an impact factor of 33.6. As an engineer, I place great stock in numbers. However, I also heed Einstein's observation, “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.” As applied to the quality of journals, I believe that acceptance rates and impact factors can give you some information, but not even close to all of it. A good journal has a clear mission, a committed editorial staff, and a reasonable time from submission to publication. It fills a niche by adding critical literature to the field. When I read articles in a good journal, I feel informed, inspired, and reflective.

JCES is a good journal. Its mission is to provide readers with perspectives that integrate community engagement, teaching and learning, and research. Its editorial staff, current and former, is committed to producing a high-quality journal with a quick turnaround time for authors. *JCES* fills a niche by “lifting all voices” into the literature, with special attention paid to community partner and student voices that tend to be underrepresented in the broad field of engagement. As a long-time reader and reviewer of manuscripts for *JCES*, I have been privileged to learn many new things and to think about new perspectives. I was honored to be asked to become an associate editor and I look forward to working with the editorial staff, reviewers, and readers of *JCES* as it continues to grow, inform, and inspire.

¹ Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

² These are calculated on a two-year average, so they change periodically for the same journal.