April 24, 2018

Dear Colleagues: on behalf of the MPSA Council (the association's elected governing body), we are writing to update you on steps moving forward in light of the Council’s action last week to accept William Jacoby’s immediate resignation as editor of AJPS.

First and foremost, we want to reaffirm MPSA’s unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct in all of the association's activities; to ensuring that our conferences, events, communications, and editorial processes are free from bias and discrimination; that our decision-making processes are fair and transparent; and that our members, officers and staff can thrive in a supportive and welcoming environment. The MPSA leadership - including the councilmembers, officers, and staff - takes any allegations of wrongdoing extremely seriously and is committed to ensuring that all such allegations are handled fairly and judiciously. The MPSA Council and membership must work together to create an environment where victims of harassment and/or discrimination can voice their concerns without threat of recriminations or reprisals. To maintain the integrity of this process, we encourage the withholding of judgements regarding the credibility of any allegations until they are fully investigated.

Second, as we reported on April 20, 2018, the MPSA Council held an emergency board meeting and voted unanimously to 1) accept Professor William Jacoby's resignation as AJPS editor, effectively immediately, and 2) move quickly forward with installing a team of interim editors. As authorized by MPSA's governance policies, we are in discussions with an interim editorial team, and will report back to the membership once the interim editors are in place. In the meantime, AJPS is on temporary hiatus. This means that while the managing editor will respond to correspondence about manuscripts already in the review process, no new manuscripts or revisions can be submitted, and no editorial decisions will be made. Our aim is to have an interim editorial team in place and to re-open the journal over the course of the next month.

Third, once the interim editorial team is in place, we will continue to work to implement the Conflict of Interest (COI) policy that the Council approved earlier this month at the annual meeting. This policy allows authors to report a potential conflict of interest, triggering a process whereby an independent Publishing Ethics Committee will evaluate the request and can direct the manuscript to an alternate editor (typically an associate editor, previous AJPS editor or editorial board member). We need to hammer out the details of the policy with the AJPS publisher and the AJPS editorial office, and hope to have it in place and available to the membership later this spring. We very much hope that this COI policy - and the other steps we have taken - provide strong assurance to the membership that the MPSA leadership takes the responsibility of protecting its members from any bias and discrimination very seriously.

Fourth, we are in the beginning stages of launching a search for a new editorial team at AJPS. We are in the process of recruiting the search committee and drafting the call for proposals. We plan to have the RFP posted on the MPSA and AJPS websites by April 30, 2018.
Fifth, we have heard from many of you about the importance of developing procedures for addressing any future allegations of harassment and misconduct against councilmembers, officers, members, section heads, and journal editors. As you may know, the MPSA in April 2017 adopted an MPSA Anti-Harassment and Professional Conduct Policy for attendees of MPSA annual meetings and any other associated events (this extended our existing policy from 2012, which was limited to MPSA staff). We are in the process of appointing a taskforce to develop more detailed procedures for reporting and adjudicating such allegations.

Finally, we thank you again for your understanding as we take these steps to make the MPSA a stronger, healthier, and more robust association. Periodic updates on these important matters will be shared on the MPSA and AJPS websites and in social media.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Gerber, MPSA President
Vince Hutchings, MPSA Past-President
Sarah Binder, MPSA President-Elect
Will Morgan, MPSA Executive Director