

## CHEERS AND A CHARGE TO THE JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP EDUCATION ON ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

In Volume 1, Issue 1 of *The Journal of Leadership Education*, Townsend (2002) posed a series of questions to the journal's new readership around this "concept" of leadership education, including, "What is the true purpose of leadership education?" and "Are leadership educators driving fantasy programs or factual programs?" (p. 35). Christine Townsend also challenged the field to consider the best teaching and learning environments for leadership education, in addition to important considerations such as whether leadership is culturally contextual. The twenty years since Townsend's 2002 introductory commentary have, in some ways, settled several of those poignant questions around whether rigorous leadership scholarship and training programs are achievable—indeed they are! However, Townsend's closing thoughts about the "future" of leadership education illustrate that while the discipline of leadership education has made significant strides since JOLE's earliest days, there is little to distinguish this 2002 parting message from today's leadership education landscape:

We are beginning to find the answers but the work is just beginning. Complex questions surround the reality of leadership education. Research and development in leadership education, therefore, has a critical purpose. In order to improve teaching and learning environments, expand program and workshop possibilities, and develop productive curricula, leadership research must continue to seek

answers to the questions surrounding leadership and the changing world.(p. 39)As the President of the Association of Leadership Educators(ALE), I feel equally challenged as I am inspired by this twenty-year old charge to our community of leadership educators. It is equally clear, however, to see that there is still a great deal of good work to do to answer the "questions surrounding leadership and the changing world" (p. 39).

The *Journal of Leadership Education* (JOLE) has been chipping away at the complex and exciting facets of leadership education for two decades—two decades of empirical, rigorous, and contemporary work to inform our ever-diversifying community of engaged leadership educators. On behalf of the Association of Leadership Educators, I am delighted to share this commentary in celebration of JOLE's 20th anniversary. As ALE's flagship journal, JOLE has provided our membership with rigorous, creative, thoughtful, and relevant scholarship and provided an outlet for the continued growth of leadership education. This is a profound moment of reflection about the collaborative and reciprocal relationship between ALE and JOLE, as well as a welcome opportunity to explore how JOLE does and can continue to challenge practitioners and scholars at the forefront of leadership education.

## A Twenty Year Relationship

For twenty years, the Association of Leadership Educators (ALE) and the Journal of Leadership Education (JOLE) have shared a rich and deep professional relationship. If ALE is the foremost community of scholars and practitioners committed to stretching and improving the work of leadership education, JOLE is our community's megaphone. As ALE's megaphone, JOLE plays a critical role in challenging the community to not only apply peer-reviewed best practices in our teaching and training spaces, but to challenge them through novel and rigorous scholarship.

JOLE was, in its earliest days, a journal for ALE's members and many ALE members still choose JOLE as their publishing home. The earliest roots of our association are in cooperative extension and the early issues of the journal reflect those early movements of ALE (see Bruce et al., 2005; Hoover & Webster, 2004; ). In addition, a review of the early years of the journal provides a bit of a historical snapshot around the development and assessment of some of the earliest leadership degree programs across the United States and beyond (see Bridgeforth, 2005; Brungdart et al., 2006; Pennington, 2005). In fact, JOLE's first issue also chronicles the earliest history of ALE (see Walker, 2002)! As a relatively young discipline, JOLE holds some profound and useful historical records of leadership education's earliest days. Over time, the association began to attract more and more traditional academic and empirical leadership scholars and practitioners, in addition to those practicing in cooperative extension and agricultural leadership. JOLE's focus followed suit and the result was (and in many ways remains) an exploration and application of rigorous evidence-based educational practices that serve leadership educators primarily working in academic leadership education settings and programs.

JOLE is, as Marianne Lorensen, past ALE President once described it, the "crown jewel of the association. Although ALE existed 12 years before the journal was created, we have had the privilege of walking together for 20 years and indeed, it has been a privilege. ALE recently recommitted our financial support to JOLE through increased funding to help

ensure the journal's long-term sustainability and editorial rigor. The dedication of JOLE's editor and Editorial Advisory Board (EAB) is profound, however the sheer number of hours and scope of work simply outkicked the journal's budget. To ensure the continued rigor and quality of the JOLE that its current leadership has built and maintained over its most recent years, we were delighted to work with the journal's leadership to create a more equitable compensation model and look forward to continuing that conversation around necessary adjustments as publishing and editorial costs continue to climb over the coming years. JOLE's editor also serves as an ex officio member of the ALE Board of Directors and has a standing line item on the Board's monthly meeting agenda. These opportunities to learn about submission and readership trends, as well as publishing trends directly from JOLE's editor help ALE develop programming and initiatives to serve our members in the most timely and relevant way that we can. Historically, JOLE also has hosted a session at ALE's annual conference to provide information and answer questions about publishing in JOLE for conference attendees. This in person, one-on-one access to the journal's editorial team creates a consistent culture of accessibility for the journal amongst ALE's conference attendees and humanizes the work of the journal's leadership team. And although JOLE's leadership team maintains total and unequivocal editorial oversight over JOLE's management and content, ALE is available to support the journal in whatever way it requires or desires.

This continued, contemporary relationship is particularly important as the discipline of leadership education reaches broader audiences. ALE continues to work towards centering voices from underestimated communities (Tulshyan, 2022) and making evidence-based leadership education available to all people practicing leadership in predictable, new, and overdue spaces. While many accomplished, well-respected journals—some in our field of leadership—have remained steadily rooted in what has worked in the past, JOLE continues to innovate to meet the interests and desires of educators and practitioners doing this work of leadership education. Looking to some of JOLE's most recent articles that explored topics such as resilient leadership during a global health crisis

(Thwaite, 2022), self-efficacy among freshman at Historically Black Institutions (Apesin & Gong, 2021), and queer advocacy leadership (Pryor, 2020) JOLE indeed, may be guiding ALE towards its important mission of being (and becoming) a home for all those interested in the scholarship and practice of leadership education.

## The Path Ahead Together

As ALE considers both the interests of our community of scholars and practitioners, as well as the needs of the communities and learners we serve, I invite JOLE's leadership and authorship to move with us, and to guide us across the next twenty years of leadership education. Our shared, rich history provides a foundation to remember and honor our discipline's early days. Indeed, JOLE's publication history, as well as the deep commitment of ALE's membership and leadership (past and present) are the foundation upon which we build our future. Looking ahead I invite JOLE to consider the shifting trends of leadership education and to consider and respond to where we've been, where we are, and where we're going as a discipline. Specifically, I invite JOLE's support and challenge our community of learners and scholars by remaining responsive to the types of articles that are most relevant to the leadership education community, exploring the spaces and voices that are not yet represented in the journal's repertoire, and spotlighting and inviting scholarship that employs or explores novel or non-traditional scholarship methodologies.

While research, application and theory manuscripts have remained a steady part of the journal's publishing history, other features such as news highlights and most recently the addition of Origins, first-hand accounts of leadership lessons from transformative leaders, and popular media manuscripts put peer-reviewed, contemporary teaching and learning tools into the hands of the leadership education community. As diverse as our leadership learners are, the approaches to teaching, mentoring, and coaching those learners should be as diverse. I applaud JOLE for including a diverse and accessible range of ways for authors to share

meaningful scholarship with the ALE community, as well as a broad range of topics and approaches to choose from as we explore various 'ways of knowing' (Heron & Reason, 2005) with our learners. I encourage JOLE to remain responsive to the interests of the contemporary leadership education community and encourage the journal's leadership to nimbly explore the addition and subtraction of submission categories as the times demand.

In addition to nimbly responding to the types of content included in JOLE, I invite JOLE and its authorship to consider the various and changing audiences of its readership. ALE's annual conference is attended by a professionally diverse group of leadership educators—higher education researchers, scholars, and instructors, student affairs professionals, leadership coaches and consultants, a rich student group, and many others who identify with leadership education in some way. I believe we are stepping into a new and exciting space where academic research and the practice of leadership coexist in a reciprocal way, neither overpowering the other but instead, encouraging new lenses and perspectives to the conversation. I anticipate this diversity of professionals and their desires to apply leadership education to both academic and non-academic activities will be reflected in the kinds of submissions journals such as JOLE will see in the coming years.

Movement towards the goals Townsend articulated in 2002 remains important—namely that, “leadership research must continue to seek answers to the questions surrounding leadership and the changing world” (p. 39). The diversity around the number, type, and demand of leadership education programs across the world has increased tremendously over the last twenty years (Fennimore et al., 2019; Lachance & Oxendine, 2015; True et al., 2020)—online education, for example, was a new and novel approach to education in 2002 and not the staple it is today. Further, while extension, co-curricular, and undergraduate leadership programs have seen steady growth over the last twenty years, the number of graduate leadership programs continues to increase, seemingly exponentially in some spaces. Scholarships that provide rigorous commentary and empirical research to guide both the creation and advancement of

leadership education for adults and online leadership learners will be an important part of the future of andragogically informed leadership education (Boud & Tenant, 2006; Sheridan et al., 2019).

In addition to graduate, adult, and online education audiences, the number of ALE members who identify as leadership practitioners (i.e., coaches, consultants, leadership-learning organizations) continues to increase. I believe JOLE has an opportunity to help meet the needs of this important audience by prioritizing scholarship that is conducted with a practitioner audience at the center, in addition to considering perhaps a future special issue or submission category dedicated to this practice-forward group.

Finally, I invite JOLE to join ALE in our commitment to be a space for leadership scholars and practitioners who haven't yet found a home in our organization or flagship publication. Townsend's (2002) (then) novel question around leadership education's future as culturally contextual is something for our community to continue to intentionally explore. We encourage JOLE's leadership and authorship to prioritize and actively recruit not only articles that explore the ways in which leadership education reaches (and doesn't) historically underestimated communities (Tulshyan, 2022), but also research that applies novel methodological approaches to exploring leadership education—for example decolonizing and indigenous methods (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), discourse analysis (Johnstone, 2018), intersectional qualitative inquiry (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022), art-based inquiry (Hobson et al., 2020; Payne, 2020; Smith, 2013), as well as a (re)exploration of existing and popular empirical findings with populations who have not yet been invited to participate. In other words, how might the discipline of leadership education continue to look to creative and rigorous methodologies to answer new questions, but also explore existing findings and traditionally considered "best practices" through new exploratory lenses and a re-centering of the question, "for whom?" To be sure, this charge is not outside of the scope of JOLE's existing way of being—novel applications

and theoretical explorations of leadership education have been in the journal's repertoire for some time. For example, articles that explore what feminism can offer student leadership education (Iverson et al., 2019), engaging nonnative English-speaking students in leadership education (Bourgeois & Bravo, 2019), confluences of student leadership and white privilege, and a conceptualization of leadership in communities experiencing generational poverty (Briscoe, 2022) move the needle towards exploring new (and old) questions in novel and inclusive ways. We encourage JOLE to continue to be a rigorous, creative, inclusive, and forward-looking outlet for the discipline of leadership education for years to come.

## Cheers to Twenty Years!

I would be remiss not to genuinely thank JOLE's current longtime and dedicated Editor, Dr. Jackie Bruce. While the work of the journal is not the result of one person's efforts (Dr. Bruce would be the first to insist this is the case...), JOLE would not be the journal that it is without her commitment to being good and doing good for the practice of leadership education. In the spirit of reflection, I share a moment with you that was shared with me by Dr. Rob Koonce, a colleague and editor of *Followership in Action: Cases and Commentaries*, at a time of change in my own life. He said, "When I read about transitions in life, I am often reminded of a presentation that I saw locally several years ago. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, was talking about an interview that he had done with Peter Drucker at Peter's home in Claremont, California. Jim asked Peter which of his many books he thought was the best. Peter thought about it for a moment and responded, 'The next one'."

On behalf of the Association of Leadership Educators, congratulations to the Journal of Leadership Education for 20 years of furthering the discipline and practice of leadership education—and cheers to the next 20 years!

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