The WPSA and *PRQ*: A Cooperative Endeavor

*Political Research Quarterly* has been owned and published by the University of Utah since 1948. Formerly known as the *Western Political Quarterly*, the journal's name was changed in 1993. While Utah remains the sole legal owner of *PRQ*, the university signed an agreement with the WPSA in 1971 making the journal a cooperative endeavor between the two organizations. Since 1971, the WPSA and the University of Utah have signed two new memos of understanding (MOU) to extend this working relationship. The most recent MOU went into effect on January 1 of this year and will continue until December 31, 2021.

**What Is the Relationship Between *PRQ* (Utah) and the WPSA?**

The MOU with the University of Utah spells out the relationship between the association and the journal. This document defines the mission of the journal, establishes the role of the editors, lays out the editor selection process, and sets forth the financial and administrative ties between the WPSA and *PRQ*.

The primary mission of *PRQ* is to serve as a “refereed journal of scholarly research that aims to record advances in the understanding of politics in all areas by publishing articles representing the highest standards of excellence and reflecting the full range of substantive interests, theories, and approaches defining contemporary political science.” In other words, *PRQ* is designed to be a general interest journal of high scholarly standards.

The MOU gives the editors control over “the substantive content of the journal.” In exercising this control, the editors are expected to follow the prevailing standards and norms of the discipline. Above all else, this means that the editors are expected to make their selections for publication based on their professional judgment with due consideration given to the advice and evaluation of an external peer review panel. The editors are also required to appoint an “Editorial Board of sufficient size, diversity, and scholarly standing” to be consistent with the general mission of the journal. The Editorial Board is required to meet at least once each year to advise the editors on policies affecting the substantive content of the journal.

The term for editors is four years, though the Executive Council can offer the editors additional two year terms. More details about the selection process can be found in the accompanying information on the Upcoming Search for New Editors.

The MOU makes the University of Utah responsible for the financial and business operations of the journal. It states that the administrative officer for *PRQ* is the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science of the University of Utah, though it also calls for the Dean to select a Managing Editor of *PRQ*. Historically, the Managing Editor has been the Chair of the university’s Political Science Department, but the Dean may designate another individual to this position. The Managing Editor serves as a non-voting member of the WPSA Executive Council and as a non-voting member of editor
selection committees. The Managing Editor is also given the right (in consultation with the Dean) to reject an editorial candidate, though this right has never been exercised nor are there any reasons to expect it will be. While the Managing Editor may veto a candidate, the selection of an editor requires approval of the WPSA Executive Council. Beyond his or her involvement in the editor selection process, the Managing Editor is not involved in the substantive content of the journal.

Lastly, the MOU establishes the amount of royalties that the WPSA receives from *PRQ*. Under the current agreement, the WPSA receives 45 percent of the journal’s annual royalties earned by the university.

Changes in the MOU can only be made with the agreement of the University of Utah and the Executive Council of the WPSA.

**The Financial Importance of *PRQ* to the WPSA**

The royalty payments that the WPSA receives from the University of Utah provide an essential part of the funds needed for the association’s operation. Although there is some variation from year to year, the royalties provided from *PRQ* represent approximately 30 percent of the association’s annual revenue. If the association were to lose that revenue without finding replacement funds, it would have severe consequences for the association. The largest expenditure in the association’s budget is for professional support. Without the revenue from *PRQ*, the Executive Council would have to cut professional support considerably, which would then affect the association’s ability to put on the annual conference.

In 2006, the WPSA created a long-range financial planning committee to consider options for increasing revenue to protect the association over the long haul. The committee was created in large part out of concern that the royalties from *PRQ* might soon end. Chaired by Shaun Bowler, the committee also consisted of Ron Schmidt, Ken Meyers, Timothy Kaufman-Osborn and Valerie Martinez-Ebers. The committee considered several ways to increase revenue, but its primary recommendation was the creation of a new journal, *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (PGI). The committee recognized that it could take as long as nine years for *PGI* to generate sufficient subscriptions to make it profitable, but that it was the best option for raising additional revenue to ensure the long-term financial stability of the association. The committee also felt it was important that the association should endeavor to own at least one other journal besides *PGI* so that it would have a bundle of assets to protect itself.

The problem in pursuing other revenue sources is that the options are limited. Beyond *PRQ*, the association’s main sources of revenue are membership dues and registration fees. The association has a long-standing policy of keeping membership dues and registration fees low so that our meetings are more accessible than the meetings put on by other associations. The association could raise dues and fees substantially, but that would go against the association’s policy and it would likely reduce participation. The WPSA President is currently putting together a committee to establish policies for
accepting donations. However, donations are used by non-profits as a long-term strategy to supplement revenue, not as a main source of funds.