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EDITORIAL

Reflecting Back to Forge the Path Forward

Editorial Team

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Thank you to all our reviewers, editorial board members, authors, and those who chose the *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education* (*JUME*) as their outlet of choice. In collaboration with the editorial team, we are releasing critical data concerning the performance of our journal for the 2021 calendar year. As such, the editorial team seeks to uphold our goal of transparency through analysis of both our shortcomings and achievements. In the annual State of *JUME* Report, we provide a discussion of significant issues to the health and success of the journal, such as review and acceptance rate, time to publication, author demographics, and lessons learned along the way. We believe that providing transparency to our readers will support our greater goal and mission of fostering a transformative global academic space for critical research and scholarship in urban mathematics.

The editorial team has worked to bring timely issues to press as quickly as possible without jeopardizing the review process. However, the review process has been tough at times. Given the very difficult year with the added challenges of the ongoing global pandemic, whose name shall never be spoken, reviewers exceeded expectations. Our typical time to send manuscripts to reviewers was two work days, and our average for days to decision was 31. Unfortunately, some of the variation around those numbers has been less than laudable. The range for time to send manuscripts to reviewers was the same day to seven days, and the range for days to decision was three days to 124 days. We could never have imagined the difficulties we would face

in moving manuscripts quickly through the process. Although these timeliness indicators are certainly not the best case, they are clear benchmarks for moving forward. When reflecting back from last year, we have improved on nearly all the metrics, with the exception of the extended range on the time to decision criterion.

There were three areas through which we worked to improve time to reviewers and time to decision. First, we made efforts to expand our reviewer pool. We broadened and deepened our reviewer pool by adding 51 new reviewer accounts in the 2021 calendar year. One goal held by our team is to ensure every manuscript receives an excellent, positive, and productive review. In response to that goal, we started a mentoring program for reviewers. Our editors still tended to rely on very specific reviewers who excelled at providing a caring and respectful review, however. They depended on these reviewers even when their recommendation was to **decline** the submission. We are pleased that through our mentoring program, we provided examples of helpful reviews to members of our community through two Zoom mentoring meetings for current and potential reviewers. This one initiative led to an increase in reviewers and better, more caring reviews. This in turn enabled each member of the *JUME* team to feel accountable and empowered to make their own informed decisions and to move quickly and decisively for every submission on which they are the action editor. This is evidenced in the reduced average time to decision. We are building a track record of collaboration and trust, and this benefits our community in reducing all the time metrics.

Submissions have risen, and we now have a publication backlog. Once a manuscript is accepted, we are currently running about six months to publication. Our goal for 2023 is that *JUME* will no longer be constrained by using traditional publishing norms and move to a publish-when-ready model. Two key features of *JUME*'s intended implementation of that model are that there will still be two editorials published per year and opportunities for guest editors to lead special issues that will be published as stand-alone issues. However, all other manuscripts will be "published when ready" without time constraints or delays. We believe that this change will positively impact many of *JUME*'s metrics.

Marketing *JUME* articles and authors continues to be of paramount importance. We have taken additional steps to ensure *JUME* authors receive broad recognition and marketing that helps their work be found and cited. We have added a new weekly read feature (see Figure 1) and a most-read metric to our site. Figure 1 shows that the referenced article has been read or downloaded 180 times, and the graph indicates the frequency of access by day for the date range provided. We have also added ORCID as a new service to the journal. ORCID is receiving broad acceptance, and its adoption is becoming more commonplace among program officers as part of their due diligence. The power of ORCID allows reviewers to receive credit for completing reviews and provides easier indexing of author contributions. If you do not already have your ORCID number, please consider all the benefits having one affords.

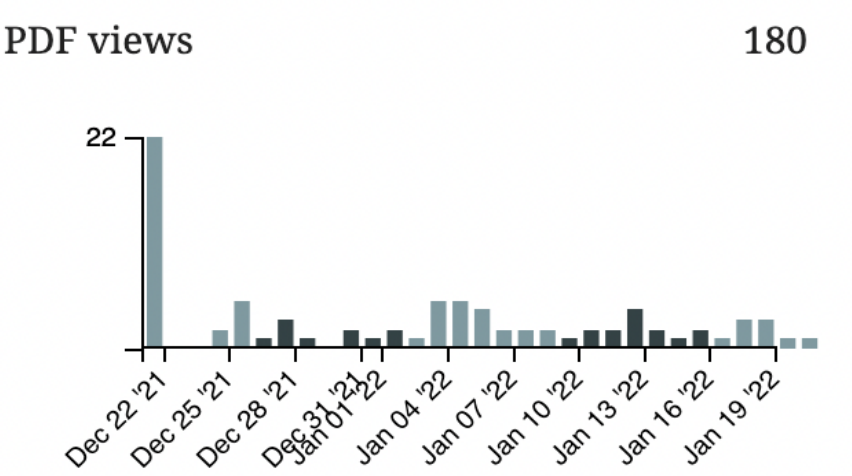

Figure 1. Sample Graph of Readership of an Article Between December 2021 and January 2022

Our acceptance rate for 2021 was ~19% (see Figure 2). We completed our first year of being a SCOPUS-rated journal, and we present our first metrics, nearly one year ahead of schedule (see Figure 3). Although our SJR is modest, we are mighty and this score will increase over time. We believe that as more readers recognize the prominence of the emerging scholars and the quality of the work being published in *JUME* that more researchers will cite the work and the work will be foundational. We will continue to carefully scrutinize how the journal fits in the urban mathematics landscape, and we encourage all readers to be sure to appropriately cite *JUME* when and where possible.

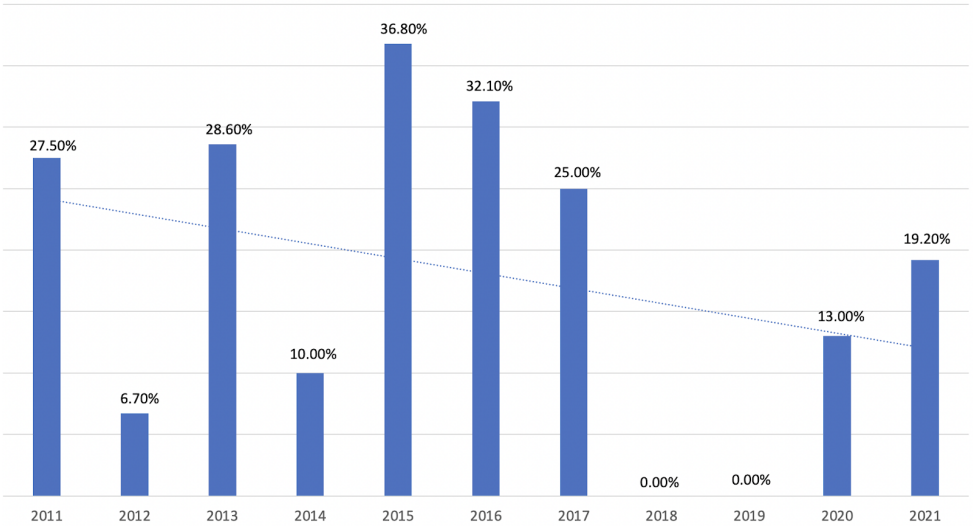

Figure 2. Acceptance Rate by Year

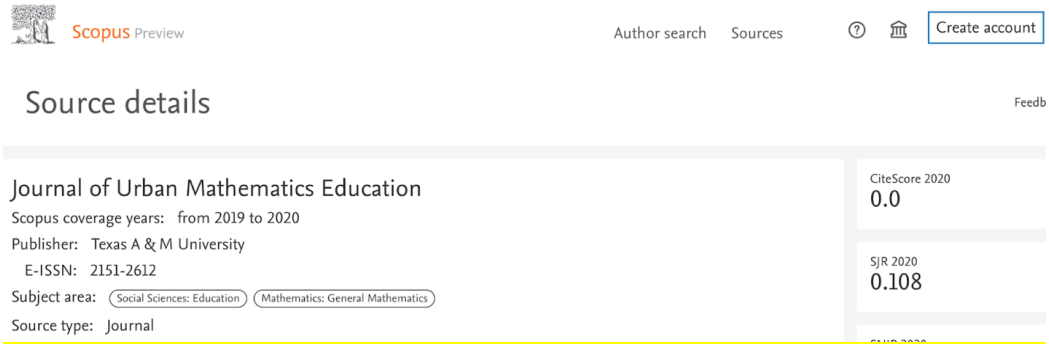

Figure 3. SCOPUS Rating for *JUME*'s First Year of Being Indexed

As a result of participating with a group of editors committed to increasing opportunities and reforming journal practices, the *JUME* team undertook a reflective look at our historical and current methods last year. This required us to gather preliminary data concerning the demographics of our authors, and in doing so we used the word "appear" to carefully categorize authors by our interpretation or familiarity with them. However, this is by no means how any one author may identify and was a precarious practice, but it afforded us the opportunity to begin following our plan to collect and publish author demographic information in our end-of-year review. This year, we have authors' self-reports of identification. Over the past year, the *JUME* team piloted voluntary submission of author demographic information. If authors were published more than one time in the journal, they were asked to complete one survey response per publication. Emails were sent to authors published in *JUME* with invitations to complete a Qualtrics survey. In this survey, we requested information on race, ethnicity, and gender as well as rank or graduate student status and institution/employer for when the article was published. "I prefer not to answer" was an option for nearly every item to respect the authors' comfort level in disclosing the requested information. For authors published from 2008 to 2019, we collected 38 survey responses out of the 166 requests sent (response rate of 23%). Additionally, out of the 21 email requests sent to authors published from 2020 to 2021, 11 survey responses were collected (response rate of 52%). The responses provide insight into the characteristics of research scholars published in *JUME*. Moving forward, we hope to increase the survey response rate to provide a more accurate representation of the published authors. To accomplish our goals of becoming a disruptor in mathematics education and reducing bias in publication, we will provide transparency as we reflect and refine our practices. Additionally, we will discuss survey responses in relation to the authors' levels of power and privilege at the time of publication in *JUME*, as this may be one of many reasons why authors have decided not to respond to the survey (e.g., lack of perceived power, threats of identification, and concerns about how data will be used). For this year, however, we only want to report the information without

making broad conclusions about what it might mean and rather allow the reader to simply absorb the numbers. We encourage readers nonetheless to contemplate how they can engage with the data and in turn how their contributions to the model can reinvigorate *JUME*.

Table 1
Author Demographics Comparison

Description	2020–21	2008–2019
Black	-	16%*
Latin or Hispanic	-	8%*
Asian	36%*	8%*
Multi-racial	-	11%*
White	45%*	53%*

Note. *The response rate was 23% for 2008–2019 and 53% for 2020–2021.
- Categories with too few responses were not recorded to retain author anonymity.

We are concerned about the low response rate of the survey, because any conclusions based on these data may not adequately represent *JUME*'s authors in general. What we know is that the survey results (see Table 1) provide insight into a limited subset of authors published in *JUME*, describing those authors' authentic identities. Historically (2008–2019), 16% of responding authors identify as Black and 8% identify as Latin or Hispanic. The representation of White authors (53%) may be due to a greater sense of security in answering the question(s).

The higher response rate for authors published between 2020–2021 could be attributed to the more recent time of publication and engagement with the journal. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement in terms of response rate. Again, the survey results only reflect a subset of the authors published in *JUME*. Approximately 36% of the authors identify as Asian, while approximately 45% identify as White. Moreover, categories with too few responses were not reported to preserve author anonymity because of the identifiability of the data due to the small sample size. It is difficult to think how the results may be different if we had received 100% complete data. Despite the difficulties we have faced in acquiring a complete data set, we will persist in attempting to secure as much information as possible. We will make that information readily available and ensure that readers feel secure in knowing that the *JUME* team is cognizant of the struggles of our diverse community, including threats,

acts of prejudice, and discrimination. The editorial team views our practice of transparency as a strength of the journal and our editorial team's commitment and dedication to encouraging a transformative global space in mathematics teaching, mathematics learning, and mathematics culture.

The Qualtrics survey also contained an item for information regarding the authors' gender identities. The choices available were genderqueer, man, transgender, trans man, trans woman, woman, not listed (with an option to add a descriptor), and "I prefer not to answer." Respondents who selected "not listed" did not add a descriptor. Additional descriptors would be useful for us to make more comprehensive subsequent surveys. According to the data from authors published between 2008–2019, authors mostly identified as women, and 13% either chose not to answer or said their gender identity was not listed. Similar to the authors from 2008–2019, almost half of the authors from 2020–2021 reported identifying as a woman (see Figures 4 and 5). However, a larger percentage of those authors chose not to disclose information regarding gender identity. The percentage of authors identifying as a man decreased by over ten percent from the 2008–2019 data to the 2020–2021 data.

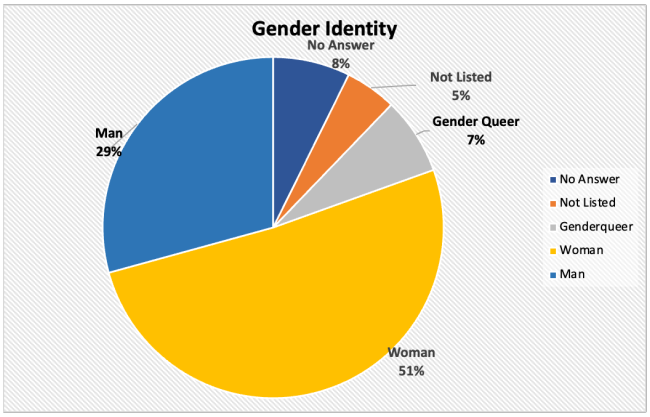

Figure 4. Author Gender Identity 2008–2019

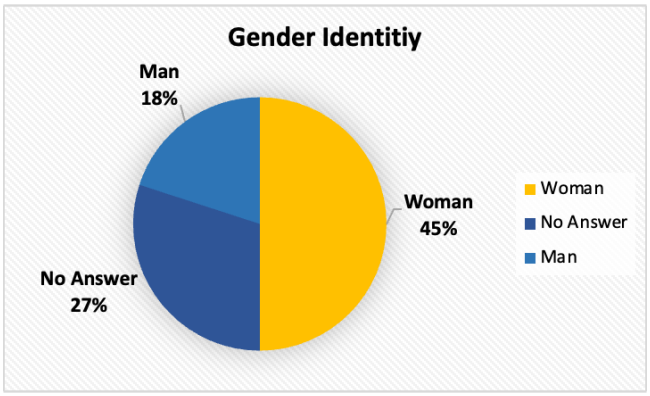

Figure 5. Author Gender Identity 2020–2021

To provide a more holistic representation of the professional identities of authors, we included a survey item regarding institution/employer for when the author's article was published in *JUME.* Using the survey responses and the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, we examined authors' university employment affiliations (see Table 2). We found a higher concentration of authors publishing from R1 institutions than from R2 institutions from 2008–2019, whereas, per author responses, there was equal representation of authors from both R1 and R2 institutions who published from 2020–2021. Additionally, published *JUME* authors represented institutions outside of the United States as well as historically Black colleges and universities and public school districts. Although the representation of such affiliations is marginal, authors from these institutions provide critical perspectives and scholarship.

Table 2
Author Professional Identities

Description	2020–21	2008–2019
Affiliated with R1 institution	27%*	47%*
Affiliated with R2 institution	27%*	18%*
Affiliated with Public institution	55%*	79% *
Affiliated with HBCU	-	3%*
Affiliated with institutions outside of the U.S.	9%*	8%*
Employed by public school districts	9%*	5%*

Note. *The response rate was 23% for 2008–2019 and 53% for 2020–2021.

Additionally, we solicited information regarding authors' position types and funding when their article was published in *JUME*. Over half of the authors published from 2008–2019 (63%) held tenure track positions, with the majority classification of Assistant Professor. Similarly, 54% of the authors published in 2020–2021 held tenure-track positions. Furthermore, in both samples, less than 20% of the authors were graduate students. Moreover, less than a quarter of authors in both samples reported receiving national or international funding as a PI or Co-PI. This supports our

belief that *JUME* is a viable outlet for junior faculty members to break ground on their research agenda as well as for senior scholars to make high-quality, meaningful contributions to the field.

Aggie STEM at Texas A&M University has housed *JUME* since 2019. Over the past three years, under the leadership of Dr. Robert M. Capraro, the *JUME* team has worked to meet our goals to establish a permanent home for the journal in TDL, to expand the editorial team, to improve metrics, and to obtain a SCOPUS ranking. We posted a call to fill a *JUME* editor position eight months ago, and we were extremely pleased to receive three applications. Each of the applicants received guidance on addressing missing or unaddressed points in their application. Finally, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Jamaal Young has been elected as editor-in-chief for *JUME* with an appointment of 2023–2027. The current editorial team is working with Dr. Jamaal Young on a transition plan to a new editorial team, and we are excited see the journal continue to grow and serve as a space for exemplary scholarship under his leadership.
