

The Development of a Peer-Reviewed, Student-Centered Journal: From Student Idea to Realization

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Informed by student needs and organizational goals, a dedicated group of students and faculty mentors founded a new peer-reviewed, student-centered journal supported by the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) and the AASP Foundation. The following paper outlines key factors that contributed to the actualization of this journal including an overview of the supporting organization, historical context relevant to the journal, and includes a brief overview of the student leadership positions at the center of the development of the journal. Additionally, we outline the three-year process of taking this journal from an idea, to a proposal, to full operation—as evidenced by this first issue. Our hope is that through a transparent reflection of our process, other students may be empowered by our learned experiences and gain confidence to advocate for lofty goals within their own organizations.

Keywords: student leadership; journal development; student mentorship, narrative history

In this paper, we will provide a narrative detailing the formation of the *Journal for Advancing Sport Psychology in Research (JASPR)*—a peer-reviewed, student-centered journal supported by the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) and the AASP Foundation. Informed by the Lyons (2011) case study wherein the authors outlined their process for establishing a new student-centered journal, we will similarly outline our process of founding *JASPR*. In so doing, we hope to illuminate the context surrounding the organizational infrastructure which allowed for an innovative environment as well as the major events that occurred across the *JASPR* development timeline. For the reader's convenience, and to compliment the narrative that follows, the *JASPR* development timeline is outlined in Figure 1.

Organizational Infrastructure

In order to provide readers a greater understanding of the development process for *JASPR*, we first want to provide important background information. That is,

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we will briefly describe the organization supporting the development of *JASPR* followed by an overview of the establishing group of students who were involved in the various aspects of journal creation. In providing this context, we hope to offer a transparent and informative outline of how we, the students authoring this paper alongside additional key student members, came to establish the final product of *JASPR* presented here, including our unique supports and challenges.

Overview

AASP, the organization supporting the development and ongoing publication of *JASPR*, was established in 1985. AASP is an international multidisciplinary organization and its mission is to focus on “human performance, holistic well-being and social functioning through education, research and practice, certification, and service to the profession of sport psychology” (Association for Applied Sport Psychology, n.d., Mission Statement section). The organization is comprised of approximately 3,000 members globally with diverse backgrounds including sport science, social work, counseling, and clinical psychology. Two unique aspects of the AASP organization are the inclusion of students as full members and the large presence of students within

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the overall membership (i.e., 43% in 2019). To this end, the student-centric culture within AASP contributed to a confluence of organizational events in the areas of student leadership, student-led initiatives, and strategic planning. These events created an environment in which the organization was ready, willing, and able to consider a proposal for an innovative, peer-reviewed, student-centered journal. For context, these notable landmarks are discussed in detail below.

Student Representative Role

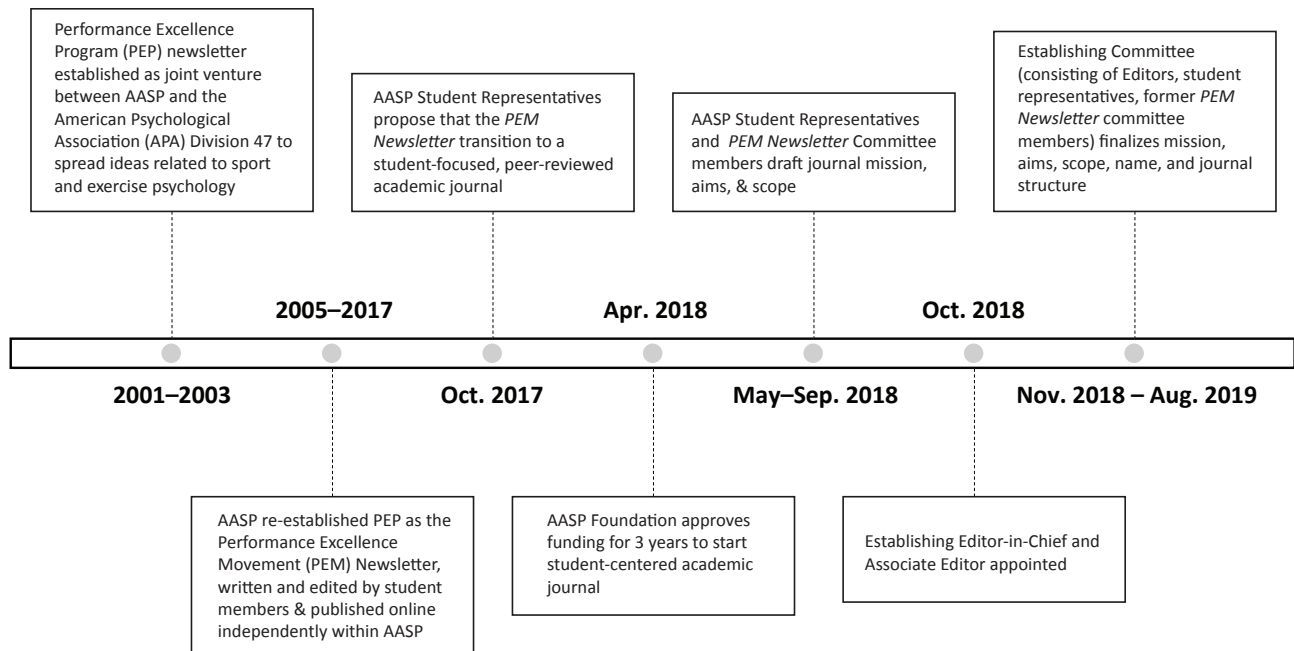
Since the inception of the AASP Executive Board in 1986, the student representative position has existed in an effort to include student voices in organizational decision making and provide students with professional development opportunities in organizational leadership. Preceding 2014, one student representative was elected by the membership to serve a one-year term on the Executive Board and ensure the presence of student member perspectives in organizational decisions. Since 2014, the Executive Board structure has included two student representatives who now serve staggered two-year terms. This change has allowed for increased student integration into the AASP Executive Board, as well as better term-to-term continuity and collaboration between student representatives. As voting AASP Executive Board members, student representatives have a voice in the development and implementation of

organizational strategic plans, participate in day-to-day organizational business, and provide direct oversight to the Student Development Committee (led by an AASP professional member), as well as the student initiatives (led by AASP student members). The student representatives across 2016-2019 were integral in the journal development process and the intersection of their leadership tasks as it relates to the development of *JASPR* are described below.

Student Integration Within the AASP Strategic Plan

Across two subsequent strategic plans (2016-2018; 2019-2022), student representatives advocated for increased organizational emphasis on mentorship opportunities for students along with the retention of early career professional (ECP) members. Additionally, to increase alignment between student and professional work within AASP leadership, student representatives proposed that each student delegate-led initiative be paired with an existing professional member-led committee. Each committee was then assigned responsibility over strategic plan objectives and SMART goals for their respective student delegate initiatives during the 2019-2022 Strategic Planning Meeting. Such integration of students within the Strategic Plan, and larger professional committees, was important for two reasons: (a) it paved the way for authentic student

Figure 1. Timeline of *JASPR* Creation



engagement with AASP professional members in the form of mentored committee work, and (b) it provided a blueprint for how student motivation and work could be leveraged to achieve AASP's Strategic Plan objectives.

Student Delegate Initiatives

Each year the student representatives review formal applications and select approximately 20-30 students to serve as delegates for the subsequent year. Appointed delegates are assigned to various student-led initiatives, which evolve in parallel with the active Strategic Plan, ongoing professional-led committee work, and student membership needs or interests (see <https://appliedsportpsych.org/students-center/initiatives/>). Until 2017, one of the most popular and productive student initiatives was the *Performance Excellence Movement (PEM) Newsletter*. This initiative, and the students who comprised it, proved central to the initiation and development of *JASPR*.

History of the Performance Excellence Movement (PEM)

As a joint venture between AASP and APA – Division 47 (Society for Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology), the Performance Excellence Program (PEP) was established in 2001 with the aim of increasing awareness, knowledge, and skill sets surrounding the application of sport and exercise psychology expertise. The mission of PEP was two-fold: (a) to offer knowledge sharing, and (b) to be a publication that was authored, reviewed, and produced by students. PEP was active in publishing newsletters for approximately three years before dissolving in 2003. The publication initiative then took a two-year hiatus during which time new ideas for publication opportunities were discussed.

In 2005, the Performance Excellence Movement (PEM) was initiated, now housed solely within AASP. The mission of PEM remained similar to that of PEP, as the *PEM Newsletter* continued to be student-led, student-authored, and focused on disseminating applied sport and exercise psychology knowledge to the AASP membership. The PEM initiative was active continuously for 12 years and offered many positive experiences for students in the organization. Grounded in a desire to increase student knowledge of the publication process, the *PEM Newsletter* offered students the opportunity to serve in a variety of roles including author, reviewer, and editor. Reviewing the publication process from a variety of different lenses was seen as a developmentally appropriate opportunity (low stakes, high reward) for shaping well-rounded scholars in sport psychology research.

Despite these benefits, across 2016-2017, discussions of the limitations of the *PEM Newsletter* began to surface in the context of the new organizational strategic plan and evolving realities of academia. Specifically, student-delegate chairs of the *PEM Newsletter* reported inconsistent submission rates and barriers to soliciting high quality submissions. It was clear there was declining incentive to publish in the *PEM Newsletter*, as faculty mentors and students were increasingly urged to publish primary research in peer-reviewed journals, which are more highly regarded with respect to faculty performance reviews and for students attempting to secure academic positions. As such, the competitive demand of survival in academia simply did not lend itself to the development-focused opportunities the *PEM Newsletter* had to offer. In response to the progressive needs of students and their faculty mentors, in conjunction with the need to align student initiatives with AASP's Strategic Plan objectives, student representatives informally suggested to the Executive Board that the *PEM Newsletter* be transitioned to a peer-reviewed journal. During this informal discussion, the student representatives importantly highlighted a few strategic membership benefits: (a) increased first-author submission opportunities for students and ECPs, (b) promotion of student and ECP engagement in the editorial process (i.e., generational turnover in scholarship), and (c) increased AASP-supported opportunities for organic mentorship across various components of the research process (i.e., author, reviewer, editor). Given the evident need to elevate the *PEM Newsletter* and the clear alignment between the publication proposal and AASP's Strategic Plan, formal processes to develop a student-centered journal were initiated.

Timeline

Journal Proposal Development

Initial development of the proposal to formalize and transform the *PEM Newsletter* to a professionally led, student-centered peer-reviewed journal occurred during the 2017 AASP Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, USA (October 2017). To begin the process, the three Executive Board student representatives (i.e., outgoing, current, incoming) met to discuss key elements of a proposal required to move the new journal concept forward. One important discussion point was the procurement of funding sources to support the initial phases of journal development. An additional point of discussion was the critical importance of professional members' service as mentors (e.g., Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editor) in order to support meaningful

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student and ECP growth. With input from the AASP Executive Board, it was determined that the AASP Foundation would be a viable funding mechanism, given the foundation's mission to "foster and enhance AASP's education, research, and training programs as well as fund new development and opportunities in these areas" (AASP Foundation, n.d., para. 1).

During the 2017 AASP Annual Conference, three Executive Board student representatives met with the AASP Foundation, wherein there was overwhelming support for the idea of a student-centered journal, as well as healthy debate regarding whether or not the journal would draw professional member involvement. These discussions offered valuable dialogue around the historical challenges associated with the *PEM Newsletter*, including the inherent limitation of students learning from students, and thus the conversation evolved to include deliberation of the potential benefits and challenges of having professional members involved in the journal's Editorial Board structure. Discussions around the Editorial Board structure and the involvement of professionals and its impact on students' mentored experiences was not solved in this meeting; however, the student representatives were invited by the AASP Foundation to submit a formal proposal for consideration.

Following the energizing meeting with the AASP Foundation during the 2017 AASP Annual Conference, the student representatives began developing the formal journal proposal. To support the merits of the proposal, research was conducted to identify costs associated with securing an inaugural Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editor, securing a digital host (e.g., Digital Commons), recruiting critical or rate-limiting resources (i.e., a Copy Editor), and developing a proposed workflow for the journal. The journal proposal itself included: (a) an overview of PEM's history, (b) a list of anticipated challenges with proposed solutions, (c) a suggested Editorial Board structure, and (d) a proposed budget, including different cost-efficient hosting options. The proposal was written as a pilot project, covering the first three years of journal development, after which viability of the journal would be assessed vis-à-vis a number of metrics including submission rates and publication downloads and engagement, as well as an assessment of general member interest in providing professional service to the journal (i.e., manuscript reviewers, Editorial Board membership). Taken together, this assessment will be used to determine the continued operation and funding of the journal.

Accounting for the feedback provided by the AASP Foundation regarding the involvement of professional members, it was proposed the journal structure involve dual role services wherein a professional member and student member would each hold a single Editorial Board position (i.e., Editor-in-Chief and Junior Editor-in-Chief). This shift was particularly important as it improved alignment between the Editorial Board structure and AASP Strategic Plan objectives, while maintaining the student-centric ethos of the journal. Another important challenge addressed during the proposal phase was determining the digital host for published works, as the independent digital platforms researched (e.g., Digital Commons) were not financially feasible. Therefore, it was proposed that the journal be hosted using an existing platform (eScholar Share) at Drake University, where one of the previous student representatives was now a faculty member. To incentivize this collaboration and meet withstanding publication needs, it was also suggested that a modest scholarship be included in the proposal to fund a journalism and mass communication student at Drake University to carry out the copy editing work for the journal. This initial proposal was submitted to the AASP Foundation in January of 2018 and was granted official approval at the Spring 2018 Executive Board meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The AASP Foundation approved the allocation of funds to support a three-year pilot project to launch the new, student-centered, peer-reviewed journal.

Proposal Implementation

Following the 2018 approval from the AASP Foundation to move forward with establishing the journal, the student representatives met to discuss and develop a timeline for journal development, necessary tasks to be completed, and additional students needed to support the development process. Guided by the similar process and case study published by Lyons (2011), the student representatives first identified the task list which included: (a) establishing a journal name, (b) developing the vision, mission, and scope of the journal, (c) constructing position calls for the Establishing Editor-in-Chief and Establishing Associate Editor, (d) developing review criteria for position submissions, as well as (e) finalizing the Editorial Board structure and associated workflow processes.

Student delegates previously involved in the PEM initiative were provided the opportunity to be involved in the journal development process along with the student representatives, as the Student Establishing Committee. Once the Student Establishing Committee

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had been formed, during the summer of 2018, simultaneous work began to: (a) name the journal, (b) write its vision, mission, and scope, and (c) curate the call for an Establishing Editor-in-Chief. These three tasks were pursued with periodic AASP Executive Board input, with developments being reported during monthly Executive Board meetings. In June of 2018, after failed attempt to secure approval from the AASP Executive Board for the proposed journal title, mission, vision, and scope, the AASP Executive Board encouraged the Student Establishing Committee to shift their focus and efforts to soliciting an Editor-in-Chief. In so doing, the appointed Editor-in-Chief could provide the mentorship required to successfully name the journal, finalize its vision, mission, and scope, and facilitate the forward momentum needed to establish a fully operational journal within three years. Following development of the Editor-in-Chief requisition and application review procedures, the call for an Establishing Editor-in-Chief was sent out to the AASP membership in July of 2018. Independent review of submissions was then conducted by the Student Establishing Committee. Selection of the Editor-in-Chief was finalized by the Student Establishing Committee in August 2018 and approved by the AASP Executive Board during the Fall 2018 Executive Board Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

During the subsequent 2018 AASP Annual Conference, the AASP membership was notified of the new student-centered journal as well as the selected Editor-in-Chief. At this time, the Establishing Editor-in-Chief appointed the Establishing Associate Editor and a Managing Editor to three-year terms. Additionally, all members of the Student Establishing Committee agreed to remain involved in the next steps of journal

development. To summarize, by October of 2018, the journal had secured a digital host and established an Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editor, Managing Editor, and a Student Establishing Committee to continue with journal development. The Student Establishing Committee led by the Establishing Editors subsequently met on a weekly basis to continue the development work needed toward establishing the journal.

The collaborative effort to revise and finalize the journal title, and its vision, mission, and scope statements was an iterative process that spanned six months, before being submitted by the Student Establishing Committee and the Editors to the AASP Executive Board at the Spring 2019 meeting in Portland, Oregon, USA. During the Spring meeting, the mission, vision, and scope of the journal were approved by the AASP Executive Board, and the title, *Journal for Advancing Sport Psychology in Research (JASPR)*, was approved at a later meeting in September 2019. *JASPR's* approved vision, mission, and scope are presented in Table 1.

Intraorganizational Promotion

Finalization of the journal title, vision, mission, and scope in early Fall 2019 allowed for the promotion of *JASPR* to occur at the 2019 AASP Annual Conference in October. During this conference, various strategies and platforms were used across the conference to provide messaging to the membership about opportunities within *JASPR* (e.g., announcements before keynote speakers, discussion at the business meeting, flyer at graduate information fair). These promotional opportunities were important for bringing awareness to the membership-at-large of the organization's newest scientific publication and its unique opportunities

Table 1. Finalized Vision, Mission, & Scope

Vision	To expand the field of psychology in the domains of sport, exercise, and performance by providing the student community a unique and inspiring platform to engage and disseminate rigorous scholarship.
Mission	The <i>Journal for Advancing Sport Psychology in Research (JASPR)</i> aims to expand the field of psychology in the domains of sport, exercise, and performance by publishing rigorous scholarship for students, academics, researchers, and applied practitioners. Specifically, <i>JASPR</i> provides students and early-career professionals aspiring to develop their scholarship skills with innovative opportunities to participate as authors, reviewers, and editorial board members within a mentored publishing infrastructure.
Scope	<i>JASPR</i> is a peer-reviewed academic publication focused on rigorous undergraduate and graduate student-led scholarly work. Submissions include primary and secondary, basic, applied, and developmental research using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies. Submissions can expand across a range of psychological topics in the domains of sport, exercise, and performance.

for mentored experiences. Additionally, the Student Establishing Committee and Editors delivered an interactive workshop for students aimed at demystifying the publication process in general, as well as building excitement for student involvement in *JASPR* by outlining opportunities for them to participate as a submitting author, manuscript reviewer, and Editorial Board member.

Recruitment of New Students

Early in 2019, the Student Establishing Committee and the Editors created position descriptions for all editorial board positions. This was followed by creation of open position calls for the Junior Editor-in-Chief, Junior Associate Editor, Junior Editorial Board Members, Student Copy Editor and Peer Reviewer positions. The inaugural Copy Editor was appointed in September 2019, the Junior Editor-in-Chief, Junior Associate Editors (x2), and Junior Editorial Board Members (x2) were appointed in December 2019 by the Student Establishing Committee and the Editors. After appointment of the inaugural Editorial Board, the Student Establishing Committee dissolved, and the Editorial Board has since carried out the remaining work to operationalize and advance *JASPR*.

Lessons Learned

In the last three years, we have learned a number of lessons while advocating for and establishing this journal, both from the processes that went as we planned, in addition to those that did not. We hope that in sharing our accomplishments and areas of challenge, we may offer learned insights that will be of help to others in pursuit of new professional endeavors. In our reflection that follows, we identify select big picture takeaways, as well as specific thoughts on the processes associated with developing *JASPR*.

First, in reflecting on the early days of our idea for a student-centric journal, and following the initial green light from the AASP Executive Board to proceed in submitting a full proposal to develop such journal, there was a substantial amount of work and energy given toward drafting the proposal. Specifically, in order to be prepared to have discussions with stakeholders at the 2017 AASP Annual Conference, the initial research (e.g., cost associated with different hosting platforms, journal operations and structure) and proposal outline was completed in three days' time, literally in the hotel rooms of the student representatives. This initial lift allowed for meaningful, in-person conversations to take

place during the Annual Conference, including the first of the discussions with the journal's funding sponsor, the AASP Foundation. Had the time not been taken in those initial days, it is unlikely that the journal would have moved from an idea to realization at the steady pace it did. Although working asynchronously is often the reality of academic life, as students, capitalizing on the synchronous moments we had with others in the organization during that time was critical. Additionally, during the development of the journal proposal, and shortly thereafter during implementation of the journal proposal, there were varying levels of professional mentorship which, through reflection, correlate closely with times of more and less efficiency in our work. That is, while it is evident that students carried important insight, innovation, and a passion to do good work, those efforts were most effectively directed and applied under some level of professional mentorship. To this end, once professional mentorship was established, the amount of work that was done by a group of dedicated students (i.e., Student Establishing Committee) and faculty (i.e., Establishing Editors) was impressive. Finally, in reflecting on the totality of the journal process, from a general student need, to a seedling of an idea to full realization – patience, clear communication, and a willingness to learn and remain resilient in the face of challenges were process factors critical to the outcomes of the journal. Indeed, a growth mindset and acceptance of a non-linear process were required, as well as the willingness to be vulnerable, offer ideas, and learn from feedback.

Specific to the process of how this journal came to be realized, had we known what we know now, there are some things we would have done differently. First, seeking professional faculty mentorship earlier in the process would have curbed, or at least tempered, some of the challenges and duplicative work we encountered. Additionally, following approval of the journal proposal and confirmed financial support by the AASP Foundation, the student representatives did consult with an Editor-in-Chief of another journal; however, having this discussion earlier in the pre-proposal process would have been helpful. More specifically, this would have facilitated identification of other aspects of journal viability and sustainability, such as the need for funding to support a workflow management system to receive, process, and track manuscript submission and manuscript reviews. Ultimately, due to the fast pace at which we moved during the early stages of proposal development, time we could have spent on more comprehensive research and development was sacrificed. As such, additional tasks were left for those who led various aspects of the

proposal implementation process, including the Student Establishing Committee and inaugural Editorial Board.

Conclusion

We hope this narrative conveys both the passion and commitment from the students and faculty mentors involved in the realization of *JASPR*. In reflecting on this process from beginning to end, it is notable what a group of committed students were able to do with the support of their organization and professional mentors. We hope in the years to come, *JASPR* will continue to provide students with meaningful development and mentorship in the area of research publication. To this end, we hope you, as students and professionals, continue to support and commit to the growth of *JASPR* through scholarly submissions of student-led work and involvement as manuscript reviewers and Editorial Board members. Our genuine hope is to watch *JASPR* grow to be a highly regarded, development-oriented outlet for rigorous scientific work in sport, exercise, and performance psychology.

Acknowledgements


We would like to acknowledge the many students and professional members that were integral to the realization of *JASPR*. First, we want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Michael Sachs and the AASP Foundation for their engagement with and support of student ideas. We would also like to acknowledge the AASP Executive Board student representatives who were a part of this process from its conception including Stacy Gnacinski (University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee), Joanna Foss (University of Missouri), Courtney Hess (University of Massachusetts Boston), and Julia Cawthra (University of Indiana). Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the work of a number of student delegates who gave time and energy to this project over the preceding three years including Alan Chu (University of North Texas), Carra Johnson (West Virginia University), and Travis Scheadler (Willmington College, University of Kentucky). Moreover, we would like to thank the faculty mentors who helped to guide this process forward, Dr. Monna Arvinen-Barrow (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and Dr. Amanda J. Visek (The George Washington University). Finally, we want to acknowledge and thank Kent Lindemann, AASP Executive Director, for his help navigating the many details of this process, as well as the AASP Executive Board for their leadership in mentoring and supporting student ideas within the organization.

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