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Improving Rural Education: Value and Input from Rural Higher Education

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The Chronicle of Rural Education, CoRE, is a journal whose time has come. Our vision focuses on serving rural education through providing peer review, open access, and high-quality standards while maintaining an apolitical stance to assist in avoiding bias.

The need for such a journal began to gain clarity, and the idea of this journal took seed decades ago during our Editor in Chief's undergraduate studies. It was at this time, he first noticed what appeared to be a preponderance of top-tier journals playing host to major research university authors and the cohorts of those authors.

Many reviewers found in top funding agencies are also the same reviewers found in a range of academic journals and conferences; moreover, the rate of research funding relates to the prestige of a researcher's institution (Lee et al., 2013; Murray, et al., 2016). A tie between elite funding and similar researchers serves as a source for bias (Fang & Casadevall, 2016; Murray, et al., 2016).

In a much discussed and highly cited study, Ceci and Peters (1982b) investigated whether "researchers affiliated with prestigious institutions ... [tended] ... to fare better than colleagues at less prestigious ones" (p. 748). With controls in place for the quality of submissions, articles published by prestigious individuals at admired institutions were resubmitted under fictitious names associated with lesser known institutions. Resubmitted manuscripts were more likely to

be rejected with “serious methodological flaws” listed as a concern (p. 187). This disturbing relationship serves to turn the back of dissemination on numerous qualified scholars from smaller, less recognized schools and the freshness of contributions to society and academia by otherwise ignored scholars.

Having spent the majority of their lives in rural environments and then, when working together in a rural university setting, the authors began to discuss the numerous smaller universities, universities where students, and the teaching of those students is first priority. What about their professors, professors from a broad range of backgrounds and highly skilled qualifications? What about professors who desire and are able to make valuable contributions to scholarship but lack resources (Arnold et al., 2005)? Their days are riddled in heavy teaching loads, community and university service, and research funding is often more limited than for peers from more prestigious institutions (Arnold et al., 2005; Murray, et al., 2016). The more the authors visited on this topic and engaged professors from other rural universities, the more shared concerns emerged. Something needed to be done!

Having an acceptance rate among various top journals as low as five percent (Asam & Watson, 2016) and with numerous journals experiencing a backlog of article submissions, predatory journals have set themselves up to make money from those caught in the “publish or perish” predicament (McNaught, 2015). The need for journals with quality standards and commitments similar to CoRE grows. CoRE believes authors and researchers from all universities and rural education institutions exist as a most valuable resource, a resource of ideas and contributions. Contributions seeking to be made not only to scholarship, but society as well. We believe these academics must be provided a podium from which to speak and from where their voices can be heard. This podium is CoRE!

With the ever-expanding reach and growth of the internet, open access journals are rapidly becoming more accepted and are cited regularly in major research and scholarship (Acharya, 2014; Asam & Watson, 2016; McNaught, 2015). In his guide to starting an open access journal, Eve (2012) summarized the need for open access journals, “Scholarly publishing is broken. Most taxpayers, funders of the research, cannot get access to the research, and early career and lesser known researchers can experience difficulty meeting with the fees associated with publishing” (para. 2). The concept of “open access” offers unfettered access for readers while accompanied authors gain in article citations (Swan & Brown, 2004). Open access by itself is a start, but a system of peer review is also needed.

Currently, peer review systems used by many journals face charges of systematic bias (Asam & Watson, 2016; Lee et al., 2013; Nat Neurosci, 1999). The range of reviewers in top-tier journals able to successfully identify authors in double blind reviews can be as high as 40 percent (Peters & Ceci, 1982). The process of peer review ultimately aims to ensure the overall quality of research and its utility prior to publishing (Asam & Watson, 2016). With all versions of the review process owning a variety of criticisms and for the purpose of assisting authors, an open system of review has been adopted by CoRE. Open review is gaining in popularity (Asam & Watson, 2016), and CoRE is dedicated to providing authors with mentorship and support

through the editing and development process which can ultimately lead to a successful publication (CoRE mission, 2021).

Since CoRE's initial discussions, the editorial board have committed to operating a quality journal with minimal or no expense for authors. CoRE benefits through the hosting services made available by Oklahoma State University and the volunteer commitments (editors and reviewers) of our staff. Our publishing costs are kept negligible as much as possible. This will continue to be passed on to submitting authors.

At CoRE, we believe a cooperative venture between authors and journal staff focused on high quality standards will be successful. We need your help to make this journal grow. We are looking forward to working with researchers and others directly involved in the field of education to make CoRE a worthy publication. Please send us your articles, ideas, and contributions. You can visit our vision, mission, and goals at <https://ojs.library.okstate.edu/osu/index.php/chronicle-of-rural-education> to see our commitment toward working with authors and providing a quality research outlet for all. We encourage you to submit your articles about education to CoRE for publishing. This is our journal. This is your journal.

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