

## Letter from the Incoming Editors

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It is an honor and a privilege to take over the editorship of the *Journal of Business Ethics*. Professors Alex C. Michalos and Deborah C. Poff, Founders and Editors (1982–2015) of the journal, have been pioneers in the field of business ethics. Their efforts to build a first-rate publication have been influential in changing how we think about business to now include a broad sense of ethics as one of its background disciplines. They have done much more than philosophize about the role of ethics in business. They have built a journal that values scholarship from many different disciplines and contributes to our understanding of business and organizational life as deeply human.

To achieve this they have built a team of editors and board members, some of whom have been a part of the journal since its founding, who have generously given their expertise and energy. These volunteers, editors, board members, referees, authors, and others have joined together to create a scholarly community.

In an editorial in the first ever issue, Michalos (1982, p. 1) wrote that the aim of the journal is “to provide a public forum for discussion and debate of ethical issues related of business.” He continued:

In short, our basic concern is the study of business activity from a moral point of view. Human understanding of virtually all things, moral and nonmoral, may be improved by sustained public scrutiny. The more important the issue, the more important it is to

initiate such processes. Thus, considering the significance of business and ethics in our lives, there is a clear need for a public forum.

With regard to how the journal should interact with its community, Michalos wrote:

The *Journal of Business Ethics* will provide an open channel of communication that will allow people with diverse views, opinions, knowledge, insights, prescriptions and proscriptions to make their case, and that will allow the other side (any other side) to respond... The Journal will publish original articles written from a wide variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives. (Michalos 1982, p. 1)

These words are as relevant today as they were in 1982 at the founding of the journal, and it is our job to keep this conversation alive and well. There can be little doubt about the importance and impact of the journal. More recently, on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the journal, in a volume comprising the top-cited JBE papers, we addressed the issue of the impact and future of the journal.

*The Journal of Business Ethics* has had a profound impact on the teaching and scholarship in business ethics, and in business schools. From its inception the *Journal* has taken a rather broad approach to what counts as business ethics. It has always published more than simply the latest analytic philosopher’s analysis of a particular problem in business. The *Journal* has encouraged empirical research as well as theoretical work for many years. Today we see other business ethics journals also taking up this approach that was pioneered by *JBE*. (Freeman in Michalos and Poff 2012, p. 721)

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*JBE* is frequently characterized in terms of both its breadth and its proliferation. The journal embraces expansive and liberal interpretations of ethical theories; diverse methodological approaches and heuristics; and wide-ranging praxis in varied organizational settings. The journal publishes many regular and special issues each year, has raised the profile of business ethics in the broader academy, and is widely cited both within the field of business ethics and more broadly...

Being involved with *JBE* is synonymous with being part of the study of business ethics. It is hard to imagine that there is one researcher, one student, one syllabus, one (academically-read) practitioner with interest in the field who has not in some way been impacted by the journal." (Greenwood in Michalos and Poff 2012, p. 731–2)

As we look forward to the next phase of *JBE*, we want to articulate a set of principles that will guide us in taking the journal forward. These principles are necessarily general at this point, and we will engage the community in a conversation about their implications for the future of the journal.

(1) *Respect for the author and the author's voice.* We want to provide helpful and timely advice to our authors. Ideally, we will strive to let authors know within a week whether their paper is going to be sent out for review. We plan to work to reduce reviewing times and work toward uniform standards of reviews across all sections of the journal. We want to support authors to tell their story.

(2) *Respect for the reviewers.* Our reviewers give freely of their time and expertise. We hope to streamline what we ask of them by only sending them papers that they will find worthy of their attention. We will ask them to focus on important issues, so that they can make an informed judgment that adds to the quality and integrity of scholarship.

(3) *Enhance the ability of the section editors to work together as a team.* The section editors at *JBE* do an incredible job. Some sections receive more papers than many complete journals. We will be working on sharing ideas with the section editors and getting them together to discuss the future of the journal with us.

(4) *Enhance the pluralist intellectual traditions of the journal.* We want to continue to broaden the scope of the disciplines that are relevant to the field. We need to engage a range of scholars such as historians, literary theorists, creative artists, as well as the social scientists, and the critics of each. We believe that ethics is present in all these background disciplines. However, we also have to delineate and be definite about what constitutes the scope of

ethics. Breadth for the sake of breadth helps no one. We hope to make this pluralist intellectual tradition a hallmark of the journal in its next phase.

(5) *Use a variety of formats to cause conversations that can make a difference in the field and in the world.* We want to make the most of the different types of media available, both in the pages of the journal and the communications that surround it. For instance, our special issues must continue to raise new topics and serve as a sounding board for the future of the field. We must move beyond "the view from nowhere" to understand the lived experience of real human beings. We want to encourage thick descriptions and engagement with materiality, a critical approach to discourse, and scholarship that begins with the phenomena.

(6) *Ensure the integrity of the publication process from submission to publication.* Business ethics scholarship must be reflexive. We must critically examine our own positions, and we have to live the ethics that we write about. For instance, many journals today pay a lot of attention to the so-called "impact factor" despite multiple accusations that these factors are easily manipulated. We believe that the best way for a journal to gain citations to its papers is by publishing great papers that other scholars will find useful. We will seek to increase the impact of the journal by increasing the quality of the papers.

(7) *Continue to diversify scholarship by geography, race, ethnicity, gender, and other modes of being.* We will continue to make *JBE* the world's ethics journal. We are aware of the privilege that membership in this community brings to us. We seek to extend this privilege to all types of scholars, especially those whose voices have not yet been heard.

Our dedication to enacting these principles is predicated on your involvement. We need your help and your active participation. Here is what you can do:

- Engage with the conversations in the scholarship as a reader.
- Be active as an author.
- Tell your colleagues in other disciplines about the multidisciplinary of *JBE*.
- Contact our section editors where you want to be involved.
- Volunteer to review, and fill out the section on your expertise, so that we can have a more up to date database to engage reviewers.
- Find members of the *JBE* team at conferences and share ideas with us. Section editors are active scholars with whom you can talk when you go to conferences or visit their institutions.

It is our belief that ethics are infused in all of our relationships. They are not just a hurdle to be overcome, or

a variable to be manipulated. We encourage scholarship that acknowledges and explores the centrality of ethics. We encourage recognition of the conventionality of how we construct our institutions. As the new Editors-in-Chief of JBE, we believe that our project should be to challenge and be challenged at the deepest level. We encourage you to engage with us.

## References

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